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REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

FOR

HOLY COMMUNION.

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HENRICUS EDWARDUS,

Card. Archiep. Westmon.

REFLECTIONS & PRAYERS

FOR

HOLY COMMUNION

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

WITH PREFACE BY

HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL MANNING

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PREFACE.

THE best recommendation of this Second Volume of *Meditations and Prayers for Holy Communion* is the success of the First Volume which was published in English in the year 1869, and is now in a Fifth Edition.

The Second Volume has the same simplicity and solidity as the first. It is founded throughout on the Holy Scriptures, and it will be of especial value to those who are familiar with the Sacred Text. St. Teresa said that one chief cause of the evils of the Church in her day was ignorance of the written Word of God. St. Bernardine of Sienna says: 'Whosoever willingly hears the Word of God shows by a manifest sign, that the Spirit of God is in him.' And St. Anthony of Padua says that: 'To hear the Word of God willingly is a great sign of predestination.' This little book breathes the Word of God: and those that have the will to hear His Word will read it gladly.

HENRY EDWARD,
Cardinal Archbishop

August 9, 1876.

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REFLECTIONS AND PRAYERS

FOR

HOLY COMMUNION.

HOLY MASS.

Preparation.

On entering the church, ask yourself, as Blessed Berchmans was accustomed to do: Where am I going? I am going to present myself before the Eternal Father, to offer Him the sacrifice of His Divine Son. Then, knowing that you are in the presence of God, kneel with deepest respect before the holy altar. Renew your general intention to honour God; add to it expressly the offering of your Communion in union with the objects of the Sacrifice. Propose to yourself a *special intention*, which you may plainly express, so as not to content yourself with vague prayers which are apt to be made without sufficient fervour.

Prayers to unite ourselves to the ends of the Sacrifice during the Mass of Communion.

I.

FROM THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE MASS UNTIL THE GOSPEL.

Adoration.

Almighty and Eternal God, grant me grace to sanctify my thoughts and feelings, that so I may worthily offer Thee this august Sacrifice, with the priest.

I unite myself to the intentions of Jesus Christ, and of the Church, to render to Thy Divine Majesty the homage which is Thy due. I am nothing; all that I have, all that I am, I receive from Thy liberal hand. I cannot of myself offer to Thee what I ought; but vouchsafe to accept favourably the profound humiliation of Thy Divine Son upon the Altar; that which He does in Thy presence, I do in union with Him. I humble myself profoundly before Thy infinite greatness, and I unite myself to all the sentiments of Jesus. I offer to Thee all the adoration which ascends from His Heart continually, to make amends for the coldness with which I discharge this great duty.

I offer to Thee all the adorations of the Blessed Virgin, of the Angels, of the Saints in heaven, of the just on earth; like them I rejoice in the homage which is rendered to Thee in the Sacrifice of the Altar.

I adore Thee, O my God, who art the Sovereign Master of the Universe, I acknowledge my dependence upon Thy sovereignty. I praise Thee with all the court of heaven, and I desire that Thou shouldst be praised, adored, and loved on earth, as Thou art praised, adored, and loved in heaven.

II.

FROM THE GOSPEL TO THE ELEVATION.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Thanks be rendered to Thee, O my God, for all the benefits which Thou hast bestowed upon me in my creation, preservation, and redemption, and for those which Thou dost hereafter design to bestow upon me until my death, and through eternity. Thanks be rendered unto Thee for causing me to be born in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Faith, and for opening to me in Thy Heart, by the sacraments, and especially in the Holy Eucharist, a fountain of life eternal. I thank Thee for those special graces which

have drawn me to Thy service, and led me to the love of virtue. I thank Thee no less for those graces of which I am ignorant, and for those which I have abused, or lost through my own fault. Thy mercies to me have been infinite, Thou hast manifested to me a tender love which invests Thee with unalienable rights over my heart. But how great soever Thy gifts may be, I can still make a fitting return. Look down, O Lord, upon this pure, holy, and spotless offering, which I am about to present to Thee by the hands of Thy priest. Its infinite value covers all my debts, and is worth far more than all the benefits which I have received in the past, and hope for in the future.

Nor do I offer to Thee once only this infinite gift, but so often as the Holy Mass is celebrated throughout the universe, so often do I entreat Thee to accept that holy offering as my perpetual act of thanksgiving, in return for Thy unceasing benefits.

O Eternal God, behold me prostrate before the throne of Thy Divine Majesty, and offering to Thee in humble adoration all my thoughts, words, and actions of this day, united to the pure intentions that Jesus, Mary, and Joseph formed during their mortal life. I form the intention to do everything for Thy love, for Thy glory, to accomplish Thy Divine will, to praise Thee, and to serve Thee: to obtain a clearer insight into the mysteries of faith; to secure my salvation, to draw down Thy mercy upon me, to make reparation to Thy justice for all the sins that I have committed; to obtain for sinners the grace of true conversion. I would that it were possible for me to sign this intention with my blood: I would that it were possible for me to repeat it in every moment of my life.

O my God, accept my good will, give me Thy holy benediction with efficacious grace to preserve me from ever falling into mortal sin, but specially to preserve me from it during this day. I desire to gain as

many indulgences as possible, and I pray Thee to apply them to the souls in Purgatory.

Most Blessed Virgin Mary, render in my name a thousand acts of thanksgiving to the ineffable goodness of God, and offer unto Him for me all those acts of thanksgiving which Jesus our Victim renders unto the Divine Majesty in His august Sacrifice.

III.

FROM THE ELEVATION TO THE COMMUNION.

Repentance and Confidence.

O my Saviour, who art really present on the Altar, Thou canst read all my sins in my conscience which lies open before Thee. I desire not at this moment to dwell upon any humiliating recollections; but from the bottom of my heart I implore Thy pardon for having offended Thee, by my words, by my thoughts, by my actions, my feelings, my omissions. Thou art about to enter a soul in which passions have been all too freely indulged, a soul full of pride, sensuality, presumption, vanity; for where is the defect which has not found access to my heart and conduct, and caused me to blush before Thee, O my God? How I detest myself for having so often and so lightly displeased Thee! Thy mercies to me have been so great that I have, even more than others, reason to deplore my ingratitude. Pardon my secret infidelities which have especially grieved Thy Divine Heart. In that Sacred Heart I have found much enduring patience, long-suffering charity, inexhaustible goodness, which will remain my eternal refuge and my hope. Can it be that I, who am so certain of being beloved, should not return that love with all the powers of my being? How often have I received Thee coldly, frivolous distractions causing my mind to wander far from Thee! If that coldness and distraction appear to me inexplicable, it is only

because I do not know myself. I have not sounded deeply enough the abyss of my own misery. O Jesus, cause a ray of heavenly light to shine upon that abyss, and grant that despairing of myself, I may rest my hope upon Thy mercy only. The root of my confidence springs from the multitude of Thy mercies which I have so many times experienced. Give me sincere contrition, true and efficacious sorrow, and pour down upon my soul pardon for all my sins.

My confidence in Thee should be boundless, O my Jesus, for in entering my heart, Thou wilt represent to Thy Father all that Thou hast done for my salvation; and Thou wilt pray Him to open to me the treasures of His mercy and His love. Vouchsafe to prepare my soul to receive the fruits of Thy prayer, preserve them also within me, and cause me to think of Thee whilst I reiterate my prayer.

IV.

FROM THE COMMUNION TO THE END OF MASS.

Requests.

First of all, prepare to make a fervent spiritual Communion, if you do not actually communicate. My Lord Jesus, I would give my life never to have offended Thee. I love Thee with all my soul, I desire to receive Thee, but as I cannot communicate sacramentally, deign to give Thyself spiritually to my heart. I adore Thee, as now possessing Thee, grant that I may never more be separated from Thee.

'My Jesus, penetrate my soul with the lively and powerful flame of Thy love, and grant that I may live and die for Thy love, O Thou who hast vouchsafed to die for the love of me.'*

Present your requests to Jesus, as if He was present before you. My Lord and my God, having

* St. Francis of Assisi.

dared to raise my desires even unto Thee, I fear no refusal when I beseech Thee to enable me to come to Thee efficaciously. Grant me all those graces most necessary for my sanctification, especially pardon for all my sins, Thy holy love, union with Thy Heart, steadfast faith, firm hope, an ardent charity which shall manifest itself in my actions, profound humility, extreme temperance regulating my whole life, and above all, final perseverance in Thy service.

I recommend to Thee all the wants of Holy Church, all the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff. Protect the clergy, the religious orders: extend the Apostolic missions. Have pity upon all infidels, heretics, and sinners; remember all those who are united to me by the bonds of relationship or friendship, all those who pray for me, and all those priests who at the Altar intercede for my soul.

O Jesus, bless the resolution I now make, by Thy grace, to endeavour to please Thee; to trample under foot human respect, and my repugnance to making certain sacrifices; to moderate my pleasures; to break with everything which opposes itself to my duties, or to Thy holy law. I ask of Thee grace to pray well, and to recommend myself to Thy Divine Heart, and to the protection of Mary in all my temptations and trials, whether moral or physical. Grant me the grace of constant devotion to the Holy Eucharist, and that I may always make such Communions as shall be agreeable to Thee, and suffer me not to die without receiving the Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction.

My God, vouchsafe to hear and grant my prayer. I beseech Thee in the name of the Immaculate Conception of Thy Blessed Mother, of St. Joseph, of my Guardian Angel, of all Thy saints, and for the glory of Thy Name.

ANOTHER EXERCISE FOR HOLY MASS

Preparation.

Upon the Cross our Blessed Lord offered Himself as Priest, and was consumed as Victim. Our salvation, the salvation of our beloved ones, depends upon one condition only, says the Apostle, 'To suffer with Jesus Christ.' Redemption comes to us from the Cross, by which also we receive the application of His merits. The Holy Sacrifice dispenses them profusely. When you are preparing to be present at it, you should therefore recollect yourself profoundly, and withdraw your thoughts from all worldly things, detaching your mind from all creatures, and forgetting even yourself, by which means you will cause great peace to enter into your soul, and secure to it the full benefit of that great Sacrifice.

Unite yourself to the Blessed Virgin as she stood at the foot of the Cross, and watched the Blood as it flowed from the Wounds of her Son!

Offer to God the aspirations of her Heart, immolate yourself with her; for was she not in that moment, by her affections, truly sacrificed with Jesus Christ?

Your whole life, what should it be, but as hers was, the Passion of Jesus *continued* for the glory of God?

Let these thoughts sink deep into your heart.

Make fervent acts of faith, hope, charity, contrition; the virtue of the Holy Sacrifice will make them more meritorious.

Heaven is attentive; the souls in Purgatory await your prayers; angels surround you; unite your supplications to those of your Angel Guardian.

PRAYERS FOR MASS AND COMMUNION.

At the commencement of Holy Mass.

My God, I offer Thee this Holy Sacrifice which I am about to attend, that I may adore Thee profoundly, that I may consecrate to Thee all my thoughts, words, and sufferings, especially all my actions, acknowledging Thee to be my Beginning, my Last End, and my Sovereign Good. Deign to establish Thy reign in my heart, apply to me the infinite merits of Thy death and Passion, and bestow upon me all graces necessary to my salvation.

I unite myself to all those souls that have consecrated themselves to the Heart of Jesus in order to render It a special homage of devotion and love, and to extend the knowledge and the love of It according to the designs of His greater glory. To attain this end, I offer to Thee all the merits which I may be able to acquire during the whole course of my life. I offer Thee the Communion which I am preparing to make, for the intention of that Divine Heart in giving Himself to me this day, and to second His merciful designs towards my soul. I offer it to Thee also in union with the Communions of those saints who have honoured that Heart with an especial devotion; I ardently desire to participate in their feelings, and to reverence the adorable Eucharist as much as any creature upon this earth is capable of reverencing It.

At the Confiteor.

While the priest humbly stands at the foot of the Altar, collect your thoughts, and examine the thoughts and feelings that you are going to offer to our Lord. Are they purified from the slightest stain? Are they not preoccupied by earthly affections? Imagine

that our Lord is saying to you as He did to St. Peter: 'If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part in Me.' Form a lively and sincere act of contrition.

O my God, I repent of my sins only for love of Thy Heart, made sorrowful by my unfaithfulness. Wash me—not my feet only, but also my hands and my head; purify my thoughts, my actions, and all the inclinations of my soul: suffer not the least defilement to rest thereon, that so I may worthily receive into a pure heart Thy adorable Body.

At the Introit.

Remember that word full of love which our Lord pronounced immediately before the Last Supper, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Supper with you before I suffer.' These words indicate the three dispositions of mind which you ought to bring to Holy Communion.

The first of these is a fervent desire to unite yourself to our Blessed Lord, as He desired so fervently to give Himself to you. The second consists in endeavouring to make your present Communion as if it were to be your last. The third is to accept the crosses and sufferings of the day, uniting them as an offering to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, to the greater glory of God.

O my Saviour, it is the want of faith in my heart that has hitherto been an obstacle to the full and abundant communication of Thy graces to Thy servant. Remove that obstacle in granting me a more lively faith and more ardent love, that all my actions may become worthy acts of union with Thy Heart, and that having participated frequently in Thy sacramental life, I may yield up my life in an act of Thy holy love.

At the Kyrie.

Invoke with confidence the Divine Mercy which has deigned, miserable as we are, to send down our Lord to save us, and which takes delight in our sup-

plications, being moved thereby to manifest the greatest clemency through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord, have mercy upon my soul, the work of Thy hands, Thy future sanctuary. Communicate to me Thy light, to drive out all idle and useless thoughts. Inspire me with just ideas of the happiness which Thou hast prepared for those who love Thee. My heart is an edifice which ought to include every virtue. If it were harder than adamant, art Thou not able to transform it, to soften it, and cause it to melt in the greatness of Thy love? Change it, penetrate it with devotion and zeal for the interests of Thy glory.

At the Prayers.

Think that if the woman in the Gospel was healed, only by touching the hem of our Saviour's garment, how confidently may you not expect the cure of all your spiritual infirmities, if you receive with faith His most Sacred Body? Gather together all the needs and sorrows of your soul, present them to Jesus, to excite the compassion of His Heart. Approach Him with holy confidence, ask of Him the spirit of humility and purity.

O Jesus, may Thy sacred presence be to my heart a precious balm, to soften its acerbities, and to heal all its wounds. Make my soul enjoy the salutary unction of Thy grace. Be Thyself the indissoluble bond of its covenant with the Holy Ghost; renew that covenant each time that I enjoy the happiness of receiving Thee, and draw more closely by Thy love the bonds which unite Thy Heart to mine.

At the Epistle and to the Gradual.

Consider who it is that comes to you! It is the Word, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father from all eternity: He who, not content with once becoming incarnate in the Virgin's womb,

becomes incarnate in some sort in your heart at Holy Communion.

My God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain! Wilt Thou so abase Thyself as to take up thine abode in my heart? I should not venture to approach Thee, O Lord, save at thine own express command; but now I come to Thee with humble confidence in Thy mercy. Thou didst sanctify St. John Baptist in his mother's womb, show that my vileness is not an insuperable obstacle to Thy love; sanctify me by Thy mercy.

O God of holiness, disdain not a soul which is stained with a thousand sins, a heart devoured by earthly affections; descend into my heart, the privileged object of Thy love. Grant me those virtues which are well-pleasing to Thee, a lively faith, firm hope, ardent charity, tender devotion, profound humility. Regard the most pure soul of Thy Mother in the place of mine, which is too unworthy of being Thy sanctuary.

Accept, O Jesus, my desire of offering myself to Thee in gratitude for the instititution of this most Holy Sacrament, in which Thou dost bestow upon me Thine own substance, in reparation for the outrages Thou dost receive therein, in union with the Holy Sacrifices which are celebrated on this day throughout the universe, with the Communions made by all pious souls according to that intention which is most dear to Thy Heart; for Thy glory, the prosperity of Holy Church, and for the conversion of all heretics and sinners.

At the Gospel.

Read with respectful attention our Saviour's words, or else, if you are not using a book, hear Him saying, 'I will come and heal you.' And then reply with the same confidence as the sisters of Lazarus, Lord, she whom Thou lovest is sick; come, and tarry

not. Restore my life by Thy presence. Give to my soul the kiss of peace, strengthen me in my good resolutions (mention any special one which you may wish to recommend to our Lord in this Communion). Make my fidelity constant and steadfast, and bind me fast to Thee in the bonds of sincere and constant love.

At the Offertory.

While the priest raises the bread and wine, behold our Lord Himself, no longer taking into His hands the bread and wine which He consecrated on the evening of the Last Supper, but Himself offering to His Father your soul with all its faculties, your heart and its affections, in union with His self-immolation on the Altar. Compose your mind and heart into a holy fervour, to make that offering with Him. Give yourself unreservedly to God, who gives Himself to you.

Eternal Father of my Saviour, I unite the offering of my whole being to that of the bread and wine which at the priest's words will become the most precious gift of the Body and Blood of Thy dear Son; but notwithstanding the immense disproportion between thine ineffable liberality and my weak acts of thanksgiving, my consolation will be to show myself truly grateful in Jesus Christ Himself, whom Thou dost give to be my heavenly food. I offer to Thee beforehand His act of thanksgiving after the Supper, and deeply affected by the extent of my happiness, I will say to Thee with the Prophet King: 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that He hath done unto me? I will take the cup of salvation, and I will call upon the name of the Lord.'

O Father of Mercies, notwithstanding my unworthiness, I venture to approach the throne of Thy Majesty under the protection of Thy Divine Son.

His adorable Blood, to the cry of which Thou wilt never turn a deaf ear, is a precious pledge of His last wishes upon the Cross, and assures me that I can never be repulsed from Thy paternal heart when I come to offer Thee that chalice which is filled with the Blood shed by Him for Thy glory and for my salvation. I offer it to Thee, O my God, imploring Thee to forgive my sins and to accept my prayers.

'Father Eternal, I offer unto Thee the Heart of Jesus my Saviour, as He offers Himself to Thee in sacrifice, with all the desires, feelings, affections, acts, and movements of that adorable Heart. They are all mine, because He offered Himself for me; henceforth I desire to have no other. Receive them in satisfaction for my sins, and as acts of thanksgiving for Thy benefits. Receive them in order to grant me by their merits all those graces that I require, especially the grace of final perseverance. Receive them as the adoration, praise, and blessing which I offer unto Thy Divine Majesty, since it is by Jesus alone that Thou canst worthily be glorified.'*

At the Preface.

As the priest utters these words, *Sursum corda*, raise your heart to heaven with a holy impatience, desiring to see it quickly open to give you your God, your all; but call to mind that in the hour of her death, St. Catherine of Sienna reproached herself for having sought her own consolation in Holy Communion, remembering that God had commanded her to take that divine nourishment joyfully upon THE TABLE OF THE CROSS—that is to say, with entire detachment from all sensible enjoyment. The joy of Communion ought to be inseparable from the love of sufferings and the will to live crucified with Jesus Christ. We should abandon ourselves with Him, in all things, to the good pleasure of God, uniting our-

* Prayer of the Blessed Margaret Mary.

selves to the sacrifice of the Sacred Victim daily offered upon the Altar.

O Jesus, Thou hast deigned to shed Thy Blood upon the Cross with extreme pain and suffering, and Thy infinite love bestows It upon me daily in Thy Divine Sacrament. Inspire my heart with tender compassion for Thy sufferings, with boundless regret for having caused them by my sins; with earnest desire to receive the healing application of Thy merits; with a sincere will to become a partaker of Thy Cross, and to imprint it upon my whole being, that so I may become conformable to Thy Passion. And because one drop of Thy most precious Blood is more than sufficient for the salvation of the world apply Its price and virtue to the souls who are dear to me; to those that have not the happiness of knowing and of loving Thee, or of comprehending the benefit which we derive from suffering here below, so that sanctified by Thy grace, we may be enabled to possess Thee in time and in eternity.

At the Canon.

Imagine that you are at Calvary, and that you are going to be present at the death of Jesus Christ. Represent to the eye of your mind His sacred Body nailed to the Cross, and shedding His Blood even to the very last drop. Behold in spirit that adorable Blood dropping from the deep Wounds in His Hands, His Feet, His Heart. Adore Him, saying, 'O sacred Body, exhausted and drained of Blood, Victim offered for the redemption of the world, I adore Thee with all the powers of my soul. I render thanks unto Thee, O my Saviour, for having in this Holy Sacrifice established a perpetual memorial of Thy most precious love, and of Thy death in horrible torments. I might have been ungrateful enough to forget those great benefits, hadst Thou not established in Thy Church an eternal monument of Thy love.

O Jesus, who dost descend almost into my hands, to dwell always with me, make me to feel a love worthy of that which Thou dost testify for me; teach me to live in Thy holy presence, to receive the fruits of Thy holy Passion, to profit by the important lessons which it teaches me. The silence which Thou maintainest on the holy Altar, notwithstanding all our irreverences and distractions, teaches me to practise the grace of recollectedness, sweetness, humility, patience. After I have received Thy divine mysteries, I will follow Thy example with unswerving fidelity.

At the Elevation.

Adore our Lord really present, offering Himself as on Calvary.

Place yourself at the foot of the Cross with the Blessed Virgin and St. John. Pray that you may participate in the Holy Sacrifice with the same sentiments of faith, of sorrow, and of love as those which filled their hearts at that moment. Repeat slowly, as you feel inwardly drawn to do so, the prayers, *Suscipe* and *Anima Christi.*

After the Elevation.

After the oblation, when the Sacred Host is shown to you, until the moment when you are to enjoy the happiness of communicating, employ your mind in the great thoughts of Jesus Christ as the Author of your creation, Restorer of your fallen nature, and Pledge of your eternal glory. Consider deeply these consoling truths, and penetrated with admiration for the vast treasures contained in the Holy Eucharist, say piously with the Church:

'O Sacred Banquet, where Jesus Christ is received by me, where the memory of His Passion is renewed, where my soul is filled with graces and receives an eternal pledge of the glory which is promised to me through my Saviour's merits!'

O Jesus, who dost so humble Thyself in the Sacred Host only to approach more closely to Thy poor creatures, give me a true desire to live hidden from the eyes of men, and to conceal everything that might cause me to be esteemed by them. I recognize Thee and I adore Thee, O my God, through the veils which hide Thee from mine eyes. I believe that this Sacred Host is the Bread which came down from heaven, and was given for the life of our souls. Blessed for ever be Thy charity which veils Thy glory and hides the brightness of Thy face, that Thou mayest annihilate the infinite distance which separates Thee from us. I entreat Thee to accomplish in me the designs of Thy love, and to make me acquiesce in them faithfully.

At the Memento of the Dead.

Pray for the souls in Purgatory, especially for those whom you love, for those who have been recommended to your prayers; and offer, for their relief, the indulgences which you may gain by your Communion and in the course of the day.

At the Pater.

Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist assumes all those titles which express the most tender love, and are the most apt to excite your confidence. Invoke Him as your Father, as your Saviour, in the moment when He comes to give you the affecting marks of His love.

I desire ardently, O my Jesus, to love Thee as much as I am able to love. Impelled by filial affection, I desire to manifest my love, to make proof of it by the exercise of every virtue. Place Thyself as a seal upon my arm, and upon my heart, to regulate all my thoughts and actions. Communicate unto me Thy holy inclinations, the spirit of humility, of submission, of sweetness, and of charity. I offer to

Thee all these virtues of the Immaculate Heart of Thy Holy Mother, where they shine more brightly than all the supernatural gifts of the angels.

At the Agnus Dei.

Until the moment of Communion, reunite at the feet of our Saviour all the faculties of your soul. Enlarge as it were your heart to receive a greater abundance of these celestial gifts. The angels are now adoring their God upon the Altar; join them in their profound, absorbed devotion. They behold Him without a veil, but you are going to possess Him!

Entreat our Lord to bestow His peace upon your soul, to calm its uneasiness, to banish far from it all agitation and distress.

Then approach with confidence: you are going to God, who loves you.

Holy Communion.

Communion is the means above all others whereby we are enabled to live in and by Jesus Christ. However holy a Christian may be, he requires continually fresh food for the life of his soul: strength to repair its daily losses and failures, and to make it increase and grow in virtue. The more we live in the world, the more urgent does the necessity of Communion become. That which seems naturally to deter us from the frequent use of the Holy Eucharist ought, on the contrary, to cause us more frequently to have recourse to it, for an incessant wasting away of life entails the necessity of incessant reparation.

Let us then communicate often, but let us bring to Jesus a heart prepared by love, a will entirely submitted to His will, an humble mind; thus we shall communicate well.

Frequent Communion requires two distinct preparations: one of these should be made, not at the

time of Communion only, but during our whole life, and it consists in accomplishing with fidelity and for the love of Jesus Christ, all our daily exercises of piety, and the duties of our state in life; in suffering with patience, and if possible, with joy, all those bodily and mental sufferings which God in His goodness is pleased to lay upon us; in frequently exercising that virtue which is most necessary to our spiritual advancement; and in practising certain of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy towards our neighbours, and especially to the members of our own household. From these works, choose such as are most suitable to your own feelings, to your requirements, to your social position: but always remember that the more habitual care you take with your interior and spiritual preparation, the greater fruit will you receive from your Communions.

Revive your faith by making fervent acts of devotion upon this divine mystery, whenever you enter the church. The preparation at the time of Communion consists in recollection and prayer, which you may vary according to the disposition of your mind at the time, and according to the present wants or necessities of your soul. Make use, if you will, of the prayers following, which contain the principal acts which we are advised to make before Communion.

ACTS BEFORE RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION.

Preparation.

Think of that marvellous love, of which the Holy Eucharist is the permanent witness; of that love which was manifested at first by sufferings and death. Think of the annihilation, the humiliations that Jesus Christ endures for you in this Sacrament. Think of *His* labours, of *His* sufferings, and how few and light will yours appear! Remember that He gives

Himself to you wholly, and then you surely can refuse Him nothing!

BEFORE COMMUNION.

Faith.

O Jesus, I declare my faith in Thy presence in the Holy Eucharist. I renew this protestation because my actions, which spring too often from an unreflecting, *customary* faith have not sufficiently honoured Thee in Thy sacrament of love. I believe firmly that I am going to receive Thy Body, Thy Blood, Thy Soul, Thy Divinity, Thy Heart, which has loved me so tenderly. O Jesus, my Creator, my Saviour, and my God, increase my faith in the awful mystery of the Eucharist; my faith, which is only strong enough to enable me to grieve that it is not far more strong, more lively, and more fit to lead me to glorify Thy presence with us and in us.

Humility.

Lord, my sins have been so great that nothing but Thy death could have revived my soul. How great soever in my past life may be the sins that I have committed, and their number and their greatness are known to Thee alone, I detest them all; I regret most deeply that I have committed them. I would, O my God, that I had never once offended Thee; but since I am so unhappy as to have done so, I would that my deep penitence could efface for ever from Thy sight those sad effects of my evil nature. I will never forget how weak I am, how easily I have been led to do evil, and I offer this Communion to Thee in sincere reparation for all my sins.

Confidence.

Would the sight of my wretchedness have attracted Thee, O Lord Jesus, had not Thy mercy been infinite

as Thy justice, that sovereign mercy in which I trust' I throw myself into Thy arms with perfect confidence. My sins had led me to the brink of the gulf of eternal destruction; but as the penitent thief at his last hour found hope in Thy Wounds, so have I looked with the eyes of faith upon Thy Heart, and like him have received the blessed assurance of pardon and absolution. Holy Communion is now about to bestow upon me as great things as the heaven which he hoped for upon the faith of Thy word. Cover my sins with Thy most precious Blood. Love has opened Thy Heart as a refuge for us; I fly thither, and I believe that it will save me from the chastisement due to me from the justice of God.

Love.

Lord Jesus, I love Thee with my whole heart, but I should be pitiable indeed were I to give Thee only a heart blighted by dissipation, worldliness, and sin. I have loved Thee little, but I desire to love Thee much. Save me from the misfortune of dying with but a feeble love of Thee. Grant that I may love Thee for Thyself without seeking the consolations of love, in order that if I cannot arrive at loving Thee with a *great* love, I may at least love Thee with a *faithful* love. O Jesus, I bless Thee for having granted to my will a liberty which takes away from me the anxiety of doubt when I say: 'My God, I love Thee, for I love Thee because I desire to love Thee. Deign to believe in my love.

Desire for Communion.

Most sweet Jesus, I ardently desire to receive Thee; deign to give Thyself to a soul that hungers and thirsts for Thy presence. I desire Thee, Source of my life; deign, in taking possession of my whole being, to produce a true union between Thy Heart and mine. I desire, O my God, to be perpetually united

to Thee by the purest love, to be continually the object of Thy sovereign bounty. This desire effaces every perishable desire from my mind. But Thou, who bestowest upon me the magnificent gift of Thyself, Thou canst expect nothing from me in return save my love, and that love, a gift which would have been agreeable to Thee, I have lavished it, alas! upon created beings. But now, Lord, take my heart; it is Thine.

To give Thee all, O my Jesus, to live on hope, on utter trust in Thy goodness and mercy—such is the happy fate which Holy Communion prepares for me. I implore Thee that it may ever continue mine.

AFTER COMMUNION.

Prostrate yourself at the feet of our Lord, and remain some moments in silence.

Jesus opens to you His Heart; endeavour to make His feelings your own, that you may offer them to Him again.

Hanging upon the Cross, Jesus redeemed us to life; but in this moment He pours that life into your soul, because of the love He bears you. Say to Him: Lord, cause me to live by Thy life.

Adoration.

Thou art all mine, O my Jesus! I adore Thee with faith, with respect, with fear, with love, with joy. I adore Thee in heaven, in the midst of Thy glory; upon the Cross, which is Thy throne of mercy; in the tabernacle, and in my own heart, where Thou art all love. I prostrate myself with the prodigal son at Thy feet. I kiss them with Mary Magdalene. I approach Thee humbly, like the leper, like the blind man. I rest upon Thy Heart, like the beloved Disciple. Thou wast but now the hope of my soul, and now Thou art its happiness. Thy goodness

ravishes and transports me. I adore all that Thou art. I admire all that Thou dost. And I rejoice to find in Thy Heart the means of perfectly fulfilling all the duties which I owe to Thee.

Love.

I love Thee, my God, I love Thee! Hadst Thou not given me a command to love Thee, I should not dare to address this bold but delicious protestation to Thee. It would be presumptuous had I not communicated, but at this moment I love Thee with Thine own Heart. I consecrate to Thee my life, which is thine. I am a little part of Thy Mystical Body. Thy Soul sees, feels, prays in me! This truth, of which I hardly dare to think, is as certain as is my union with Thee. I adore Thee, I believe Thee, O mystery of happiness and love. Deign to live in me, O Jesus: the world cannot deprive me of that favour. Take full possession of my will, which alone is able to separate me from Thee.

Gratitude.

Most sweet Jesus, I desire to return thanks to Thee after the manner of angels. Must my desires be powerless, and my voice be mute? I know not how to express myself, but Thou readest my innermost heart. Thou knowest that Thou art dearer to me than heaven and earth. What shall I render, then, unto Thee, which shall be pleasing unto Thee, in gratitude for this gift of Thyself? I will give Thee my heart, and also *my entire confidence.* Distrust on my part would be an insult to Thee. Thy goodness, which daily multiplies the gifts Thou hast bestowed upon me, from my birth even until now, gives Thee ever-increasing claims upon my gratitude. Though I can make no return to Thee, yet it is sweet to recall to mind how much I owe Thee.

Agreement with Jesus Christ.

My God, I implore Thee to imprint upon the tablet of my heart the remembrance of the favour Thou hast now conferred upon me. And that I may be for ever thankful to Thee for it, grant this my petition, that so often as I shall look at the tabernacle, or kiss my crucifix, or shall read or pronounce Thy holy Name, or shall make any sign of respect for Thy sacred Presence, so often may all these my actions be testimonies of my faith in all revealed truth, of my express determination to live and die in the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Faith, in a firm hope in Thy mercy, and ardent love for Thy Heart, for the Holy Eucharist, and for the Holy Church. Grant that I may die sooner than betray my faith. Vouchsafe to increase it, and my love also, at the cost of all things and of myself. Finally, I intrust to Thy keeping every day of my life. I implore the grace of final perseverance, and I pray Thee to receive me into Thy bosom at the hour of my death.

Requests to be made to Jesus.

My God, when I seek Thee, call me by my name as Thou didst call Mary Magdalene.

When I have committed a fault, look at me with a look such as touched the heart of St. Peter.

Suffer me, like St. John, to rest upon Thy Sacred Heart.

Show me Thy wounds, as Thou didst show them to St. Thomas.

Give me such courage in my sufferings as Thy martyrs showed in theirs.

Grant that I may love Thee like St. Theresa.

That I may live innocently like St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

That I may imitate the sweetness of St. Francis de Sales.

That I may have a contempt for the world like St. Francis Borgia.

That I may live in the practice of charity like St. Vincent of Paul.

Teach me to labour for the salvation of souls, as did St. Francis Xavier.

Excite me to meditate upon Thy sufferings with St. Francis of Assisi.

Attract me to thy Sacred Heart, and suffer me to dwell there with full confidence like the Blessed Margaret Mary.

Make me love the Blessed Virgin as St. Alphonsus Liguori loved her.

Receive my soul into Thy hands, even as Thou didst receive the soul of Thy martyr Stephen.

Grant me the happiness that St. Joseph had, of dying in the arms of Jesus and of Mary.

Prayer to the Blessed Virgin that we may obtain the fruits of a good Communion.

O Mary, I address myself to thee, to thank our Lord for me; without thy protection I could neither receive well, nor retain the fruits, of my Communion. O my Mother, be always ready to supply my needs. My passions are lively, my temptations frequent, my sins are multiplied. Grant me your continual help to correct my worldly habits, to triumph over my besetting sin. Make my thoughts pious, my feelings charitable; make me circumspect in speech, reserved in manner, prudent in my proceedings, moderate in my desires, exact in my duties, patient in all my mental and bodily sufferings, firm in all my resolutions. Assist me especially in prayer, that by my fervour I may console thy Divine Son, who is so often outraged in the Sacrament of His love. Give me the feelings with which you received that Sacrament, and permit me to offer Him your preparation and your thanksgiving to make up for the insufficiency of my own acts. Good and tender Mother, accept and condescend to grant this filial prayer.

FIRST MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

JESUS AND THE CHRISTIAN SOUL.

Preparation.

THE soul, a simple and spiritual being, has need of motion, of food, and of rest, like the body. Being created in sympathy with God, it finds in Jesus Christ its type, its sphere, its aliment. Being made in the divine image, its activity is thought, its light is truth, its rest is in confiding prayer. In the soul, all activity and all lively or profund *feelings* tend to produce *actions* equivalent to their strength; it is then necessary for its welfare that it should be united to Jesus Christ on earth, because He alone can feed it with food suitable for it, capable of developing its activity; of satisfying its needs. In the Holy Eucharist our Lord places Himself at the disposal of the soul. *One* Communion ought to be enough to attach us irrevocably to Him.

I. *How Jesus approaches our souls.*

Between God and the soul there exists a resemblance, and therefore a harmony; in the beginning there was even a close intimacy. But sin has destroyed the resemblance, and turned the harmony into discord. And now the infinite greatness of God, and our littleness, are brought near to each other, by means of the Incarnation and the Holy Eucharist. Nothing more venerable or more tender can be imagined than the relationship established between Jesus in the Eucharist and the soul of man. This relationship begins upon the blessed day of first Communion, which develops the germ of supernatural life first implanted in us at baptism: and in every one of our future Communions

our Saviour increases and perfects that supernatural life in the soul.

I have had a spiritual childhood of which I remember even less than of my bodily infancy. Perhaps the first awakening of reason implanted in my mind the remembrance of some early fault. My youth, though marked by precious graces, yet leaves me the regret that at that age I did not do good without constraint.

I deluded myself with passing desires which had not Jesus for their object and end. How carefully I observed the rules laid down for my studies, but how little solicitude I showed to keep faithfully the solemn compact made with my God in presence of the Sacred Host! Still more do I grieve for having afterwards tarnished the beauty of my soul by contact with the world. My soul perhaps loved that imperfect life and desired not its own revival. If I dwell upon those days of error and illusion, it is in order to feel more deeply how much I ought to love Jesus who has delivered me from them.

O my Saviour, it was not Thine intention to come into my soul to form with it a *passing* union only, neither to dwell inactively therein. Thine intention was to make it better. Thou didst seal it with Thy Blood, with the intent that it should retain a sign to call ever to my remembrance Him who for my sake delivered Himself up freely to the bitter death of the Cross for me. Thou hast signed me with that sacred unction which Thou hast Thyself received, and caused my name of Christian to be formed out of Thy name of Christ. May that mysterious sign shield me from all my enemies. Preserve to my soul the health which Thou hast restored to it, and keep it ever under the direction of Thy grace.

II. *Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament attracts the Christian soul.*

Jesus has performed so many prodigies in order to hide Himself in the Holy Eucharist, that in one sense instead of appearing there as He who is, He appears as if He was not. But do not those very prodigies lend a voice to our Lord to say to us: Behold this little Host, under which I hide Myself entirely, my love seeks by this annihilation to attract you to Myself. Suffer me not to consume Myself vainly for love of you in the tabernacle. My Heart is ever ready to hear you, to sustain you, to console you, to make you happy.

Although our Lord cannot be comprehended by our senses in the Eucharist, yet souls in a state of grace rarely fail to experience an impression of awe and reverence in His presence, an undefinable attraction to Holy Communion. How unfortunate are those who suffer this feeling to become extinguished, or who substitute the attractions of the world for the attractions of Jesus in the Sacrament!

That soul, which loses itself in the pleasures of the world after having loved the Holy Eucharist, may count itself happy if one day the powerful grace of God should seize it, cause it to fly to the tabernacle, and make it feel that henceforth it must communicate or die!

Jesus has granted that grace to me; one day my heart became attracted, chained as it were to the tabernacle, and never since have I been able to break that chain; I had tasted the Holy Eucharist! That word always thrills my heart, for it is full of hope, my sweetest recollections are included in it.

Nevertheless, I often feel the need of reviving my faith in the Presence of our Lord, for distractions frequently oblige me to cry out, 'Truly, my God is here, and I knew it not;' or, rather, I *thought* not of

it. How can one be near to Jesus, and yet not think continually of Him?

O my Jesus, I believe firmly, I believe with joy unspeakable, that Thou art present in that little Host, which from all eternity Thou hast destined for me, and that now the happy day in which Thou wilt bestow it upon me has at length arrived.

But what have I done all my life long to render myself worthy of that wonderful benefit? Alas, my silence shows my fault too plainly: this is only another reason why I should believe more firmly in Thy mercy. As fully as I believe in Thy greatness and holiness, so fully do I believe in Thy goodness and mercy. Regard me from that mercy seat to which I now venture to draw nigh, and look upon me only as the work of Thy mercy, not regarding my iniquities, for I come to Thee covered with Thy most precious Blood, and my faith strengthens my confidence in its efficacious action upon my soul.

III. *The obstacles which arise between God and the Christian soul.*

'One should be pleased to receive God,' says St. Alphonsus Liguori; but far from being pure, we often drag to the Holy Table a half dead soul; for 'luxury, pomp, and curiosity,' St. Augustine says, 'are the offspring of a soul which is dead, but not so thoroughly dead as to be completely deprived of motion. Our souls die when they wander from the source of life; they take the tone of the age, and the torrent of its influence carries them away.'* We should feel our own weakness, but we must also humble ourselves still more for our sinfulness, which is the real barrier between Jesus Christ and our souls. While in the bottom of your heart Jesus Christ is saying to you tenderly, 'Come unto Me,' think well on the state of your conscience; recall to your mind

* Confessions of St. Augustine, ch. xxi.

the chief of those faults which you commit most frequently. Confess humbly that your will is weak, often evil, and that you never cease to offend God, who never ceases to do you good.

Assure our Lord of your repentance, and while you say with St. Peter, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord,' add with St. Magdalene of Pazzi, 'I would rather die than voluntarily lose one Communion,' lest you should thereby lose the benefit of those astonishing marvels which our Lord Jesus Christ can perform in one instant in our souls. Be humble and penitent, and Jesus will remove all the obstacles which your passions oppose to His grace and holy inspirations.

O my Jesus, I have made thee an humble confession of all my faults, of everything which is displeasing to Thee in me; give me such grace that I may no more be one of those souls in whom the love of worldly things, cares of earth, taste for frivolity, dispute for empire with Thy divine law. Come, Lord, and reign more fully in my heart. Come and animate my soul, think with my mind, remember with my memory, act by my hands, and cause all my actions to bring forth fruit abundantly.

IV. *How the soul draws near to Jesus.*

If we compare the prodigies which Jesus effects in the Holy Eucharist in order to descend into our hearts with the efforts that we make to free ourselves from indolence, sensuality, self-love, and vanity, and from the habit of committing venial sin, we shall have good reason to feel our immense distance from Jesus. But our confidence in Him is the bridge which unites His Heart to ours, and spans the gulf of our offences. Let our confidence be proportioned to the depth of our wretchedness, and then our fears can never drive us away from Jesus. Yes, let us have confidence; Holy Communion is the means of bringing to

perfection the dispositions which it requires. Grace labours to repair, by corresponding degrees of mercy, the degrees of misery which it meets with in our souls.

If this work of grace be incomplete in my soul, there can be no reason for its incompleteness save my own will. Why cannot I do what so many others have done? Am I of a different nature from them? Is not God ready to grant me the same assistance? And even if I were to find in myself more serious obstacles, more perplexing difficulties, is not Jesus Christ almighty to aid me in overcoming them? Lord, I think with sorrow of my past resistance to Thy holy inspirations, but although it proves my unfaithfulness, yet it declares Thy goodness even more plainly than my ingratitude. Accept my feelings of mingled shame at my own unworthiness, and gratitude for all Thy mercies, past, present, and to come.

O my Jesus, it is too sweet to receive Thee so often, to enthrone Thee above all creatures in my heart. Grant that I may henceforward behold in the world two objects only—*Thou*, who art my God, that I may love Thee; and *self*, that I may detest myself, and offer up all my tastes and inclinations to Thy holy will.

V. *Our souls are conducted to Jesus by Mary.*

It is not without reason that the saints invoke Mary as their mother, for she is so truly according to the spirit, because in giving us Jesus she gave us true life.

It is then by the title of child of Mary that I approach this Holy Table. What a fresh encouragement to approach it with confidence when we are led thither by Mary herself! Does it not seem to tell us that if the greatness of God strikes fear into our

hearts, His Mother and ours will obtain for us from His mercy what His justice might have refused? We owe every one of our Communions to our Mother, for if Mary had not given us Jesus, He would not have become our heavenly food. She is the dispenser of all graces. Knowing that she is as good as she is powerful, let us then have recourse with fervour to her protection, that we may obtain grace to approach worthily and often the Table of her Son. Let us ask especially for the graces of purity of conscience and love of the Holy Eucharist.

Most holy Virgin, I belong to you. Cast a maternal glance of love upon my heart, into which Jesus will enter in answer to your prayer. Unite me to the holy feelings of your heart, give me such as are most useful to me, give me such as are most pleasing to Jesus. Enable me to show myself always your faithful child, and to participate frequently in the adorable Sacrament of the altar. O Mary, obtain for me from Jesus a passionate love of the Holy Eucharist. These are great requests, but I cannot ask for less than I desire, when I know that Infinite Goodness is waiting to hear and grant my prayer presented by you.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Jesus Christ is all your own! Adore Him profoundly. Open to our Lord all the recesses of your soul, and entreat Him to possess it wholly. Consecrate your person and all that you have to Him, that you may be His alone.

Ask our Lord to enable you to comprehend the value of your soul which He has loved so dearly. Think of the price which He paid for it, and resolve never to refuse Him any sacrifice which may be necessary to establish His undivided dominion over your soul.

Prepare to yield submission to that irresistible

attraction which Jesus exerts over the soul which unites itself to Him.

I. *What Jesus is to the Christian soul.*

Jesus Christ is ALL IN ALL to the soul. At this moment He ought to be your all in all, absolutely; the principle of your faith, hope, and love, until He becomes also your beatitude. What could you want more or greater than this? Is not all besides fragile and perishable?

Say then to Jesus Christ with full conviction, 'My God, my all.' Dwell upon these words. Consider the truth contained in them. Repeat them with joy and confidence.

O my Sovereign Lord and my God, Thou art my all upon earth and in heaven. I adore and praise Thee with all saints. Give me grace to say practically with truth, that Thou art all, in all things, to my heart and to my mind.

'O my Light, mine eyes bless Thee, who hast created them to contemplate the beauty of Thy face.

'O uncreated Word, my ears bless Thee, because Thou hast prepared them to hear Thy voice.

'O Incarnate Word, my tongue blesses Thee, because Thou didst prepare it to receive the Sacred Host. O Infinite Beauty, my heart blesses Thee; penetrate it with Thy love. O my Beatitude, my soul blesses Thee, because Thou hast created us to enjoy eternal happiness.'*

I know not how worthily to celebrate Thy praise. I therefore offer unto Thee that warm and lively affection which all pure souls bear to Thee this day in their Communions; may their love make some amends for my coldness. O my God, since Thou art my all, condescend to dwell in me that I may be all Thine. Make of Thy Heart and mine one heart only, that I may be a partaker of that ardent charity which is

* St. Anselm.

communicated by It to the souls that are admitted to Its intimate love.

I am thine, O my Lord, and I will dwell for ever in Thee.

II.—*Jesus demands my soul as the price of His Death.*

Jesus Christ attaches great price to the possession of my soul. After the Incarnation, the Eucharist, His Death, by all which He has acquired absolute right over the souls of men, He desires to receive from the Father a special gift from the eternal rewards decreed to Him for His labours. 'Bring Me My reward,' He cries by the Prophet Zacharias; and according to St. Bernard, 'The gift of a soul is a reward worthy of a God.' But how pure, how loving, how faithful should be that soul in which God takes delight.

Jesus expects this gift from us in every one of our Communions, and it is at the Holy Table that He desires us to bring it to Him.

Are we not happy in being able to offer to Jesus, in giving Him ourselves, a joy much desired by His Heart?

And for myself, am I ready to make of my whole being so complete an offering to Jesus that He may find in me all that happiness which He desires? Hitherto I have caused Him to wait long for it. I would not that this day's Communion should afford Him another distressing disappointment. The prevailing thought in my act of thanksgiving should be *to add to the joys of Jesus entering my heart.* I will ask our Lord to show me what I had better do until my next Communion, to increase the joy which He takes in me this day.

O Jesus, I give Thee my soul, and here I bring to Thy feet all that it consists of—intelligence, memory, imagination, freewill, feeling, and sensibility. By Thy grace I consecrate to Thee the use of all these faculties.

If my memory, which is intended to retain Thy innumerable benefits, should be inclined from the force of habit to dwell rather upon those things which it might more profitably forget, efface from it every unfortunate remembrance, calm my imagination, exercise Thy sovereign rule over my will, and extend over my whole being Thy gentle sway. I ask not that I may become happier here below, but that I may become better. I desire the grace of faithfulness to my duties rather than consolations; and I pray for grace to prefer to passing, transitory favours, the means of arriving at eternal happiness.

III.—*What must I give to Jesus in this Communion?*

The Communion of the Christian soul is a day of rejoicing to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; but it requires us to give our love, and our blood, or at the least, our sorrow; for Jesus having suffered all His life long, and dying at last by crucifixion, we cannot unite ourselves to Him in this world unless we are partakers of His suffering. The spirit of sacrifice, which is pure charity, derives its aliment from frequent Communions. And this is why we must never be surprised at *suffering* on the day of Communion. Jesus, who sees that we are all unapt to seek for suffering voluntarily, places thorns in our hearts, in our senses, in remembrance of His painful crown, that so He may prevent us from forgetting that He has come to us by means of the sacrifice of Himself. As one may say, He forces us to be grateful, that so we may henceforth live for His glory and His love alone.

It rarely happens that any of my Communions are not followed by some sacrifice, some suffering. Ah, if I take from the hand of God the Sacred Host which He bestows upon me, shall I not also accept freely the thorns which enable me to offer Him a little sorrow, a few drops of blood. I will accept my present sufferings as a bunch of myrrh of sweet odour

to the Lord; but, oh, that my heart were pure as a lily, which, closed from earthly stain, receives into its snow white cup only the heavenly dew of grace.

Lord Jesus, when I think of all the trials which may yet await me on my earthly pilgrimage, my heart is naturally disquieted. But had I been at the foot of the Cross when Thou didst endure such terrible suffering for me, and hadst Thou then shown me, tinged with Thy Blood, all the Hosts that are appointed for me to receive, should I then have thought Thy love too exacting? In this hour when Thou dost cement with Thy Blood the cross which Thou hast planted in my heart, give me fresh grace and strength by Thy sacred presence, that so I may praise Thee, that I too have some sufferings to offer Thee in return for Thine. O my beloved Saviour, suffer not my impatience and discouragement to wither the flowers of those many sorrows which compose my days, but grant rather that the entire submission of my will may ever preserve their perfume and freshness in Thy sight. There is no winter for those flowers which surround the Holy Eucharist. The heart that loves Thee is like a winter hot-house garden where they expand and flourish without fear of frost or nipping air.

IV.—*How to give Jesus at each Communion the gift which He desires.*

Let us hear a wise counsel of St. Bernard. He proposes to the Christian soul, fallen from its rightful position in the society of angels, and in the enjoyment of the vision of God, to regain its lost position by the means following—voluntary servitude, or the utter abnegation of self in accomplishing the will of God, . . . bearing the cross . . . humble imitation of the conduct of our Saviour on earth . . . that so we may recover our liberty by renouncing our own will . . . may be restored to the society of angels by

means of mortification of our senses, and patient endurance of the cross . . . and by following our Lord Jesus Christ in the path of self-denial and virtue, we may be permitted to enjoy the glories of the Beatific Vision.

These means seem to me hard, especially because they require constancy on my part. But do I remember how much nobility God confers upon our nature in approaching us so closely? When I reflect upon all that He has done for us to this end, I am led to consider what respect my senses deserve. My eyes with which I behold heaven and the Sacred Host; my ears, which are destined to listen to the Word of God and the song of angels; my tongue, on which has reposed the Body of Jesus Christ; my feet, which ought to tread in the paths of virtue only, and should lead me to the Church of God; my hands, with which I serve God, ought never to be employed in any but good works. Ought I not to esteem myself happy in consecrating my life to such holy uses, and could I bear to degrade my senses by employing them in the satisfaction of my passions? God wills that everything in us should be great, noble, and pure. I will no longer suffer in myself, His image, anything mean, little, contemptible, or unworthy of my origin.

O my Jesus, even as Thou art in Thy Soul and Body entirely Thy Father's, so I am in my soul and body entirely Thine. All things are possible to Thee, deign to do Thy will in me, enable me to do it, and then I shall be sure of pleasing Thee.

V. *What Jesus does for the soul which is united to Him.*

St. Macarius tells us that the soul which is united to Jesus Christ by grace becomes all light, all fire, all beauty, all life, so that it far surpasses any imaginable earthly magnificence. Its beauty is greater after Communion when it bears in the sight of the angels

the luminous traces of the presence of Jesus Christ. The shining of this beauty is made visible outwardly by the change which is effected in our lives. The world receives from the sight of a fervent Christian a kind of intuitive perception that a friend of Jesus is there.

My beauty is to be intimately united to Christ. How great is my soul in which a mystery so important as this union has been accomplished! My God enters my lips, descends within me, makes Himself my flesh in nourishing me with His own, penetrates every part of my being, applies His soul to my soul, His Will to my will, His Heart to my heart, without my senses being able to perceive the slightest evidence of so incomprehensible an union. In sight of my own greatness, closing my eyes to vain things, I am astonished that I could ever have desired them, or loved them, or occupied myself actively in passing pleasures. I will never more forget my dignity, so wonderfully increased by Holy Communion.

O my Jesus, I shall never be able to render Thee due thanks for the happiness of knowing Thee, of finding Thee every moment of my life, and of feeling Thee living in my own life. Faith enables me to esteem the grace of receiving Thee far before all the glories of this world! O my Jesus, may I ever become more truly one with Thee; may I be ever less *myself;* may humility destroy my egotism; may purity shine brightly in my soul; may the spirit of self-sacrifice expiate my imperfections.

Give me the pure heart which shall behold Thee without a veil, and may it be endowed with the wings of love to ascend into Thy presence.

Conclusion.

One of the most fervent petitions in our acts of thanksgiving should be, that we may be called to aprtake frequently and worthily of the Holy Fucharist.

It is *everything* in this world to our souls. Without grace we have no good thing in us, and nothing remains to us but to suffer without consolation; but Communion increases grace in our souls. Let us ask that we comprehend well what Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is to us, and let us pray fervently that we may be enabled always to receive Him holily.

SECOND MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

LET US COME TO THE LIFE.

Preparation.

JESUS most truly lives in the Holy Eucharist.

His mysterious life, subject to those peculiar laws which He submits to in His sacramental condition, subsists, as it were, entombed in a mystic winding sheet. Our Lord preserves this secrecy in order that we should touch His holy Body with less fear, though not with less respect; with more familiarity, although with profound humility. Let us then often go to entreat Him at Holy Communion to preserve and increase the life of our souls.

I. *Where is the life of our souls to be found?*

Jesus says expressly, 'I am come that they may have life.' St. John Chrysostom remarks, that whenever our Lord speaks of the Holy Eucharist, He promises to give us life, because the desire of life is an universal passion. Holy Communion bestows upon us an admirable life; for Jesus is the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body. The more often we communicate worthily, the more closely

are we allied to Christ, and the more closely we are united to Him, the more of life do we possess. 'In Communion,' says a saint, 'our life is full of God.'

Until now, I have not sufficiently reflected upon the truth that God, Who is all in all, penetrates me through and through with His presence much more completely than the rays of the sun which enter into my room fill it with light. The air I breathe is full of God. The earth which I tread under foot is full of God. I am myself also plunged in the immensity of God: yet more, He is present in me, present in every part of my being. Shall I use my feet to lead me into sin? No; for they are full of God. Shall I suffer my hands to rest in idleness? No; for God, Who is sovereign activity, has taken possession of them. Shall I permit my tongue to utter falsehood, evil speaking, raillery? No; for God occupies my mouth: He is upon my lips. All my senses, like my faculties, are full of God. It is not permitted me to feel that divine and intangible presence at all times, and yet by the light of faith I am able to say always, God is *there*. Yes, nothing can be more true; He is without me and within me.

But now Jesus Christ in Holy Communion is pleased to be still more immediately present with me, that He may give me His life. O greatness of divine love, to which I owe so many great and wonderful benefits, may I be worthy to receive them frequently!

O Jesus! condescend to make me fit to receive Thee more perfectly. My unworthiness covers me with confusion, but I am the object of that divine love which makes me desire to live by Thee and in Thee. Unite me closely to Thy Divine Person, as to that immovable foundation upon which my spiritual life is built.

II. *The support of our supernatural life.*

In the natural creation, every kind of life possesses an aliment suitable to its needs.

The supernatural life gives to the soul in baptism a kind of nourishment, such as is felt in the natural life. Its true food should descend from heaven. And therefore the Word Incarnate has reserved to Himself the feeding of our souls. How great must be the life which is supported by God. But how does He nourish us? It is by means of bread which does not differ externally from our ordinary bread, that Jesus prepares the food which is to preserve the life of our souls. The various kinds of food sustain an important relation to our physical life; by assimilating them we develope and repair our strength. But the act by which our souls receive the food suitable to their spiritual nature is much more solemn, more necessary. The sacred bread acts upon them with such force, that they cannot receive it with indifference: it must be to them either an increase of life, or spiritual death.

It is important that I should communicate often. As I need to repair my bodily strength daily by several repasts, so do I need to seek in Holy Communion, in which the Food of Heaven descends into my soul, the true support of my supernatural life.

How right it is to take no material food before we receive the nourishment of our souls at the Holy Table, and demand from Him who is the Life Eternal, the principle and the support of our immortal life! How good is Jesus in permitting me by Holy Communion always to nourish my soul with His Divine Flesh before I think of providing my body with its needful food! It is His will that the Holy Eucharist should, as it were, take root in me, and that my natural life, spiritualized as it were by Communion, should be prepared under the special care of my God, and even

by His own hand, for its final and glorious consummation.

What! shall I then fear to eat of the Sacred Bread, when I willingly obey the call to partake of my bodily food?

I thank Thee, O my Jesus! for having led me to comprehend the greatness of that life, which is the prelude to life eternal, and prepares us for it. But grant that my faith in the virtue of Thy Holy Eucharist may enable me to find in it the increase and perfection of my life: I implore Thee to grant me this favour. I feel my need of Thee, O Life and Hope of my soul, and I beseech Thee to increase my faith, my confidence, and my love of Thee.

III. *Desiring the Food of Life.*

According to their differing constitutions, some men eat more, some less than others, just as all souls do not hunger equally after the Bread of Life, though all need to receive it. The life and strength of the Christian is contained chiefly in the Holy Eucharist. We must communicate or die! But the attraction of our souls towards the Sacred Bread is an immense grace which is given us by the Holy Spirit. It is He that excites the hunger of our souls after that august Sacrament. I could not lead a supernatural life unless our Lord united Himself to my heart: for what but the Body of our Lord in Holy Communion can possibly appease the immense desire which my soul feels, even upon earth, for God?

How many things have I desired without desiring Jesus Christ? I have longed after pleasures, after all kinds of trifling satisfactions which have passed away like a dream. For how long a time did I not think of everything in the world except of the Food of my soul? While I lived the factitious life of the world, I suffered my soul to waste away, almost to die, and I did not consider that Jesus is the Life.

Whence came the grace which has unsealed my eyes, which has shown me the only object worthy of my desire? O tender mercy of the Heart of Jesus, which came so *far*, which descended so *low* to seek me, and to cause me to ascend so *high*, that above the supernatural life which I now enjoy there remains only heaven! Oh, how vile does the world appear to me now, compared to Jesus, the Living Bread.

Lord Jesus, I praise Thee for causing me to desire the Holy Eucharist, I thank Thee for causing me to love it so exceedingly. Grant that I may ever more ardently desire that Sacred Bread, although I feel that it is only a means of arriving at the plenitude of life.

IV. *The operation of Jesus in our supernatural life.*

If I fully comprehended the sense of those wonderful words—'He that eateth Me, even He shall live by Me.' I should believe that Communion is not merely an increase of grace, but an augmentation of life. Jesus Christ points out to us plainly that His Body is the aliment, the nourishment, of our life. Yes, consoling thought, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the true Bread of the supernatural life, which raises us very near to heaven, by detaching us with exquisite attractions from all our earthly bonds.

When we feel that by means of the Holy Eucharist, we live by the very life of Jesus, how can we desire anything besides? or how can we fail of desiring to communicate daily?

Lord Jesus, remember Thy word, which is Sovereign Truth, and render my union with Thee so close that it may confess *one life* with Thine. And as the heart is the centre of life, and as where our treasure is, there must our heart be also, grant that my heart possessing Thee, may live in Thee alone. Grant that hereafter I may seek only Thee, may regard only Thee, may desire Thy glory only. Direct my thoughts,

attract my affections, rule over all my actions: dwell upon my lips that no words may issue from them save those which have for their object Thy love, Thy service, and the salvation of souls.

V. *Let us come to the Life.*

This invitation which Christians used formerly to address to each other for the purpose of stirring themselves up to frequent and fervent Communions, makes it evident to us how deeply they must have felt that Jesus is our Life. Now *love* is essential to the extension of that blessed life. He who loves passes into the object beloved. This is just what Jesus does in Communion, it is what He is now about to do to you. In corresponding to His love you will give back to Jesus, by whom you are beloved, the life which He will after a manner have poured into you.

Let us come to Jesus! Let us come to draw life from His Heart, and to give it back to Him again by our love. Let us come to ask Him for strength to walk in the thorny and narrow road which leads to eternal life. If we have one life, one action with Him, His strength also will most surely be ours also. If the interests of Jesus are indissolubly bound up with ours, will not the same means assure our common triumph?

O my Jesus, Thy love to me is equal to Thy power, since when Thou desirest to feed my soul, it is Thy will to give it no other aliment but Thyself. I am happy, I am even astonished at my own happiness; but suffer me still further to recall to Thee Thy promise, to *live* in those who should be partakers of Thy most blessed Body and Blood. What great things may I not expect from Thy life-giving Spirit dwelling and abiding in me? I will watch more than ever carefully over myself that I may not fall into sin, and the fear of enfeebling Thy life in me will preserve me from it, equally with the fear of losing it altogether.

Act of Thanksgiving.

In the first few moments immediately after Communion adore our Lord. Do not speak much to Him. Joy, reverence, and love ought to fill your whole soul. You now possess Jesus Christ, enjoy His Divine Flesh. It will penetrate your mind, your heart, your senses, your whole being.

Implore our Lord to cause His Blood to flow in your veins. The effect of this favour should be to make you live with the very life of Jesus Christ.

Entreat Him to maintain you in that supernatural life by the grace of the most Holy Eucharist, and to augment it in you according to the desires of His Heart.

I. *I am the Life.*

Jesus, in Holy Communion, imparts to us His life, and in giving this to us He dies to His mystical life, without ceasing to dwell in us by His sacramental life. O what a beautiful, what a noble life it is, thus to live in the life of a God. When you reflect upon this great mystery, let not your soul fall a prey to fear. Do not be afraid of Jesus. And yet the venerable J. B. Viannay, curé of Ars, said to a person who begged him to speak a few words which might tend to revive his fervent love for Holy Communion, 'If you knew what it was that you received in communicating, you would die,' probably from love rather than fear.

Jesus is to me the source of life, of that supernatural life which causes the soul to live eternally. Do I sufficiently consider the greatness which this life confers upon me? If one dreams of leading a noble life in this noble world, where should we find it but in that which has God Himself for its beginning, continuation, and end? It is only the Christian who leads a noble life, for he alone lives by God, for God,

and in God. This noble life obliges me to make every effort to strengthen it, and to suffer it to expand freely. But if it is to expand and increase in me, it is absolutely necessary that the sacrifice should cost me *something* daily.

O Lord Jesus, Thou who hast created me! Thou by whom I live and in whom I desire always to live, Thou art my greatness! As our natural life cannot be compressed into any part, but must animate and pervade the whole being, so Thou, my Jesus, art in all my soul; Thou dost animate all its senses and faculties without exception. Make me to live by Thee alone; leave nothing in me to the rule of my own nature. Ever weaken more and more my earthly nature, which strives to gain the mastery over Thy grace; and permit me not to regret that which Thou takest away, nor to strive to replace it here below.

Give me grace to consecrate to Thee my double life, natural and supernatural, and voluntarily to do nothing that can weaken it or destroy it in me.

II. *The perception of Life.*

It is not the will of our Lord that we should be without any perception of His presence in Holy Communion.

'It happens sometimes,' says St. Francis de Sales, 'that our Lord imperceptibly sheds forth into our hearts a certain sweetness which is a sure sign and token of His presence therein. And when our Lord causes His presence to be felt in this manner, all the faculties of our being are attracted and turn themselves towards Him, that they may become united to that ineffable and heavenly sweetness."*

But He does not always confer upon us that sweet perception of His presence, and we must not fall into the common error of subordinating the exterior

* *Treatise of the Love of God.*

work of Jesus to the sensible effects of His presence with us.

Say to Him: Lord, what have I to do in this world if it be not to live by Thee and in Thee? and if I live by Thee, how is it that I am not more sensibly affected by Thy mercy and Thy love? If even now you do not feel your heart melted, carry the complaint of your insensibility to our Lord, and ask Him to shed into your heart a single drop of His Blood, which should be able to melt a heart of stone. Or complain to Him of His refusing you the enjoyment of His love, as St. Anselm said to our Lord, 'If my soul possesses Thee, why does it not feel Thee present?' Finally, pray Him no longer to delay this blessed gift, to hide Himself from you no longer. You may venture even, you who have but now communicated, to say to Him: My God, why does not my soul feel Thee, *since* it possesses Thee? Never will you be able sufficiently to feel the depth and reality of your happiness: but even if you are not sensible of it, your faith should assure you that it is complete.

O Jesus, I have nought to offer Thee but a heart defiled and withered by the breath of this world. And yet, while openly confessing my unworthiness to receive Thy consolations, I desire them and implore Thee to confer them upon me. Deign to accept my prayer, make my soul feel Thee as its Centre, its Beatitude, its Life. Ah, if the consciousness of my own utter unworthiness can bring me nearer to Thee, I shall never more envy the souls who receive a large portion of Thy favours. Let me not be so unhappy as to live loving Thee but little and feebly. I bless Thee for having bestowed upon my soul such a measure of liberty as permits it to say to Thee, without doubt or fear, My God, I love Thee. I say this from the bottom of my heart; and even though Thou shouldst never see fit to bestow upon me a sensible enjoyment of Thy love, yet will I

repeat this act: 'My God, I love Thee,' even to my latest breath.

III. *The manifestations of Life.*

To live is to think, to act, to love. The whole conduct of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist is a sufficient proof of the fact that He loves us, thinks of us, and acts for us. We ought to show Him by our whole conduct that we think of Him, that we act for Him, that we love Him. I sometimes find it impossible to *think*, to pray, during my act of thanksgiving. But to think of Jesus, to pray to Him, to love Him, is a grace which we must receive from God. Perhaps, therefore, I have not asked Him for it, or if I have asked for it, I have perhaps been impatient at not immediately receiving it. If I seek well for the motive of this impatience, I shall perceive that it arises from too great haste in concluding my thanksgiving. Our Lord does not immediately answer my request, because He wishes me to ask more earnestly, to remain longer at His Feet; and in my impatience I may perhaps arise and depart just as the gift of prayer was going to descend from Him into my heart.

My only vow, O my Jesus, is to consecrate to Thee every moment of my life, to devote it to all the labours which I may find to do in Thy service. Suffer not vanity, vainglory, or presumption to hinder me from working for Thee. By Holy Communion Thou hast so completely taken possession of my whole being that no part of it remains to be taken from Thy service, and devoted to the service of any earthly thing.

IV. *Holy Communion raises the whole substance of our lives.*

The highest point of sanctity seems to be in man the highest degree of sanctifying grace, from which

grace he receives the greatest virtues. By Holy Communion our Lord increases our degree of sanctifying grace and our virtues. The acts of virtue which we perform give to our life a degree of elevation proportioned to our fidelity to the measure of grace which is granted to us. What are your virtues?—you who possess Jesus Christ, who is the very sanctity of God? Where is your wisdom, if you do not imbibe it from the doctrine of Christ? Where is your justice, but in its holy precepts.

Where is your temperance, by which is understood a just moderation in all lawful things of this life, if you find it not in the example of our Lord? From whence do you derive your strength but from His merits? your purity, but from the Blood of Christ? your charity, but from His Sacred Heart? It is this queen of virtues that you should especially strive to acquire, because it is the living virtue of the Holy Eucharist, and the most beautiful fruit of Holy Communion. But be gentle in acquiring virtues. We are so essentially weak, that the use of force even for a good object leads us into a certain harshness, as if the practice of virtue was an unnatural act. Every one who practises the virtue of patience, which requires such great strength of soul, as well as grace and sweetness, imparts to his virtue a superhuman beauty in the sight of our Lord.

Divine Author of my existence, never can I thank Thee as I ought. My soul responds with gratitude, it aspires to reach Thee, and to do so it must ascend far above the world, far above all its thoughts, desires, and affections; far above itself; it must even ascend where Thou art. It is a bold thought, but it is not too bold, for do I not meet Thee always at the Altar? In the Sacred Host heaven itself descends to a level with me! When shall my soul ascend to Thy level, O my God, and there continually dwell? That will it do when Thou shalt deign to grant the petition which

I now make, that I may daily die unto myself to live in God.

V. *Death allied to life.*

In the Holy Eucharist Jesus Christ effects a marvellous alliance of death with life; by Communion He lays down His supernatural life, and preserves us from death. This may teach us an important lesson: that since it is for our sakes that Jesus assumes His sacramental life, which life He hourly assumes in the consecration and lays down for our benefit when we consume the sacred species, while still retaining the same sacramental life by His continual residence in the ciborium. Since it is for us that He performs these acts of love, we ought most truly to live in Him and He in us. Now He cannot *live* unless He also *reign* in us; nor can His reign be partial—it must be sovereign and undivided.

If in the Sacred Host Jesus imparts to me His life under an appearance of death, is it not to teach me that I must strive to die to my own will, that He may live more perfectly in me? Remembering this, how will it be possible for me to use my hands or feet for any sinful or unprofitable purpose, when He was this very day made one with my whole being? Or my tongue, so lately touched by the Sacred Body of our Lord, shall I dare to utter with it one word which could possibly displease Him? I must also, taking refuge in the Sacred Heart, endure with patience the trials which occur to me between each Communion. I may sometimes feel myself lacerated as it were by thorns, or tortured by those nameless sufferings which are inflicted upon us by association with characters entirely out of harmony with our own; this shall be my daily martyrdom. Jesus will give me grace to endure it with patience.

Instruct me, O my Saviour, in the great science of self-sacrifice, teach me not only to live, but to die for

Thee. Thou hast shown me that love is manifested by sacrificing ourselves for the object of our love; give me that share of suffering and tears which is my part in the heritage of Thy Cross, and if I desire to reign with Thee hereafter, may I not refuse to be crucified with Thee on earth.

Conclusion.

Let us love to examine with the eyes of faith the progress which the supernatural life is making in our souls. It is infused into us first in holy baptism. It is abundantly bestowed upon us in the Holy Eucharist. Hereafter, in heaven, we shall enter into its fulness at the hands of Jesus Christ. Let us live with this desire and this hope ever before our eyes, and our object will most certainly be attained.

THIRD MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE DIVINE CALL.

Preparation.

Our Lord calls us to the Holy Table by the precepts of the Church, by the voice of our spiritual guide, by the inspirations of grace, or by a sensible attraction to the Holy Table. Hasten with faith at the Saviour's call, He wills to fill your soul with holy joy, to lend a favourable ear to your prayers, and to dispense to you his greatest benefits.

I. '*The Master is there*' (St. John x.).

Whatever path we may take on earth, we are certain to meet with Jesus Christ, who casts 'a gracious smile' upon our wants, our desires, our prayers. He is our Guest in our earthly exile, He is

also a captive here below. On whatever side we turn our eyes, a cross, a trial says to us, 'The Master is there.' Love retains Jesus in the tabernacle more strongly than the nails affixed Him to the sacred tree. A prisoner there, He sacrifices for us the liberty which He confers upon us.

He is, then, the Prisoner of love; He refuses to leave me for a moment, but is not this because He desires that I should often approach Him there? How could I ever have endured the bitter sadness of my life had I not been able to look towards the Church and say, Jesus is there? had He not given me to feel that He is really present with us *there?* And when I know that He abides *there* for my sake, how can I fail to go to Him? or being there, how can I quickly tear myself away? What happiness to be enabled to say further, Jesus is THERE to give Himself to me!

O most dear Master, prostrate before Thee in the Blessed Sacrament, which I am about to receive, I believe simply and sincerely that Thou dost give me Thy Body, Thy Blood, Thy Humanity, which reigns above in the brightness of eternal glory. What joy to be thus united to Thee! But how great are the duties this privilege imposes upon me! Give me that ardent love with which Communion should inspire me in Thy service.

II. '*I stand at the door and knock*' (Apoc. iii. 20.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ should always find the door of my heart open to Him; but so highly does this Blessed Saviour respect our liberty, that He stands at the door until it pleases us to open it. He pursues us with His tenderness, He endures our resistance patiently, He is never discouraged, never weary, but waits for a favourable moment to enter and obtain the wished-for love. Even if we refuse to receive Him,

He bears with us still. Instead of departing in anger, He waits!

How often has Jesus already knocked at the door of my heart since the day on which I first received Him? He has knocked as many times as He has called me to His Holy Table. When I sin, He provokes me to remorse and to repentance. He knocks to awaken me to fervour. If I open not to Him for awhile, but seem to forget my Heavenly Friend, He mourns to find me so deaf to His call, so forgetful of His love, so prompt to turn my thoughts to other objects. My remorse for past offences and my desire to love Jesus more, are two powerful incentives, which excite my soul to combut all the seductions and pleasures of the world. Their sharp pressure has often saved me from receiving a mortal wound.

It is indeed too true, Lord Jesus, that I have often refused to give Thee entrance into my heart. Conscious of deserving Thy reproaches, fearing to meet thine eye, I have chosen to turn a deaf ear to Thy gentle solicitations. Too deeply absorbed in transitory things, and certain of Thy return at some future time, I have said impatiently, 'Wait, O my God, I am busy with other things, other persons. I am thinking of myself, of my dress, of my pleasures—wait!' And not until some mistake or disappointment, weariness or remorse, came to turn my wandering thoughts to Thee, not till the hour of sorrow, did I arise and open to my God.

O Jesus, knock loudly at the door of my heart, enter it as a Sovereign, and bestow upon me the abundant graces of Thy presence. Open to me also, when in my turn, during my last moments, I come to knock at the door of Thy mercy. Hide me all my life long in the shadow of Thy sanctuary, and in the great and awful Day of Judgment suffer me not to be separated from Thee.

III. *Surge—'Arise.'*

The soul in seeking that invisible Being who is its eternal happiness, obeys its truest impulses and satisfies its greatest needs. The absence of God is the soul's greatest torment, while His presence becomes under certain circumstances a source of disquiet and alarm. This is because our souls know God sufficiently to long for Him, but not sufficiently to be always absorbed in Him; hence come distractions and inconstancy; we have always need of God, and yet are always ready to forget Him. We experience every moment in our daily life the power and the love of Jesus, but, shut up within the narrow prison of our earthly existence, we do not sufficiently realize it; we are too slow to seek by faith and prayer the higher regions of His presence.

Be quick to answer the voice of Jesus. If your passions weaken its force, or make you deaf to its appeals, impose silence upon them. Collect your thoughts. Drive away all those worldly thoughts which throng in upon your imagination even at the foot of the Altar, and hasten to obey that heavenly voice.

Jesus beheld me surrounded by the things of this world, absorbed in some, tormented by others; He pitied my misery, but I did not always listen to His voice. Then I hungered, but my hunger remained unsatisfied; I wept, and my tears were not wiped away; for what in this world could give me true food or comfort? And yet I continued to love that world which promised so much but performed so little!

Call me yet again, Lord Jesus, my sorrows have rendered me more obedient, more docile. I thank Thee for all the favours Thou hast conferred upon me, and more especially that Thou hast never permitted me to find permanent and tranquil enjoyment *in any created thing*. I have suffered everywhere and always.

As I know not how to advance Thy glory by any useful action, permit me never to grow weary of suffering for Thee, and grant that by means of every fresh sorrow I may advance one step nearer to Thee. Make me live upon the Cross, if such be Thy divine will; but grant that I may die in thine arms, quite close to Thy Sacred Heart.

IV. *Propera amica—'Haste thee, My beloved'* (Cant. ii. 8).

Our Lord addresses me, and I listen with pleasure to His heavenly voice. He desires me to come near to Him and to *hasten* my arrival. Then, foreseeing that if I cast one backward glance, either at the world which I am forsaking or upon my own heart, I shall lose the power and will to obey His call, He says to me: Fear not, art thou not My beloved and My friend? The sweet sympathy of friendship unites us; fear not, then, to come unto Me. Hasten rather, before the time of grace is past.

If I am astonished that our Lord should press me so tenderly to come to Him, St. Gregory of Nyssa bids me consider that 'No one can possibly comprehend with what ardent desire our Lord, who is Infinite Goodness, seeks to take up His abode in the faithful soul, because the soul of man is His natural dwelling-place and, as it were, the *centre* in which He loves to repose.' It is a great misfortune for the soul to lose a single moment of His presence, to wander from Him for an instant. It is His will that I should have but one care, to be faithful to Him; one occupation, to please Him; one desire, to love Him well; that I may be spared the bitter remorse which is expressed in these words: '*Ah, if I had known!*' He desires that *I should know now*, that I may not regret my ignorance bitterly *hereafter*, when it will be *too late.*

O my Divine Master, I ought indeed to lose no more time in asking Thee to bestow upon me all those graces and feelings which I desire to offer unto Thee.

Holy Communion is a very great act, but it is also one of very great delicacy. I ought to prepare for it with calmness; and the fear of being unprepared raises a certain amount of agitation in my mind. I never have more need of calmness than at the moment of Communion, and it is precisely at that time that I am most apt to be deprived of it. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to enable me to come to Thy Altar with feelings of *love* rather than *fear*, for is it not at this time that the love and compassion of Thy Heart are most especially made manifest? I implore Thy mercy, I trust in Thy love, and thus I can hasten to meet Thee without fear.

V. *Veni—'Come unto Me.'*

Jesus does not call us to come to Him because of any advantage which He finds in drawing near to us, for He can find none: He seeks us in our weakness and our misery, only to do us good. Do not be afraid, then, even if you have fallen into any fault, when you hear Jesus call you to His Holy Table. It is precisely because He sees you are inclined to turn away from it that He desires to clasp you in His arms and assure you that He has not cast you off. Come, then, His love will never fail you.

'Fear not,' Jesus says to me, it is I that call you, I who know your sins and miseries far better than you do yourself. I knew them all when I first instituted the Sacrament of My Love. And it is with loving compassion for your infirmities that I summon you to My Holy Table. Come to your God, who has loved you from all eternity, who knows the clay out of which you were formed by His hands. Trust in My love and mercy; have faith in My goodness; give free course to your holy desire to partake of My Body and Blood.

Love Me, for 'love covereth a multitude of sins. What sweet and affecting words are these, O my God. They touch my heart, but the feeling of my unworthi-

ness has taken such deep possession of my soul that it hesitates, it trembles, although it desires so ardently to approach Thee. I am a prey to darkness which terrifies me, but I am still firmly resolved to cast myself entirely upon Thy mercy. Yes, Lord, my trust in Thee is sincere; for even were I to behold the gulf of destruction open and ready to swallow me up, I would still raise up mine eyes unto Thee, and I would hope, because Thou hast *bidden* me to hope in Thy mercy. At the Holy Table that mercy will not fail me; Thou art offered upon the Altar to close the mouth of hell, and to open Thy Heart to receive my guilty but repentant soul. Come, Lord Jesus.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Learn to receive with humble joy the visit of our Lord. You have perhaps kept Him waiting long at the door of your heart: be not astonished if He makes you wait for His consolations.

Adore Him with your thoughts fixed on Him rather than on yourself. At the instant of Communion you should *see*, *hear*, and *love* Jesus alone.

I. '*Here I am.*'

It is sweet to come near to Jesus; it is sweeter still to receive Him; but the greatest happiness of all is to abide with Him.

I have communicated joyfully, because our Lord has mercifully regarded the lowliness of His handmaid. His goodness encourages me to hope that the strong, sweet bands of union with Him, which have been drawn so closely around my soul, will never be dissolved again. But remembering my inconstancy, my variableness, I may not dare to say: Nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ; for I fear myself more than any outward circumstances. I will not cloud over my present joy by mournful anticipations. I am happy in that I can say with hope and confidence:

'Jesus, the Beloved of my soul has come to me. I hold Him, and I will never more suffer Him to depart from me!'

Lord Jesus, it is because I feel Thy presence in my soul that I am so happy, so overwhelmed with joy. Ah, may all earthly feelings be silent within me, and leave me to the undisturbed enjoyment of a grace which raises me far above earthly things. I know not how to express the love which I feel for Thee; but Thou knowest my heart. Grant me that perseverance without which the possession of Thy love cannot be assured to me. Grant that I may persevere in loving Thee, and that I may implore this grace from Thee up to the last moment of my life.

II. '*Rejoice my heart*' (Prov. xxvii. 11).

Jesus Christ desires to satisfy to the full His love for me; it is therefore necessary that He should not discover in my heart the smallest *atom* that could be displeasing to Him. Ah, how far am I from possessing all those dispositions which should rejoice the Heart of my God! As I neither possess nor can obtain them, I will offer to my Lord the Heart of Mary, and I will entreat Him to rejoice in that pure and well-beloved Heart.

O my Lord Jesus, I hear with confusion and joy this sweet invitation which Thou dost address to my inward being. How gladly would I give Thee joy by my purity, my love, my fidelity, by my ardent devotion to Thee in the Blessed Sacrament. But I know that Thou canst not find in me that superabounding joy which in some favoured souls may make amends to Thee for the indifference of many Christians. My coldness makes me sad; melt it by Thy love. My unworthiness puts me to the blush; cover it with the robe of Thy holiness. My poverty is extreme; enrich it with Thy infinite merits. I have so often communicated, and yet I am not worthy

to appear before thine eyes; but pardon my unfaithfulness to Thy grace. And if, in spite of my fears, this unworthy heart, so different from Mary's, should still be admitted to partake of her happiness, it will still offer up to Thee its cherished prayer, that it may love Thee more.

Cause me to love Thee, O my Jesus, and I ask no more.

III.—*'It is time to awake from sleep.'*

Jesus is in your heart: He fills it with His grace; it is now time to produce the outward fruits of Holy Communion, and to show your love of your neighbour. It is your duty to spend and be spent for others, but you should do it with sweetness. Like St. Theresa, before you pass from one action to another in the course of the day, offer yourself to our Lord, and say to Him: 'What wilt Thou that I should do? I am ready, whatever it may be.'

Ah, how you will one day regret all the vacancies which have been left in your life by those occasions in which you did not perform your actions directly for God, if you do not at once prevent them by a pure intention in all. I have done many things, merely to please the world or to satisfy myself. Before I began them I said to myself: There will be time enough afterwards to begin to work for God. But how heavily does that badly-employed time now weigh upon my conscience! How I regret that I gave so little of it to Jesus! What have I done for Him since my last Communion? How many hours have I spent idly, perhaps even foolishly? If I *advance* not in His service, I shall infallibly *recede;* and if I depart from Him, O whither shall I go? To sin, to death! Jesus requires of me an *active* submission, which can refuse nothing to His grace, and a *passive* submission, which will endure whatever it may please Him to send. There is only one word required of

us whatever may happen: 'It is the will of God, and it is mine also.'

My sweetest Master, it is full time that I should begin to work for Thee. The sands of my life are fast running out, and how many of my years are already swallowed up in eternity, without my being able to say with full certainty that they have been employed for Thy glory! I know what my duties are, and this knowledge enables me to serve Thee in the way which Thou hast appointed for me. But grant me a persevering determination to serve Thee, and above all grant that I may remember to ask Thee for it every day.

IV. '*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer*' (Apoc. xi. 10).

Whenever Jesus enters, He brings His Cross with Him, and inspires us with a greater or less desire (according to the design of His wisdom with respect to us) to partake of His sufferings. All the saints have experienced this desire. Mary of Jesus, a famous servant of God in her time, said: 'If sorrows were sold in the market, how fast I should run to buy them!' This was because she had great faith in the words of Jesus Christ, and was not afraid of what He recommended her not to fear.

Jesus Christ has come down into my heart as upon another Altar, where He completes His sacrifice. I will offer unto Him the sorrows which hover over my life, as an act of thanksgiving perpetuated in my whole being; and I will entreat Him to bless the little victim whom He deigns to offer with Himself.

O most pure Flesh of the Lamb, without spot or stain, strengthen me with Thy divine strength, that so I may pass fearless and unharmed through the tribulations of this life; make me escape by the grace of the Holy Eucharist from the dejection into which I should be cast by adversity, if I had to strive against

it in my own strength. Deliver me from those enemies which are within me, and from those which harass me outwardly; suffer me not to fall a prey to any of them. They expect a certain victory over me; but if it is certain on account of my weakness, I trust that Thou wilt render it impossible by reason of Thy powerful grace.

V. *'I will make Thee sit near my throne'* (Psalm xliv. 10).

Such is the magnificent promise made to us by Jesus, not for the few years that we have yet to pass on earth, but for eternity! Such are the hopes which Jesus confirms to us each time that we receive Him! Would they be so certain were it not for the manifold sufferings which are to us, as it were, an earnest of their realization?

Since Jesus deigns to promise me so high a destiny, I will not quit Him until I also have made Him some promises. I have heretofore been too liberal with such promises; but if they were sincerely made, my constancy has failed me, for they have not been perfectly kept. I have renewed them repeatedly, without keeping them more faithfully, and yet I am the recipient of a promise that cannot fail. I can trust His word who is the Truth, but alas! can Jesus depend on mine?

O Jesus, before I leave Thee, what promises shall I make unto Thee? Shall I vow to combat my faults? to strive against my besetting sin? not to be governed by my feelings? to bear annoyances and discomforts? to endure suffering patiently? It is very difficult! I fear that I shall not keep my promises; but when I feel my heart about to fail me, I will say: My God, I love Thee; help me, O my God; I offer to Thee my trouble: suffer me not to be overcome by it.

My Jesus, make me think unceasingly of Thee. I would that it were not necessary for me to make this

prayer, that my heart might turn as naturally to Thee as the needle to the pole. When St. Aloysius Gonzaga was sick, he was forbidden to think so continually of Thee, but I am recommended to think of Thee more frequently, and to forget myself. O Lord, how could I lose sight of Thy Divine Majesty? One who has just communicated ought no more to be able to forget Thee, or to lose sight of Thee, than if he were one of the angels in heaven. Since Thou dost condescend to permit me to share their happiness, it is just that I should also share their love. Cause me to love Thee; and may I remember to tell Thee that I love Thee a thousand times in every day.

Conclusion.

The soul suffers when it is not faithful to grace given—prompt to follow out the Divine inspirations. If you have been so unhappy as to experience this suffering, do not expose yourself to it again. Learn, with the help of prayer, to give to our Lord everything that He requires of you, to do everything that He commands you, and to come to Him as often as He calls for you; for the peace of your soul depends upon this condition alone.

FOURTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE SACRED BANQUET.

Preparation.

To eat food at certain times is an action essentially necessary to our physical life. Our spiritual part, the soul, requires food just as much as the body. Jesus, who has constituted bread the chief nourishment of man, offers to us in the Eucharistic Banquet the Bread of Life which is HIMSELF. Let us partake often of that Heavenly Bread; It will supply us with the strength necessary for us in our daily labour, and it will endue our souls with power to triumph over death.

I. *The place of the Banquet.*

Man upon earth is like a *great temple* in the little temple of the universe, says St. Gregory of Nazianzen, to show us that the visible creation cannot render to God a homage so acceptable as that which He receives from us, who are intelligent beings. The glory of God, too confined as it were in the vast spaces of immensity, takes pleasure in abiding in the faithful soul. The temples dedicated to His Divine Majesty are of great *height*, imaging forth our *hope*, and built of an incorruptible stone to shadow forth the purity which should shine in the dwelling-place of God. The hardness of the stone represents the immutability of our Faith and the constancy we must show in the service of God.

The temples should be turned towards the east, because God is the object towards Whom our souls are attracted by the force of their nature. Our heart is the Altar upon which there should burn nought

besides the fire of divine love, and the incense of prayer; but profane or sinful love extinguishes that holy flame, and prevents the incense of our prayers from ascending to the Lord.

Does Jesus find many of these temples amongst Christians? In how many of their hearts does not self-love still retain its dominion? Do jealousy, ill-feeling, malice, or animosity, never find access to my heart through my feelings and emotions? My emotions ought only to ruffle the surface of my heart, without penetrating deeper; but if my thoughts, my conversations, my actions, are light and frivolous, or, perhaps sinful; or if, while appearing to lead the life of a Christian, I fulfil my duties with a kind of careless indifference, then the tone of my whole life is lowered; light, peace, and elevation disappear. My heart loses its vital strength, and becomes like a desert, wasted by dissipation. What does Jesus think of Communions made in this state of miserable coldness? Ah, I know but too well!

O Jesus, enter into my heart, that little temple which was created only for Thy glory, but into which so many alien affections have made their way; pardon my infirmities, O my God! But suffer not my heart to remain without an altar, nor without perfume. It is just that my heart should suffer awhile, and that the place where Thy supreme rights have been forgotten rather than denied, should be purified by sorrow. But grant that I may recover that liberty, that interior purity which always exists where Thy reign is unquestioned and absolute.

Lord Jesus, condescend to enter into my soul, even mine; and if my heart be found hard and insensible as stone, strike it with the hammer of Thy grace, and cause it to bring forth the sparks of heavenly aspirations!

II. '*Jesus Christ hath prepared a table.*'

Our Lord prepares the Eucharistic Banquet in every place, and invites us to it at all times, by the precepts of the Church, by the voice of our spiritual guides, and by a sensible attraction to Holy Communion. This is the hour in which we are called to partake of it. Come with faith, and sit down to this heavenly Banquet of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, and take your fill of His sacred delights. Pour out your soul in gratitude to Jesus, who invites you to it, who admits you to such close communion with Him, that He may lend a favourable ear to your petitions, and bestow upon you His greatest benefits.

Can it be possible for Jesus to express His desire to bring me near to Him more strongly, than by a direct invitation to His Table. No favour upon earth can equal this, for it proceeds from an excess of love, of which the secret, with that also of my predestination, is hidden in His Heart. Am I able to tell Him in return that I have ever received His love with eager thankfulness, and that I have at present one desire only, to make the best use of all His bounties?

O Lord and my God, I fear and yet long to receive Thee. I fear my own misery, my sins and stains. I fear lest I should be found without that wedding garment, in which only I can enter Thy presence without reproof. Grant to me all holy dispositions; grant that, drawn powerfully by Thy grace, I may rise above this world and myself, and may attain even unto Thee.

III. '*There was bread placed there.*'

If bread be the daily food of our natural life, why should not the Holy Eucharist, which we may justly term the sovereign food of the supernatural life, be made also our *daily* Bread? Our Lord, in choosing for the form of this Sacrament, a substance in such

common and general use, intended to express His intention of becoming our *habitual* Food.

Let us then who desire to live in Jesus Christ, communicate as frequently as possible, with true fervour, and thus we can never communicate too often: as also it would be better never to communicate at all, than to do so without *love*.

But sensible devotion is not at all necessary, it is sufficient that we be exempt from mortal sin, and from affection for venial sin, provided we also desire to fulfil the will of God.

Jesus has prepared for me the Bread of the strong; at the Altar He dispenses the Bread which came down from heaven, which is more delicious than manna to the spiritual taste. How comforting it is to know that, 'he that eateth of this Bread shall be delivered from eternal death!'

'O admirable goodness of Christ,' says St. Bonaventure, 'He that is my God, my Love, gives Himself to me as Food, He who is the beatitude of angels becomes my daily Bread!' If I cannot always receive Him really, may my soul at least never fail to feed upon Him spiritually!

O my Jesus, give me this day my daily Bread; may I always hunger after it. May it be Thy will for me, that *this day* may mean every day without any *to-morrow*. It is Thy desire that we should come *daily*, but would not one day in each month or week be sufficient? Ah, but the soul, any more than the body, is not fitted to endure a long fast. Every day I have need of bread, without it my life would quickly be changed into death. And therefore it is that I must communicate daily. Since it is Thy will that I should do so, deign to realize it in me. May Thy love and Thy presence take from me all will or the power to wander away from Thee.

IV. *And Wine.*

At the consecration, Jesus changes the wine which is contained in the chalice, into His Blood. This Divine Blood, celestial dew which the Heart of Jesus distils upon earth, may be called the *rain which waters* the soul. From this Divine sprinkling the soul derives strength and refreshment. It will grow and increase in virtue, in proportion to the degree in which the influence of Jesus shall penetrate its thoughts, animate its words, and direct its operations. Fear not to drink too freely at the Holy Table of the wine which makes virgins. That fountain can never be exhausted. 'When your heart is filled with it,' says St. Augustine, 'it will gush forth in streams of praise and thanksgiving.'

But if the sweetness of this life be so great and heavenly, I must in gratitude be prepared to drink freely also of that bitter cup of the sufferings of Christ, and to embrace His Cross and humiliations, despising the shame, and abasing the pride and reluctance of my sinful heart. I resolve to bear my cross so long as God sees fit to lay it upon me, and I will trust His grace and mercy to give me strength to bear it well and patiently.

My soul thirsteth for Thee, O Precious Blood, which issued from my Saviour's Side, Fountain of grace and source of all my confidence. My God, grant that by the power of that Divine Blood, I may lose after every Communion something of *self*, and may acquire more of *Thee*. Give Thy Body and Thy Blood to me, poor hungry and thirsty traveller, wearied with my journey through life, and cause me, by the strength of this Celestial Food, to increase in virtue more and more until I reach the fulness of love made perfect.

V. '*Eat of My Bread and drink of the Wine that I have prepared for you.*'

Jesus Christ, with benevolence truly God-like, encourages us to eat of His sacred Body, and to drink of

His adorable Blood. Having heard His Divine invitation, we cannot but desire to accept it, nay more, we rejoice, we approach with holy confidence. 'The reverence which our Lord expects from us at the Holy Table is not that cowardly fear which drives away, or discourages the penitent, but it is a filial respect which leads us to dwell rather upon our confidence in His mercy, than upon the fear with which His sanctity might reasonably inspire us. It is a reverence which does not deter us from communicating, but leads us to communicate worthily.'*

Consider, O my soul, that Thy principal Food is the Body of Jesus, which alone can make thee holy upon earth and blessed for ever in heaven.

Grant, O my God, that my whole heart may be at Thy Holy Table, that I may unceasingly hunger and thirst for the Holy Eucharist, that I may find my greatest happiness in receiving that heavenly Food, so that having been once initiated into the sweetness of Thy Spirit I may never more wander in search of sensual pleasures and worldly enjoyments. Give me my Bread, even Thyself, that dwelling and living in and by Thee, I may remain a worthy member of Thy mystical Body.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord, whom you possess in your poor soul. Unite yourself to the perfect adoration which is rendered to Him by the Blessed Virgin, by the angels, and the saints. Give thanks to Him for placing you in His Church. Ask Him to give you grace to make your calling and election sure by abounding in good works, and to preserve you from the misfortune of forfeiting its privileges by sin. Offer to Him a reparation for all the crimes which are committed in the temple of His universe.

* Mgr. de Ségur.

I. *Rejoice that you have participated in the Sacred Banquet.*

You have just been seated at the Holy Table, a sweet image of the heavenly Banquet at which you hope hereafter to find a place. The earthly and heavenly banquets are in fact but one, for in both the Giver of the banquet is Himself the feast. This is the hour of heavenly joy. Rejoice because Jesus Christ has deigned to be present in your soul; rejoice for the love which He bestows upon you; rejoice for the inestimable graces with which He has enriched your soul. This joy, to which no other joy is comparable, which we feel only after Communion, will never leave us—it will grow and increase throughout eternity. Remain faithfully near to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, so will He not depart from you in the hour of death. Have I a proper sense of my happiness in being thus invited to sit down at the Table of Jesus Himself? I am where He desires all Christians should be, at His feet; close to His Heart. I desire to remain there for ever.

O most sweet Lord Jesus, how great is the delight I feel in taking my place at Thy Divine Banquet. It would be very sweet to me were I able to pour forth my heart before Thee in fervent acts of thanksgiving, but I rarely find that sensible devotion. My heart ought to be full of love, but it is cold, wandering, even now, although I possess and see by faith Him whom the angels adore, and contemplate face to face. I love Thee, O my God, but until the time when I shall be permitted to behold Thee clearly, my love will be liable to inconstancy. Ah, when shall I be delivered from the burden of this mortal life? when shall it be permitted me to enter Thy glorious abode, and to behold the ravishing beauty of Thy countenance? When shall I be suffered to exchange this mysterious Communion of Thy Body and Blood, for the ever-

lasting possession of Thy most Holy Humanity? and when shall I be permitted to enter into the permanent blessedness of Thine elect? Come happy day, come happy hour, although it may be accompanied by the severest pain! One instant of celestial happiness will dry up for ever all my tears.

II. *The effects of this sacred Bread.*

'This Bread which thou hast received,' St. Ambrose says, 'this Living Bread which came down from heaven, penetrates thy whole being with the substance of eternal life.' Thus penetrated with the substance of the glorious Flesh of Jesus Christ, our flesh obtains a special right to incorruption and immortality. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the cause and origin of our future glory.

O Jesus, I should not dare to raise my feeble voice, all unfit to render Thee due thanks for so great benefits, but that my gratitude impels me to offer Thee my humble tribute of praise. If I were to become Thy slave, I should not make Thee any fitting return for all Thy mercies. I am ready to make any sacrifice, if only I may dwell within sight of Thy altar, much more when I am permitted to remain Thy living sanctuary, where, with unceasing praises, I anticipate on earth the blessed state of the saints and angels in heaven. I entreat Thee, by the love which Thou hast for me, give me grace to love Thee. Absorb me in the interior joy of Thy presence; cause that joy to penetrate to the very marrow of my bones. All that I ask of Thee on this side eternity is to shed upon my life, everywhere and at all times, the blessings of Thy mercy. My soul desires to attain unto that blessed day when she shall enjoy the contemplation of Thee—that day of sovereign felicity, day of Communion, which shall know no declining, nor evening, and which shall endure throughout eternal ages. O Jesus, since Thou hast deigned to en-

lighten my youth with the rays of Thy divine light, disdain not my riper age, and though years increase upon me, grant that I may love Thee with all the strength and vivacity of my youth. But if Thy call from earth should yet be long delayed, defer not to visit my exile, and feed me with Thy Sacred Body and Blood unto life everlasting.

III. *Offering to God His own gift, even Jesus Christ our Lord.*

To give thanks, is to offer unto God an offering equal to that which we have received, but after Communion it is to render God to God.

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is an offering worthy of the Divine Majesty, and equal to His infinite greatness. By a Holy Communion I render unto God as much as He has given to me. The gift that I receive becomes the price of my gratitude. Oh, if we understood all that God has done for us, in giving us Jesus Christ, and all that we owe to Him in return, with what fervour should we not communicate, in order to thank Him, and to promote His glory.

At the Altar, our Lord bore me on His Heart, and covered all my defects by His merits; now it is in my own heart that He listens to my prayers, and offers up His requests to God. If by the Incarnation I am become the debtor of a God, my gratitude for that divine gift, as manifested by the offering which I now make of Jesus Christ to His Father, is equal to the divine liberality itself. It is most true that the numberless benefits which have been so freely bestowed upon me during my whole life time, are not worth more than the offering of a single Communion. My God, I offer Thee the Body of Jesus Christ Thy Son, who is my life, and His Adorable Blood, which has purchased my salvation—the Blood from which I have received strength to obtain the victory over sin, and to look with sure and certain hope to my

reward in heaven. Give me grace to return *to-morrow*, or as soon as I possibly can, to this Sacred Banquet, and let not my frequent access to so great and precious a means of grace weaken my feelings of reverence and holy fear. I offer to Thee again the gift which I implore, and I hope that having conferred upon me that great and wondrous gift, Thou wilt be graciously pleased to receive It again for Thy greater glory.

IV. *How to eat with gratitude the Bread of the Divine will.*

When I contemplate in my heart Jesus satisfied with the Bread of the will of God, which He had eaten all His life long, without desiring any other food, I can wish above all things to accomplish even unto death the holy will of God. And I am especially obliged to do this, since Jesus bestows upon me abundantly the Bread of His most sacred Body.

It is the peculiarity of a loving soul to conform his will to that of the person beloved by him, to desire all that the loved one wishes, and to procure for him from others the same respect and love which he desires to manifest himself.

The desire of doing the will of God is a certain sign of His love in a soul. I desire that my soul should bear this sacred sign. If one of my actions is not conformable to the command of God, were my life to depend upon that action, I must make the sacrifice of it. I will not omit the very smallest thing in which the will of God is manifested to me. I will ask from Mary the favour of that entire dependance upon grace, in which, having lived herself, she desires to see me live also.

O Jesus, show me Thy Divine will: I believe that by Thy aid, I can leave all to follow Thee. Call me. Nothing shall retain me in the world, if Thou callest me elsewhere; nor upon the earth, if my days are

numbered; but wherever I may be, cause me to be ever thine.

V. *How to obtain fruit from the invitation of the Lord.*

The Holy Spirit teaches us, in a few words, how to profit by Holy Communion: 'Be humble as a little child,' and the wondrous gifts of the holy altar shall be bestowed upon you.

Am I humble before God? am I as little in my own eyes as in those of others? Alas, if I am a difficult person to live with, if a careless word has power to wound me, if an unkind action can excite feelings of animosity, it must be that I prefer my private interests to the interests of God, and of charity; that in thinking myself to be something, I have not yet learned the lesson of self-forgetfulness. In one word, it is because I am wanting in humility, and do not see clearly how necessary that virtue is to my soul.

Lord, since my faults have not prevented Thee from extending to me Thy gracious invitation, I approach with confidence, happy in Thy willingness to hear and answer my prayer. Preserve me from taking pride in the possession of Thy gifts, for without humility we are apt to wander from the Truth. Give me a just estimate of my own unworthiness, remove all false ideas of my superiority to others, enable me to conquer my self-love by a series of courageous efforts. If my heart suffers in the process, Thy hand will heal its wounds. Establish good thoughts in me, turn away my desires from vanity, and when they are directed towards good things, may they be ruled with wisdom. Rectify my worldly ideas, teach me to escape from all those snares into which I might fall through temerity or ignorance, and make my whole life holy. May my heart be filled with Thy love, so that, forgetting all earthly vanities, like the prophet who found in the remembrance of God the

most lively joy, I may find the greatest happiness and consolation of my life, in the constant enjoyment of Thy presence. Bind me closely to Thee with the cords of love, for, 'He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit with Him.'

Conclusion.

Let us not receive with lukewarmness the Bread which makes us partakers of the Divine nature.

To receive Holy Communion with little faith, little recollectedness, shows we are forgetting that it unites us to our Lord. Let us remember well that our Lord does not love the profane heart, the frivolous mind, and that He can take no pleasure in a state of internal agitation and excitement. Let us leave all for Jesus, and be assured that He will repay us a hundred-fold for all our sacrifices.

FIFTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

BY WHAT TITLES OUGHT WE TO ADDRESS OURSELVES TO JESUS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT?

THE relations which we contract with our Lord in the Holy Eucharist are assuredly the most signal favours that man can possibly receive, and also the most easy to be obtained. St. Paul exhorts us to come to Jesus Christ *that we may obtain mercy.* Observe that by this expression the Apostle means that we should *ask* with full confidence that we shall *receive.* Come to Jesus, and address him by all those titles which best describe His kindness to us. If you dwell especially upon the tenderest, you will most surely touch His Heart.

I. *Come to Jesus as to a skilful Physician.*

Jesus when upon earth manifested His power in such a variety of ways, and exercised it for the healing of so many different infirmities, that He showed plainly that for Him there exists no incurable malady. He can and will heal all our sicknesses. Let us then bring them all to Him with simplicity, humility, and confidence. He will lay His hand upon our wounds, whether it be to *heal* or to *enlarge* them. Whatever His course of treatment may be, let us have *resignation*, *peace*, and *confidence*.

O my God, I speak to Him who knoweth all, who seeth all, who can do all, who beholdeth all, even the most secret, the most sorrowful thoughts of my heart. My soul shrinks alike from the retrospect of the past, and from the prospect of what may await it in the future. Take pity on the miseries which are not incurable to an Almighty Physician.

I thank Thee, O Jesus, because the miseries, which seem to weaken the vigour of my will, serve to lead me unto Thee; because when I behold them in the sight of Thy holiness, I feel a more ardent desire to be delivered from them.

I fear to wound Thy love far more than any personal sorrow, and not to receive Thee with the purity and fervour which is due to Thy presence in the Holy Eucharist.

Suffer me in the Communion to touch Thee in such an humble manner, as once drew miraculous virtue from Thy sacred Person. Many receive Thee in Holy Communion, but few touch Thee with that lively faith which renders their touch efficacious. Let me not be of the number of these careless ones. Shed upon my soul that Divine virtue which healed so many diseases of the body, and which is still more directly efficacious in its influence upon the soul.

II. *We should come to Jesus as the discreet confidant of our troubles.*

The most perfect earthly enjoyment is unquestionably to be found in the mutual confidence of two loving hearts, which have not a thought hidden from each other. The Christian life is exactly that! Only the relations between God and the creature are different. The Heart of Jesus condescends to us; and the heart of man, borne up on the wings of faith and prayer, aspires towards heaven. This continual intercourse, which keeps alive our hopes of heaven, is of the sweetest kind in the Holy Eucharist, because in it Christ visits our souls in a specially direct and intimate manner, and reveals Himself to us with almost unimaginable tenderness and delicacy.

The more frequent and intimate this intercourse between Jesus Christ and my soul becomes, the greater will be my happiness. But it is my duty to increase it by my confidence in Him. Our Lord will not suffer me to have any secrets from Him. If He were to read in my countenance any sorrow which I had not brought to Him to be relieved, or in my heart any offence which I had not confessed to Him, He would be sorrowful! I owe it to His Heart to tell Him all the truth. Ah, if I had always reposed full confidence in Jesus, what errors, what regrets might have been spared me!

My beloved Saviour, I come to confide all my trials to Thee, for Thou hast said, 'Come unto Me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden.'

Suffering and sadness give me double cause to come to Thee. I will tell Thee all my daily trials; Thou knowest how much I suffer from *such a thing*, from *such a person*. Thou knowest how much I am afflicted by *such an event*: how deeply *such* words have wounded me. These are my outward trials, but I have inward ones also Lay thine healing hand upon

them all, O Lord, and if Thou dost not see fit to deliver me from them, enable me at least to endure, for Thy glory, that which I could not endure for a moment without Thee.

III. *We must come to Jesus as our pattern, whom we are to strive most earnestly to resemble.*

God has granted me a very close connection with the Sacred Humanity of His Son. I have a certain natural resemblance to His sacred Body; I ought then to regulate my actions by those of our Lord, and use my senses in a measure answering to the use which He made of His. It is easy to see with what discretion and modesty I should order my exterior motions.

I have also a spiritual resemblance to Jesus by reason of the immortal mind with which God has endowed me. I ought to adopt in every particular the thoughts and feelings of Jesus. This is precisely my most difficult task, because I am so apt to judge according to my feelings, my tastes, and my inclinations. But by His grace, by the help of Holy Communion, I may acquire a more perfect supernatural resemblance to Jesus. If I were ignorant of all the other advantages I receive in the Holy Eucharist, this last would be sufficient to make me love it. How many are the motives which attract me to the Holy Table! I know not which to prefer.

O Lord, my God, by this Communion I ask that I may be enabled to do more than resemble Thee. I desire to lose myself, only to find myself again in Thee. May Thy adorable Person, at this hour united to my being, absorb my feelings and affections, and transform me according to Thy good pleasure. Sanctify my heart, so that I may not love any created being, except with that pure, angelic love, with which they love in heaven. Bring my dispositions nearer to per-

fection, and give me strength to be willing to do for Thy glory, all that grace alone can enable me to perform.

IV. *We should come to Jesus, as to the Victim offered for our salvation.*

You should be present at Mass with the same feelings of gratitude and love, as if you were seeing our Lord hanging upon the Cross. From the altar, He says to you, in showing you His Blood in the chalice: 'See what I have suffered for you; behold My Wounds, and My love. What will you do for Me?' Do not answer *vaguely*, but specify with generous willingness the sacrifice that you will make *to-day*. Jesus did not put off His sacrifice until *to-morrow*, do not defer yours. You cause sorrow to His Heart every day in some particular, and every day He gives you His Blood to wash away your sins. Would you ever have thought of asking our Lord to die upon the Cross, to place in your hands His adorable Flesh to be the Food of your soul which has derived life from His death? If His Heart did not refuse to suffer and die for your sake, will you refuse to make *one single* sacrifice for Him? Love will make your desire to please Him stronger far, than your selfish fear of suffering.

Make here a short examination of your feelings with respect to *such and such* an occasion, which may present itself in the course perhaps of the next few hours.

Question your heart as well as your conscience; and pray that you may not fall short of your present resolutions. Remember that, upon the altar, Jesus offers Himself, is a Victim for us.

What an instructive lesson! The Sacrifice is consummated by the destruction of the sacramental state of our Lord. After Communion His sacramental being disappears!

O Jesus, Thou art more present to my soul upon the Altar than if I could perceive Thee with my bodily eyes; for where my senses fail me, my faith increases my reverence and my love. My heart longs for the consummation of Thy sacrifice. May I, by Thy grace, be enabled to add that my soul languishes for the moment, when I shall be able to sacrifice myself to Thee. Grant me strength, perseverance, and good will to make the sacrifice.

V. *We should come to Jesus as to a longed-for guest.*

Isaias, wishing to explain to the people of Israel, the great goodness of the Lord in taking up His abode in the midst of His people, and dwelling amongst them with condescending familiarity, says, 'The Lord hath His fire in Sion,' which may mean, a hearth, or fireside, where He is always expected and waited for. Ought not the hearts of Christians to be also like warm fire-sides, where our Lord should enter as a guest, welcome, expected, beloved, and adored?

Jesus approaches, His hands filled with gifts of grace, and His Heart throbbing with love. Express to Him how greatly you desire His coming; the request of the fervent soul is granted. The graces you receive will be great in proportion to the joy with which you receive Him. As in this world every one takes delight in going to the place where he is sure of finding an affectionate welcome; so the Divine Master is eager to come into those hearts which desire and expect Him most anxiously.

O my beloved Jesus, the oftener I receive, the more ardently do I desire Thee! The more frequently I communicate, the oftener I desire to do so. I beseech Thee to accept all the acts of faith, hope, and love made by Thy saints, to supply the deficiencies in those which I ought to make. Accept, as if I possessed them, the dispositions which Thou wouldst wish to find in my soul at the hour when Thou shalt call me into thine

eternal kingdom. It will probably then be impossible for me to perform acts of repentance, love, and submission to Thy will, receive in Thy mercy those which I now offer to Thee for every instant of my life.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore Jesus, alone with you in your heart.

Console Jesus, abandoned by Christians in the Sacrament of His love.

Make reparation by your fervour, for the profanations and sacrileges committed throughout the world.

Offer for that intention all the prayers and actions performed by you during the day.

But, because any satisfaction which you can make must necessarily be extremely weak and imperfect, collect the sacred Blood which issues from the Wounds of Jesus, and present It to the Divine Justice, implorring grace and mercy for yourself, and for all sinners.

I. *Adore Jesus as our Creator.*

O my God, I adore Thee, under the title which invests Thee with the most sovereign right to my gratitude; for although I feel more inclined to render homage to Thee as Host or Victim, yet I could never have participated in any of Thy benefits hadst Thou not first created me, and given me a place among intelligent beings. Eternity will not be too long to teach me all the happiness which will accrue to me from this primary benefit. But until I am more fully enlightened as to what I owe Thee, my heart desires to confess its gratitude for the blessings which I already possess and enjoy. The supernatural gifts which Thou hast seen fit to bestow upon me, might have been less numerous, less delightful, had such been Thy sovereign will; but when I think of what my life would have been without the Holy Eucharist; without that continual possibility of communication

with Thee, O my God; without that absolute certainty of Thy Real Presence near me; without the joy of Holy Communion; without the constant hunger of the soul for that Divine Food; without that invincible attraction which draws my heart so sweetly, yet so strongly, towards the tabernacle—when I consider all these things, I cannot find words to express my gratitude.

Lord Jesus, all the benefits that Thou hast hitherto bestowed upon me are as nothing compared to those which Thou hast promised me in the world to come. I know that in this life my state is incomplete, imperfect; but that in eternity Thou wilt perfect it by the light of Divine glory, in which I shall behold Thee face to face, enjoying the Beatific Vision with the angels in heaven. Then, and not till then, shall I begin to comprehend the vast extent of my indebtedness to Thee.

O my Almighty Creator, when I think of the extent of Thy benefits only as my Creator, my soul is lost in admiration of their multitude and immensity. But when I consider how many of Thy gifts are still unknown to me, how many are forgotten, how many abused, neglected, my mind is crushed, overwhelmed by that consideration!

I adore Thee, O my God, with a deeper, a more lively sense of all Thy benefits, with a more ardent desire to receive them, and make a better use of them. I entreat Thee to grant me grace more especially to adore with deep devotion Thy power and Thy goodness, and to reflect upon them with the most fervent love. Thou only, O my Jesus, canst give me a just idea of Thy benefits, and an ardent wish to be less unworthy of them. Prepare me, O my God, to adore Thee in heaven, and to love Thee there eternally, as I have never been able to do on earth.

II. *We should come to the feet of Jesus, who loves us as His 'other selves.'*

The love of our Lord for our souls, ancient as it is, does not become weaker with the course of years. It is ever new; it will last for ever; because Jesus considers all of us Christians, but more especially the souls that communicate frequently, as His 'other selves' (*d'autres lui même*). Even before the Incarnation, He lived by anticipation in our hearts, and each of our hearts had its separate place assigned to it in His own. O my Jesus, I am thine for ever. I adore Thee with lively gratitude for all thine inestimable benefits. I desire earnestly to preserve those benefits in my soul, and I therefore say to Thee, with St. Magdalene of Pazzi: 'O my Jesus, enclose my eyes to-day within the eyes of Thy mercy. Close them unto vain things which might obscure Thy Presence in me. . . . Close them to all things that might stain my purity. . . . Close them to all things that might cause me to judge uncharitably of my neighbour.

'O Jesus, place, I beseech Thee, my ears within thine, that they may only hear the voice of the well Beloved of my soul: that Divine Voice which speaks of peace, and hope, and love; which invites me to self-renunciation, and calls me to give Thee my heart. Lord, my heart is all thine: do with it as Thou wilt. . . . Thy voice shall be my consolation in sorrow; it shall give me courage to recover from the depressing influence which the words of others sometimes exert upon my mind.

'May my mouth speak only the words which it shall learn from Thy mouth, O Jesus; for Thou only hast the words of eternal life. I will listen and reply to no other voice save thine, which utters none but edifying and consoling words. I will avoid all vain, idle, uncharitable words: they shall never profane

my tongue, sanctified by the reception of Thy sacred Body.

'May the Wounds in Thy Hands, O my Jesus, be the abodes of mine, that all my actions may participate in the virtue of the precious Blood which has issued from them! I pray that all my actions may derive their merit from that precious Blood alone. Purify by it also the faults inherent in my frail and sinful nature. Unite my griefs to thine, so that they may be the first fruits and earnest of my eternal glory in heaven.

III. *We should invoke Jesus as our tender Father.*

My Father and my God, according to thine own laws, I may justly claim from Thee all things suitable to my position as a child in my Father's house. Home, clothing, food, I receive them all from Thee. Thou hast placed me in the midst of the beauty and magnificence of earth; the whole creation takes part in supplying me with all things necessary and delightful. Having all these blessings in abundance, I should be ungrateful indeed, did I not eagerly look forward to my celestial heritage. But with respect to that, my highest privilege, I ask little, I desire little!

O Jesus, I know not how to pray. I want a stronger conviction of Thy love; I want that supernatural ardour of the child-like soul, which can obtain all things from Thy Sacred Heart. How many graces have I lost through my own fault! But as Thou dost still deign to pray in me *Our Father*, I will unite my acts of faith and love to thine. To behave to God as a child, it is not enough that we believe in His Divine Paternity, that we venture to aspire to the lowest place in the heavenly abodes. No, something more than this is needed; for after we have prayed that Thy kingdom may come on earth and in our hearts, we must also perform with deep submission Thy holy will, as the saints and

angels do in heaven. I submit myself entirely to Thy good pleasure. May my hopes be fed by the great hope of eternal happiness, and take not away from me the daily consolation of the Eucharistic Feast. Ah, Lord, can one who is dying of hunger think of what may happen on the morrow? And when I am expecting to receive Thy Body, can I think of any other good things? Give me the joy of Thy Presence in the midst of the tumults and the combats of life.

I should not feel my full life if I communicated less often, because I should be less certain of Thy love, which is the life of my soul; but grant me also that I may always ask fervently for grace to love Thee, and to receive Thee as often and as worthily as possible.

IV. *We should give thanks to Jesus as our Benefactor.*

My mind is lost in contemplation of the multitude, the extent, the variety of those benefits which Jesus Christ bestows upon me. I owe Him, first, the preservation of my life and of my being—a benefit quite distinct from that of my creation, and quite as wonderful. All the gifts of the natural order—health, fortune, position, all intellectual gifts, intelligence, liberty, freewill; all gifts of the spiritual order, the first of which is that supernatural life which was bestowed upon my soul by Jesus Christ at my baptism—a life mysterious, but real, emanating from His adorable Humanity; a preparation for the state of glory; for, says Bossuet, 'Grace and glory proceed from the same beginning, just as youth precedes mature age.'

I owe to our Lord a multitude of present graces, which are daily bestowed upon my soul, that it may choose the good and refuse the evil. If I do not fall into a multitude of sins, it is because Thy grace preserves me from them; for I feel in me the root of every bad inclination. If these roots of evil do not

flourish and bear fruit in me, it is because Thy grace prevents their growth. A thousand dangers which surround me, body and soul, are averted by the cares of Thy ever-watchful Providence, and by the ministry of the Angel who is sent to guard me in all my ways. The Blessed Virgin, my tender and powerful protectress, is one of the most excellent gifts bestowed on me by the Heart of Jesus. Her continual succour is an ever present source of benefits.

I owe to our Lord the gift of the Holy Spirit, bestowed upon me in the Sacraments, and more especially in the Sacrament of Confirmation. But the sweetest gift of all is the Holy Eucharist, where Jesus hides His virtues, His strength, His holiness, and shows us His goodness only. And yet this great and wonderful gift is but a preparation for the greatest gift of all—the Vision of God and Eternal Beatitude! It is not in my own merits, but in the merits of Jesus that I hope to attain unto eternal life; and the love of Jesus, not any virtue of mine, will open the gates of heaven to me.

O Jesus, my heart can express nothing of all that it has to say! But cause me to feel a gratitude worthy of Thy gifts; and that I may conceive it, give me Thy Heart, which *knows* and *feels* all that I owe to Thee.

V. *We should entertain Jesus as a faithful Friend.*

Is it not in Holy Communion that Jesus fulfils His promise, 'Henceforth I will no more call you *servants*, but *friends*?' Holy Scripture calls the faithful friend 'a precious treasure.' How sweet it is to be allowed to call Jesus our Friend, and to know that this title is one of His own devising! Let us love this Friend, who has given His life to win our love, this eternal Friend whose affection will never pass away.

As a friend, Jesus deserves my entire confidence. But how rare and difficult a thing is perfect confidence! It seems as if man always retained some

remembrance of that memorable day when he reposed in the Tempter a confidence which was most frightfully misplaced; and henceforth he gives but a half-hearted, timorous confidence to Him who gave His life to merit and obtain it. Who can have more right to my confidence than Jesus? He permits me to say, My God and my Friend; but He requires a proof that I really consider Him one. Have I given Him this proof by renouncing for Him the friendship of creatures?

I have great need to interrogate my soul respecting its feelings towards Jesus Christ? Do my Communions unite me more closely to Him? Do they aid me in comprehending the worth of His Cross? Do they instil into me the love of duty, and contempt for the world? After each Communion does my soul feel more deeply that she is a stranger and foreigner upon earth? And does she aspire more ardently to her home in heaven?

Lord Jesus, my conversation with Thee leaves behind it no taint of bitterness. Thy presence ever rejoices and consoles. The expectation of Thy coming, and the recollection of my last Communion, lightens all my grief, disperses my weariness and petty trials, fills up the *void* in my soul, enables me to bear the deeper trials of my state in life, and the cross of the *present day*. Draw me still more closely to Thyself in proportion as I receive thee more frequently. Make me seek in Thee that which I most want, *grace*—that fruit of Thy Blood which grows not upon earth, but which is given by Thee to all who earnestly pray for it.

VI. *We must ask Jesus for grace to be ready to sacrifice ourselves with Him.*

In the Eucharist, Jesus is at the same time Priest and Victim: *Priest*, because He offers up Himself the sacrifice of Himself; Victim, because it is He Who is

immolated and consummated in our hearts. But this great sacrifice which was begun on Calvary, and is continued in a mystical manner on the Altar, must receive its accomplishment in each one of us. As St. Paul says: 'I fill up that which was wanting of the sufferings of Christ in my flesh, for His Body's sake, even the Church' (Coloss. i. 24).

The glory of God in the Holy Sacrifice borrows nothing from the merits of Him who offers it; but in my Communions the glory of God proceeds entirely from the degree to which my soul is united to Jesus sacrificed. Communicating so frequently as I do, I ought, like St. Paul, to know nothing but 'Jesus crucified,' and I should be, after Him, the priest of my own sacrifice. And when I see what Jesus undertook that He might descend to me, shall I shrink from the hope of uniting myself to Him, because it will involve multiplied sacrifices?

O my Jesus, I cannot be so frequently united to Thee as a sacrifice, and yet escape from Thy law of expiation and suffering. Lord, give me a part in Thy sacrifice, according to the measure of my weakness. Many of the trials which weigh down the lives of others are spared to me; and yet there is a thorn in my life also. Make me consent to those innumerable daily trials, so insupportable to my natural feelings, which render my life bitter. I complain not of them, for they are inevitable; it is sufficient that I can weep over them near Thy Heart. May these continual internal trials serve henceforth for my preparation before, and my thanksgiving after Holy Communion!

Conclusion.

We ought to suffer nothing to prevent us from coming to Jesus; neither troubles, nor sorrow, nor suffering, nor our own unfaithfulness, provided *that our hearts are not in any of these things.* Our infirmi-

ties and trials should hasten us to take refuge in His Heart, that centre of Christian souls. Let us return then to the Holy Table as often as our necessities lead us to seek for relief, consolation, support, and above all, for grace to preserve us from sin. Let us remember those words of the Blessed Margaret Mary: 'It is better to lose all than to lose the favour of the Heart of Jesus.'

SIXTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

WAITING FOR AND RECEIVING JESUS CHRIST.

Preparation.

It is a delicious feeling to be expecting the arrival of a beloved friend; we count the hours, we try to forget nothing that can give him pleasure; and our hearts beat more quickly as the moment of his arrival draws near.

Holy Communion enables us to receive Jesus always, and yet always to be expecting Him again. Ah, if we could feel towards Him as we do to our dearest friends, how fervent our devotion would be! Jesus deserves these feelings at our hands when we come to Him at His Holy Table.

I. *The continual and general expectation of Jesus.*

Man seeks for God everywhere, and at all times, but under sensible forms, that He may appropriate Him to Himself. Therefore, at the very thought of Jesus, at the bare sound of the sacred Name of Him who assumed our humanity for love of us, the heart of every Christian feels an involuntary thrill of secret joy. By God's grace, our souls are ever as it were, *in expectation* of Christ our true Good. Out of Him

the soul must perish, for He is the very principle of its supernatural life. To this expectation of Christ, which is inherent in our Christian existence, must be added that free and loving expectation of the heart, which is a continual longing for, and aspiration after, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Out of Christ all is vanity, and the soul that is attached to vanity becomes a *vanity* itself. Happy will you be, if living in the world, you desire nothing but Jesus Christ; and if while dwelling among men, you aspire after heaven alone, and strive after it in the grace of Holy Communion!

My constant attendance at the Holy Table proves that I have experienced the *attraction* of the Holy Eucharist; but does my conduct prove that I fulfil the obligations which this grace imposes upon me? I want so much to receive our Lord. I shall be so happy when I am united to Him. Shall I not be ready and willing to pay any price for such a great happiness? And when I possess it, why should I not enjoy it to the full?

Lord, to the blessed in heaven only it belongs to possess Thee without any interval. But I call Thee, and Thou dost deign to prepare my soul for Thy reception, by inspiring it with a most lively desire to possess Thee. Answer my appeal, which Thou dost forestall, by pressing me to draw near to Thee. Thou hast washed away my sins that Thou mayest not be responsible for the debt of my infidelity; and Thou dost secure my penitence by deigning to accomplish it with me. I come to Thy goodness, to which alone I owe the grace of daring to desire Thee. Be not weary of my entreaties for Thy mercy. Come, Lord, I am thine alone.

II. *Where will Jesus come?*

It is not in what is called *the world* that Jesus loves to dwell. He comes to seek your little, feeble soul,

that He may convert it into the very house of God. Offer yourself to Jesus. Be not of the number of those souls who are to themselves their *only place of rest*, and who never desire to come out of themselves. You cannot enjoy true peace until your heart escapes from itself, and flies to hide itself in Him. St. Augustine knew how difficult it is to do this; and how great the happiness of the soul that attempts this great work by the help of prayer, and accomplishes it by the help of divine grace, and in the strength of Jesus Christ our Lord.

By Holy Communion my life is transformed into 'a mixture of expectation and possession—of hope and love.'*

I am prostrate before the tabernacle in which all heaven dwells, and in a few moments I shall myself become the tabernacle of my God. I am now *in* the temple of Jesus, but I shall soon *be* His temple.

Lord, we are most happy in possessing Thee upon our Altars; but how can I express the blessedness of the thought that Thou art quite *close to me*, and that in another minute Thou wilt be *in me!* Give me grace to come to Thy altar in the hope of effecting a real change in my soul. Thy obscurity puts to shame my pride; Thy self-abasement provokes me to humility, to self-renouncement.

Alas! I am but a novice in these great virtues of the Christian life, but if they are too exalted for my misery to attain, they are not incompatible with my will.

I desire to obtain them. I implore Thy grace to ask for these virtues so frequently that I may obtain strength to practise them faithfully.

III. *Jesus does not make us wait long for Him.*

These divine words, 'Behold, I come quickly' (Apoc. xxii. 20), with which Jesus accepts every

* Mgr. Baudry.

offering of bread and wine made to Him in the Mass, are re-echoed in the highest heaven, and the angels bring back their echo to earth, the echo of a hope that will quickly be changed into eternity.

A friend who keeps us waiting, who often fails in keeping his appointments, gives us pain, it may be, wounds our feelings deeply. The Heart of Jesus feels not less deeply, and if He were yet capable of suffering He would feel the same distress at our proceedings in this respect as we feel from the neglect of others. If He sees that we defer, or omit our Communions for trifling causes, or on account of voluntary faults, He has just cause for offence.

Jesus does not keep us waiting for Him, but He waits long for us! For eighteen centuries He has been waiting for this moment of my Communion. But how many moments have I spent in preparing for it?

Negligence in this particular is unpardonable. The friend who is ever present to our thoughts, seems to be with us in spirit, though distant from us; but when our thoughts wander away from him, his image disappears from our heart. When I think of the persevering love of Jesus, I am astonished that my heart can be so cold and distracted, especially when I know that Jesus comes to me as if I were the only person to receive Him upon earth. And shall I then love my God so little? I who have only that fleeting moment which is called *life* in which to make my eternal salvation sure; and already the greater part of that short life has passed away! Ah, at this thought, how I long to cause *all* my love to mount, straight as an arrow, to the Heart of our Lord; a pure love, a fervent love, a love so ardent that the rest of my life should be consumed in its flames before the tabernacle.

O Jesus, I love Thee, I love Thee! Listen from heaven, listen from the Altar, to the utterance of my heart.

To love Thy Heart well, I must love It alone; all my thoughts, all my feelings, must be directed to It; and Thou knowest, Lord, what clouds, what distractions, pass between Thy Heart and mine; how often it is agitated, preoccupied!

Take away all distractions from my mind. Thou art about to give Thyself to me, it is right that I should come without any lingering affection to things of earth, without any division of my feelings. Come, Lord, and give me the love that Thou wouldst receive from my heart; for if Thou dost not implant it there, what can I feel or express towards Thee?

IV. *How shall we receive our Lord?*

Let your whole heart be occupied with the desire to receive Jesus; do not be afraid to express your feelings; the more you have desired the meeting the sweeter it will be. If your heart were all expectation of Jesus, how desolate it would feel, even in the midst of those dearest to it on earth! How continually it would sigh for the happy moment of Communion! How ambitious it would be to possess its God! You should, however, entertain a salutary fear of the Divine Majesty who condescends to approach you so closely, and attract Him into your heart by declarations of the deepest humility, and render yourself worthy, by the simple confession of your unworthiness, that Jesus should come near to you. Say to Him in your heart, rather than by your lips, 'Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come into my house;' but add, 'I look for Thy mercy to *make* me worthy to possess Thee.'

How great a thing to be expecting heaven, how dear a thing to be expecting Jesus! This expectation may well occupy all your thoughts and deliver you from earthly anxieties, for our Lord never suffers those who firmly trust in Him to be put to confusion.

As one may figuratively say, that all eternity was not too long for God to prepare the living tabernacle

of the Incarnate Word: consider the care with which you should prepare your heart to receive Him. There is no precaution too minute, no care too particular for us to take, when we are called upon to give pleasure to God, by the interior beauty of our souls while we are preparing to receive Him. I can only express my lively impatience for the arrival of that happy hour. Thy love and mercy attract me forcibly, and I cover the remembrance of my sins by that of the precious Blood which Thou didst shed to wash them all away.

Thy love emboldens me to hasten to thine Altar. In beholding Thy Real Presence thereon, and knowing that Thou art there to give Thyself to me, I feel that I am one of the most favoured souls in the whole world. Why can I not number myself among those also who love Thee best? Add that grace also, to those which Thou art now about to bestow upon me.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Because Holy Communion is given to us by our Lord Himself, it imperatively demands from us three things which are the proofs of love—the gift of ourselves: devotedness: self-sacrifice.

Consecrate yourself fervently to the Heart of our Lord. Jesus comes to you for your happiness, for your salvation; devote yourself to His interests.

He offers Himself that you may receive Him. Offer yourself to Him, that you may become worthy to receive another Communion.

Let all the prayers of your act of thanksgiving contain these acts—adoration, consecration, promise of devotedness, and self-immolation.

I. '*I in them, and Thou in Me*' (St. John xvii. 23).

In order to comprehend the value of these words to our souls, we ought to try and imagine what we shall feel when, separated from the body, we shall see

Jesus appearing in His glory and saying, 'Thou shalt be eternally in Me!' Jesus is ours now, as He will be then, but His Presence is made known to us by faith only; we cannot tell the moment when He ceases to dwell in our souls. But in heaven we shall possess Jesus uninterruptedly and eternally. There will be no more absence, no more interruptions, in that irrevocable possession of our God.

O happiness enjoyed at this moment, happiness already so sweet, but which I am unable to retain; happiness which seems to give me a glimpse of heaven, though now I see darkly, by faith alone. I nevertheless prefer Thee to all that earth can give, and I only ask that this happiness may be confirmed to me!

O my Divine Master, I place in Thy hands the being which Thou hast conferred upon me; I consecrate to Thee all that I am, all that I can do, beseeching Thee to dispose of me according to Thy good pleasure. Move upon the face of this abyss out of which Thou hast created me, and renew my life in the beams of Thy heavenly light. Give me grace henceforth to see in this world but two objects —Thee, O my God, that I may love Thee; and myself, that I may detest my evil nature and sacrifice all my thoughts and inclinations to Thy holy will. Hide me from the sight of the world, if it be pleasing to Thee, but in this emptiness of nature may the roots strike deep of a most profound and fervent love for Thee.

II. *God is within me.*

I have never seen the God whom I adore, but I have felt His invisible presence. Though He veils His Majesty in pity for my feebleness, yet He sometimes causes a ray of glory to shine forth which transports my soul with joy. In Holy Communion He dwells in me, and so long as the sacred species exist within me I may believe that I am filled with the immediate presence of His Humanity, almost as much

as with His Divinity. The love of Jesus causes me to feel my happiness in being loved, and the holiness which each Communion ought to increase in me. I am then almost continually, either expecting Jesus Christ to come or giving Him thanks for having come to me. The pleasure of anticipation and expectation, being more prolonged, is in a certain sense even sweeter to me than the instant of Communion; for the moment which gives me my God is very near that which takes Him away from me. My joy, my gratitude for His coming, give way to my regret for His absence, to the vehemence of my desire for His return. It is because an instinct, strong as love, imperious as time, impels me onwards, to seek in eternity a solution of that mystery of our being which involves all noble and mournful things on earth in one common ruin, since our nature is destined to find stability and repose. Look upon me, O my Jesus, and heal me by Thy saving glance. Thou canst never behold me without my faults and infirmities, and I can never behold Thee without Thy mercy. Thy mercy has given me to know the love which is unchangeable, imperishable, the love which neither trials, nor separations, nor ingratitude, nor unfaithfulness can weary, the love that is ever ready to pardon. My very faults have been the means of causing me to feel more perfect confidence in Thy bounty, and my confidence in Thee is increased still further by the bitterness I have often found in my earthly affections. Grant that no creature may be ever suffered to usurp Thy place in my heart.

III. *We may be united to Jesus Christ every day.*

My joy in possessing Jesus is not mingled with the fear of losing him for ever. The hour of the Holy Sacrifice, the summons to Communion, returns every day. If I had reason to fear that a time would come when the Holy Eucharist would disappear from the earth, when, though death were still far off, I should

have to communicate *for the last time*, I should not have words in which to express my grief, nor tears wherewith to weep for it. The thought that every Communion I received diminished the number of those which I should yet be permitted to make, would fill my soul with greater sadness than the presence of Jesus would give me joy. Our hearts are formed for eternal joys, and cannot relish those which are transitory and limited. Even when happy in the present, they reach instinctively forward to the future, in which alone full stability in the possession of Jesus is to be found.

My certainty that the treasure of the most Holy Eucharist will not be taken away from me prevents my heart from being so deeply moved and affected by its happiness, as it ought. I complain of its hardness and coldness towards our Lord, but perhaps I have been expending its freshness and energies in some other direction. An exhausted, enervated heart is worthless; it cannot give what it no longer possesses. I ought to watch over the direction of my feelings and affections, so that instead of wasting them on inferior objects, I may be able to offer them all to Jesus in their pristine warmth and freshness. If I have been able to offer our Lord a soul still untarnished by the breath of the world, it is because this grace also, pure as the drops of morning dew, has flowed upon me from His Sacred Heart, and will still preserve me, if I am faithful to it, from those natural emotions caused by curiosity, and from those passions which are excited by extreme sensibility.

O my God, how much I thank Thee for remaining with us on earth. Ever more earnestly will I thank Thee for suffering me to communicate so frequently. I would overcome every imaginable obstacle, to enjoy this favour, only do Thou continue to direct my will towards the practice of self-denial and holiness.

Help me to please Thee, that so this sacred and perpetual mystery of Thy love may not have been instituted for me in vain.

IV. *How to give to Jesus what He expects from us.*

Jesus does not come to you without a special intention. Just as in each Communion you propose some intention to yourself, so does He come with a certain object in view, which you ought necessarily to be made acquainted with. Interrogate His Heart when He comes to you. Examine your own wherein it may be found wanting. Consider what He may desire of you. And if He makes His wishes known, be prompt and generous in your response. We cannot be niggardly in giving to Jesus Christ.

Consider also whether, since your last Communion, you have faithfully responded to the desires of Jesus Christ; for if you have not given Him all that He demanded of you, or if you have afterwards repented of your gifts, will He, after such a deception, ask anything of you again? Be beforehand with Him rather; give to Jesus even before He asks, and esteem yourself happy if, when He has received your gift, He asks still for something more.

I am filled with shame when I consider how far I have been from fulfilling the expectations of our Lord, especially in this Communion. What sadness, what disappointment I must have caused His Heart to feel; for, how many sins and negligences have I not committed! how often have I refused to obey His will! The uneasiness I feel is not without remorse. And yet our Lord has returned to me: He will return to me again, because He loves me always. I dare not say, O my God, that I return to the Holy Table because I always love Thee; but I return, desiring by Thy grace to become one of Thy most faithful servants; desiring grace to love Thee *for Thyself* in this world and in the next. I pray more

particularly that I may become a *prayerful soul.* By means of prayer I shall obtain the gift of love, and all other virtues.

Conclusion.

In the world absent friends are often forgotten. We cannot hide from ourselves that such is the case with regard to Jesus. Unless we remain always near Him, dwelling close to His Heart, we run great risk of losing Him. And if our absent friends are so often forgotten, can we hope to escape from that painful coldness with regard to Jesus our best Friend, if we habitually neglect Holy Communion, or are negligent in our preparation for it? Let us fear thus to chill the very flame and centre of love. Let us rather hasten to warm our cold hearts more often at its sacred fires.

SEVENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

ALONE WITH JESUS.

Preparation.

In the very midst of Christians, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has no family round Him. The inhabitants of towns devote to Him a very small part of their time, and the numerous village churches are deserted from one Sunday till another. This exterior solitude, which He bears for love of us, ought to make us love Him more, but we treat it with indifference.

The loneliness of His Heart is forgotten, despised! Ah, let it be so no longer, let us communicate, that we may come nearer to our Lord.

I. I will bring thee into a wilderness.

Why should our Lord desire to separate from the world the soul that loves Him, and desires to unite itself to Him, except in order to deliver it from loneliness of the heart? What a frightful solitude is that world from which Jesus willingly flees! How lonely seem those noisy assemblies where the adorable and beloved name of Jesus is never heard! Nothing in them is in accordance with the aspirations of the Christian, whose heart should harmonize only with such things as come to us from Jesus, or lead us to Him. Love is the point of junction between His Heart and ours. From His solitude in the tabernacle He sees us as we wander nearer or farther from Him; He sees us, more or less detached from the world, more or less full of love to God, more or less anxious to acquire His love, and to seek it in the Holy Eucharist. The soul that approaches Jesus most frequently, feels its loneliness in the world most keenly. The crowd by which it is surrounded can never fill up the void within, which is at once its joy and its greatest cause of suffering? Poor exile in the desert of the world, it groans and complains without relief.

I should be most pitiable if I did not feel this isolation on the days when I do not communicate! What matters it that I am surrounded by the world? it cannot fill the place of Jesus. I can, however, even in the midst of the world, bear the thought of Jesus in my mind, His image before my eyes, and in my heart, I can endeavour to banish a worldly spirit, to abjure its language, its vanities, to efface worldly impressions from my memory, for Jesus has repeatedly said, 'My disciples are not of this world.' I ought to look with suspicion upon all conversations in which Jesus has no part, and still more so upon all those intrigues and petty jealousies which spring

from them. When the remembrance of worldly things clings to me, I will say to myself: I have but one soul, which belongs to Jesus, my Creator and my Saviour. I have only one heart, and I have offered that to Jesus. I have only one mind, which was given to me that I might learn to know Jesus. I have only one life, which is entirely consecrated to Him. I will not despoil my days, which pass away so rapidly, of their best hours, to be cast to the world, and afterwards buried in everlasting death!

Come, Lord Jesus, make within me a solitude worthy of receiving Thee. I run great risk of losing Thee, so long as I content myself with *half measures* in avoiding sin?

Help me to repulse with energy the demands of my passions, to root up unsparingly all my evil habits. Revive the sweet thought of Thee within my breast, and may it cause all worldly things to be distasteful to me. Come to enlighten my heart with the flame of Thy true love.

II. *And I will speak unto thee there.*

It will be profitable to meditate attentively upon this little word 'THERE,' which indicates that it is our Lord's will not to speak to the soul except in solitude. If I reflect deeply, I shall see that however brilliant the life of any one may be in detail, it must consist mainly and essentially in the direct and uninterrupted intercourse of the soul with God.

It is from God that our soul emanates, and to Him it must return: it receives everything from Him, and He requires it all again: it feeds upon Him, and in Him it will live for ever, if it fulfils the conditions of receiving the Bread of Life and offering up in return the sacrifice of all human pretensions.

My outward position is anything but solitary. I must then seek for the solitude where Jesus speaks

within me. In order to be truly solitary before the Lord, we must accustom ourselves to place the Divine Master always between us and all created things, otherwise they will gain the mastery over us. How shall we defend ourselves from the enemies to which our own hearts open a free passage? I shall not be alone with Jesus, until the voice of the world shall be silenced in my mind, and its echoes fall from my imagination. I ought to determine that in my life the world must be the *exception.*

When Jesus finds us alone, He speaks to us sweetly, forcibly, sometimes severely, but His mercy and love are the same in all. Notwithstanding our distractions, our absences, He resumes His intercourse with our souls, just as if we had never interrupted Him, and He tells us, either by gentle insinuations, or by direct commands, what He requires us to do.

To prepare my soul to listen to the voice of Jesus, I must concentrate all the activity of my mind, all the affections of my heart, and powers of my will, in my religious exercises, especially at Holy Mass and at Communion. I must try to be alone with Jesus, who uses me as an instrument, and prays to and glorifies His Father in me. I will preserve an indirect devotion and recollectedness in all those exterior employments to which it is necessary that I should devote some care and attention; I will submit my will entirely to the Divine Will; and, without fear or inquietude, endeavour to discourage all useless and idle conversations.

My Jesus, I cannot prepare myself for Holy Communion, without feeling still more the greatness of Thy love to me, and the obligation under which it places me, of using every possible means to increase my love to Thee. I acknowledge joyfully Thy great mercies. Speak to me, Lord, and give me grace to hear Thee attentively. I pray so little that I cannot tell Thee, as often as I ought, how much I love Thee;

and I think that I love Thee enough to wish to give Thee more proofs than assurances of my love. Behold Thy servant; speak to me, O my Jesus; I hear Thee with the ear of my heart, which listens that it may *obey*, rather than that it may *know*.

III. *I will speak to her heart.*

Jesus nowhere speaks to our hearts as He does in Holy Communion. Doubtless He speaks to us by creation, by the Gospel, by Apostolic preaching, by our spiritual director; but in Holy Communion it pleases Him to speak to our hearts. Nothing is more fit to pacify the heart, to enable it to forget the world and all created things, than an earnest conversation with our Lord. His voice excites in the soul a sweet familiarity, a secret confidence, an ardent love, which transports it with heavenly joy.

How many things Jesus has to say to me, to ask me, to reprove me for!

He desires first of all to give me a high idea of the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, and to convince me of His love. We love well, only when we *know* well the object of our love.

In this august sacrament He concentrates my love into one focus and centre, to increase its constancy and fervour. The certainty that our Lord loves me so much, that He is already waiting to give Himself to me; that He never departs from our Altars; is well calculated to overcome my soul with astonishment and joy. This conviction is sweet indeed.

O Jesus, speak to my heart, so as to attract it to Thee with holy confidence. Speak to my soul, that it may never more be distracted from Thy remembrance. Speak to Thy Father, to draw His mercy upon me. Speak to Thy Mother, to obtain her protection for me. My hope rests upon Thy precious Blood alone, which speaks to God for me.

Never permit me to give Thee cause to distrust my

promises, or to reject my prayer. I thank Thee for causing, by lively sufferings, the silence of the world to exist around me. Had I been consulted, I should not have had courage to consent to these trials. But by saying to my passions, Peace, be still, they have been the means of enabling me to hear Thy divine voice, and to answer it. Make me ever obedient to its call.

IV. *Jesus comes to console the heart, wounded in its earthly affections.*

The wounds of our heart afford an easy entrance to our Lord. St. Francis of Sales says: 'The Divine Master especially desires to enter into the soul that merits His tender compassion by its sorrowful love.' He will speak to it, while still listening to its sad complaint.

The Cross may wound our hearts, but have not we also wounded the Heart of Jesus? Is it not just that, having opened His Heart to us by the Wound which we ourselves have inflicted upon Him, He should wound ours, in order that we should never more be able to close it against Him?

Let us suffer painful events and cutting speeches to bury themselves in our hearts like swords. Jesus will enter in by those wounds, and He will dwell with us. Suffer yourselves to be wounded and healed by the Hands of Jesus. Be very sure that your trials form a part of His designs upon you, to lead you to love Him more perfectly, and to act in all things more directly for His glory.

Reject as a temptation any resolution or desire which may occur to you of delivering yourself from the pain caused by a creature. The slightest feeling of revenge would fall upon our Lord, for *He it is Who sends you* this trial; other causes are but secondary. Seek no motive for it, no cause save His sacred will, look at *that* only, and your mind will be

at peace. Who knows if it be not on account of that very pain that Jesus grants you the Communion you are about to make? If you were perfectly certain that such was the case, how trifling would your trouble seem, in the light of this reward! A fellow-creature makes you suffer, and you are comforted by God.

There are trials to which we resign ourselves without ever being able to become accustomed to them. I have felt such trials. I know what suffering they cause us. But I have wept over their loss, since my tears have flowed at the feet of Jesus. It is near His Heart that I learn to forget all my sorrows.

O Jesus, I suffer very deep griefs, but I entreat Thee to turn my mind away from them. May Thy voice alone be heard in my heart. Console me by the hope of receiving Thee, and may all my human love, which seeks in vain a true resting-place on earth, return and find perfect satisfaction in Thee. I thank Thee for having forced me to make painful sacrifices which I could never of myself have either imagined or executed. By the influence of Thy grace, may the compassion of my friends become beneficial to my soul.

V. *Jesus draws me into His Heart.*

It is no more in my heart only that Jesus desires to converse with me; it is in His own; that so I may live more in Him than in myself; that my heart may be His by love as it is His by right. Ah, when united to Jesus, I can no longer think that I am isolated in the world, nor can I feel disposed to take up again the things that I have left behind.

Jesus has detached Himself in the Holy Eucharist from every kind of companionship, to assure me that He is *all mine* in the Sacred Host. His attention is not distracted, His blessings flow on in an unfailing stream. He does not reproach me for my long

absences, for my dissipation, or indocility. Now it is His will that I should apply myself wholly to the love of His Heart, because as the natural life of the body comes from the heart, so does my supernatural life find its increase and accomplishment in the Sacred Heart. I must therefore take away from my heart and my person whatever can prevent me from belonging to Jesus as completely as He condescends to give Himself to me.

O my Jesus, open to me Thy Heart, that true and sacred refuge, where I shall find grace to love my duties, and, greater grace still, to hate all sin, to conform myself in all things to Thy holy will, and to bear adversity courageously. My confidence in Thee has no bounds; I believe without hesitation; I hope without distrust; and, resting on Thy love, I will live patiently and cheerfully in the midst of suffering.

Act of Thanksgiving.

I possess my God. I cannot isolate myself from Him. Ah, if I were always able to say this!

I will ask of our Lord more love than familiarity, more fervour than consolations, more purity than interior joy. I will ask that I may love Jesus always, and live only for Him.

I. '*My child.*'

I know who it is that calls me by this tender name; it is Jesus, my God, my All, the essential Plenitude, the All of all things, the Perfection of all things, the Sublimity of all things. And by these sweet words, Jesus desires to excite my tenderness equally with my confidence. As a father is everything to his child, so Jesus desires to be everything to me.

As a well-nurtured child listens attentively to his father's voice, so Jesus wills that I should hear and remember all that He says to me in the close intimacy of the act of thanksgiving; whether He consoles or

reproves me; whether He asks me questions or replies to mine.

There are no earthly consolations so effectual as those which we receive from Jesus, but often, when He desires to speak to me, I am not present to myself.

The hour of grace passes away! I find Jesus again, but He is silent! I had not listened to His voice.

Jesus is the Sovereign Truth, therefore I must believe that in calling me His child, He really gives me the filial privileges of a child. I am loved paternally by my God!

What happiness to tell Him, as a child, how much I love Him, and to know that He hears me do so with pleasure. 'O my Jesus, I speak to Thee freely from my heart as a friend speaketh to his friend; more freely still, as a child to His Father, whose tenderness nothing can affect, not even my ingratitude.' 'Who will give me to find Thee alone, and to enjoy Thee according to my heart's desire, so that no person may regard me, no created thing attract me, and that I may speak to Thee alone.'

My request is, that I may be entirely Thine, withdrawing my heart from every outward thing, and learning to enjoy the things of heaven more and more. Ah, Lord, when shall I be united to Thee perfectly, without one remembrance of myself. Thou art in me, I am in Thee; grant me to remain for ever in this holy union.

II. '*My child, give me.*'

Jesus has a right to ask, because He has bestowed much upon me, and there is no love without a reciprocity of manifestations.

But what does Jesus ask? If I consider that in the Sacred Host He has given me Himself, I shall see that He cannot ask less than the gift of myself. But what a poor gift is this; for I am overwhelmed with miseries, and Jesus sees them. I am full of defects,

and Jesus has suffered from them. I am full of passions, and Jesus has not been their ruler. I am loaded with sins, and Jesus has not yet been able to free me from their dominion. I have freewill, but it is a slave to my evil habits, and my great inclination to please myself in everything.

What shall I give then to Jesus? My conscience shall answer this question, or I will ask our Lord what He desires of me.

Lord Jesus, I dare not offer anything to Thee, because everything in me is too unworthy of Thee, but ask of me whatsoever Thou desirest to receive from Thy poor creature, I shall be too happy to be permitted to lay it at Thy feet.

III. '*My child, give me thy heart*' (Prov. xxiii. 26).

Both as our Creator and as our Redeemer, Jesus Christ possesses rights, absolute, essential, and inalienable over our hearts. He will not take them by force, but He desires to receive them as a voluntary gift.

Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is exposed to the indifference, the scorn, the hatred of men; He desires to be loved and consoled by us. He seeks the meek and humble heart, which alone can be in harmony with His own. But how few hearts give themselves to Jesus Christ. How many think they are doing great things, when they love Him *as well as those who are dearest to them on earth.*

The loving Heart cannot endure to be thought unreasonable, nevertheless we cannot desire less than we give. It is indispensable for me to give my heart to Jesus; for if I am free to violate a right, I am not free to act as if it did not exist. Even were I to throw off all allegiance to Him, I should be committing an act of horrible ingratitude, but the right of Jesus over my heart would not cease to exist. When He sees me undecided, or rebellious, is it not good of Him to take that which I refuse to give, and to make

me feel the painful consequences of my fault, as soon as my earthly affections cause sorrow to my heart, which cannot be at peace when divided between God and the world? God is too great to enter a heart which does not open itself to Him without reserve. We must cast behind us all that is not Jesus, or comes not forth from Him.

My poor heart, ask Jesus to plunge you into the sacred furnace of His Heart, that all your imperfections may be consumed by its flames; that the balm which flows from It may heal all your wounds; and that in truth you may no longer live of yourself, but only by the life of Jesus.

O my Jesus, I give Thee my whole heart; I would that I could also have all existing hearts to offer them to Thee with mine. Give me grace to consecrate my affections to Thee with new ardour, as often as Thou shalt favour me with Thy presence.

If every communicant may say before the Altar, 'The Heart of Jesus is there for me;' oh, how truly do I feel that, after I have communicated, my happiness in this world is only *there.*

IV. *How to keep Jesus in our hearts.*

At this moment our Lord says to us, 'Now I am thine alone!' He gives Himself to you to make you happy; just as fully as in the Incarnation He gave Himself for the salvation of men. Guard your treasure well. A man who wishes to watch carefully over any valuable possession, knows how to rid himself of any intruders who seem likely to interfere with him in guarding his own interests. So ought we to do. In order to preserve Jesus, let us live in a state of interior detachment, or *apart* from the things of earth, otherwise it is impossible for us to enjoy the sweet mystery of our union with Jesus. What happiness to the eye of faith thus, to lose all things earthly, that we may be filled with things divine!

My heart is a very small organ; yet can it become so large that the world itself is not able to fill it! The reason of this is, that it was created for the possession of Jesus. But how shall I keep my changeable, inconstant heart true to Him? As St. Bernard says, 'I could more easily count the atoms which are contained in the universe, than the endless variations of my heart.'

The Psalmist also has said: 'Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain.' It is then to Jesus that I must have recourse; I must ask Him to watch over my heart, and to consecrate it entirely to Himself. When He is the Guardian of a heart, 'He openeth, and no man shutteth: He shutteth, and no man openeth.'

Lord, if my heart is a city, be Thou the sentinel to keep guard over it. I will erect a throne therein to Thee, my King, my Master, deign to remain there always. Receive as my thanksgiving after Communion this cry of my faith: My God, Thou *before* all, and in all. Myself, always *after* all! Penetrate me ever more and more with Thy presence, and make me ever *less and less* in the eyes of others and of myself. I only desire one thing more, but I desire that ardently: it is that I may learn always to pray better, to love more, and to suffer patiently.

V. *How to dwell alone with Jesus.*

When we endeavour to destroy every existing impediment to our full and perfect union with Jesus Christ, we are associated with Him, and take up arms, as it were, not against ourselves, but against the *evil development* of ourselves. Grace, which is the soul of this endeavour, is gentle, though imperious: it does not work by force. In proportion to its influence over the soul, all uneasiness agitation, all signs of interior disorder, disappear.

The present pressing interest of my soul, is to dwell with Jesus. When I return home, I will speak to all around me, as much as is necessary. But my heart will be thinking of Jesus. I will go wherever duty leads, or the usages of society direct, but I will place my heart in the hands of Jesus; and where He is not I will not go, save upon compulsion.

If I am called to suffer, I will lay my heart upon the Cross, and in the pierced Heart of Jesus. Whatever I have to endure, I will promptly offer to Jesus. I will not permit my heart to indulge any feeling unworthy of Jesus, and which cannot be made subservient to His glory. My heart will thus dwell alone with Jesus, because earthly things will not be able to enter there, unless they are admitted by Jesus Himself.

Lord, Thou wilt not call me unto this deep solitude without giving me the grace necessary to dwell therein. Doubtless it is not in a place of rest, sweet to the heart and senses, that Thou dost propose, as in past times, to put my love and my fidelity to the proof. The Cross was the great trial of Thy life. Why should it not be also that of mine?

I should fear suffering less if I loved Thee more. Love lightens sorrow. The Cross does not hinder the soul that loves Thee from running in the path of Thy Commandments. But to suffer always, and always to feel so little love to Thee! This is martyrdom indeed! My desire to love Thee more pierces through and through my heart, like a sharp sword. May it enable me to accomplish the difficult task of entire self-renunciation, and to renounce all pleasures of the heart, of the mind, of the senses, in so far as Thou shalt call me to do so.

Yes, I give myself up entirely to Thee, O Jesus, set all in order in my soul. Ascend the throne which is prepared for Thee in the centre of my being, in compensation for the neglect with which Thou are

treated in the village churches. Oh, I would gladly fill up with my love the empty spaces which surround Thy solitary tabernacles.

Conclusion.

You who communicate often, content yourselves with Jesus. Rejoice in Him without inquietude. Desire nothing *beside* Him or *with* Him. Regret neither the temporal blessings or spiritual favours which have not been granted to you: you might be deceiving yourselves in entertaining any such regrets. To all your complaints and desires make but one reply: 'I desire Jesus *only*,' and your mind will be at peace. When you have not the enjoyment of His presence, or suffer from dryness, call vocal prayer to your aid and make acts of love and of self-sacrifice. Be very sure that you will receive far more than you give.

EIGHTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

OUR UNION WITH JESUS CHRIST.

Preparation.

OUR limited intelligence is not able to penetrate completely the value, truth, and strength of that union which is effected by Holy Communion between Jesus Christ and the faithful soul. Let us strive less to comprehend *in what manner* we are united to Jesus Christ, than to render ourselves *more worthy of being united* to Him.

I. *The Divine attraction.*

Our Saviour has formally explained this attraction in the following words: 'No man cometh unto Me

unless My Father draw him.'* This strong and sweet attraction which becomes the ruling impulse of the heart and life, seems to be an instinctive feeling of the family of God. What a wonderful grace to be thus led, by this Divine attraction, to the feet of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! But we must guard it carefully, for it may be extinguished. Cherish it by prayer, and by extreme vigilance over yourself, and ask our Lord ever more to increase it in you. Be grateful to Him for having predestined you to this signal favour, when you behold so many souls, animated by sanctifying grace, without which no one is permitted to approach the Holy Table, yet never thinking of communicating, never even desiring to do so. At Easter they fulfil a duty, they do not follow the impulse of an irresistible love. God has not *drawn* them to Jesus Christ. What grace God bestows upon me, by giving me this attraction, this love for the Sacred Humanity of Jesus, this great desire for Holy Communion, this firm faith in the Holy Eucharist. What grace to have preserved this attraction in me, notwithstanding all my sins, and to have created so profound a need of Communion in my soul, that nothing gives me pleasure when I am unable to approach the Holy Table.

But I am often so unhappy as to resist this Divine attraction, and while it endeavours to raise me far above earth and perishable things, instead of *ascending* as Christ would have me do, I follow my natural inclination of *descending* towards imperfections and sin. But I will not be discouraged. The conviction of my weakness shall only urge me on to pray with greater ardour for that sovereign grace which can enable me to overcome myself.

O Jesus, I come to Thee by the help of that grace which *draws* me: by the favour of thine infinite mercy, which has sought me so *far* and so

* St. John vi. 44.

low upon earth. I entreat Thee to prepare my soul to receive such wonderful graces, and to assist me to profit by them. Come, O Jesus, draw me to Thee still more powerfully, and may the same attraction which leads me to Thee, lead me also to the practice of all virtues, and to do all such works as may best show forth my gratitude to Thee.

II. *The Christian is a member of the Mystical Body of Jesus Christ.*

By the parable 'I am the Vine, ye are the branches,'* our Lord endeavours to show us, that we are united to Him by grace, as truly as the branch belongs to the parent tree. As the source and principle of our supernatural life, He inspires all its actions, just as the soul directs all the feelings and movements of the body. Only our limbs are not free to resist the action of the soul; whereas I am at liberty to resist the impulse of grace.

When I exercise my sad power of acting in opposition to Jesus Christ, every action so done, causes me to lose as many degrees of spiritual strength as I should have gained had I acted in accordance with Him. It is to repair my daily losses, to help me to act like a true member of His Mystical Body, that our Lord calls me to His Holy Table.

Lord Jesus, give me grace to act in Thee and for Thee alone. My interests can never be separated from Thine; for all that I do for Thy glory turns to my own advantage. But my wish to follow Thy Divine inspiration is not dependant upon this secondary consideration. I have everything to hope from Thy bounty, everything to fear from myself: and I greatly desire to see Thee enter, and take full and free possession of my whole being. O Jesus, come and dwell in this poor soul, which without Thee can do nothing, either for Thy glory or for

* St. John xv. 5.

its own salvation. Act in me and by me, and make me ever ready to yield to Thy Divine impulse, which I pray Thee to continue to use, notwithstanding my too frequent resistance to it.

III. *Jesus unites Himself to us in Holy Communion.*

There is no earthly union in any degree comparable to that which we contract with our Saviour in Holy Communion. Men may love each other, but their souls are always divided. There remains a great gulf between them. At Holy Communion *no* obstacle intervenes between the soul of Jesus and the soul of the faithful receiver: nor between His Body and ours. 'The Saviour,' said St. Angela of Foligno, 'is in our soul more closely than He is in Himself.' Our soul is like a plant, of which the sap is Jesus: a star of which the light is Jesus: a being of which the *all* is Jesus.

If I believed that, after this Communion, the Divine Master would address me, as He did His servant Margaret of Ypres, in these words: 'Behold, My child, the sweet union that exists between Me and thee! Love Me, then; let us ever be united by love, and let us never more be separated,' with what fervour should I now concentrate my thoughts, in order to prepare my soul for such a sweet discourse. But if I do not hear these words with my bodily ears, yet the union I am expecting is neither less real, nor less wonderful: and I owe to our Lord every good impulse of my mind and heart.

O Jesus, I implore Thee to prepare me so perfectly for this Communion, that I may remain ever united to Thee: that bonds so closely drawn may no more be dissevered. I know that Thou wilt not separate Thyself from me, unless I first withdraw myself from Thee: but I fear, lest I may hereafter cause this union to be dissolved by sin, as has unhappily occurred at other times. Suffer it to be so no

more. I love Thee, and I desire to love Thee for ever. Thy love is the chain wherewith I desire to be bound eternally.

IV. *Unity with Our Lord by purity and love.*

We cannot expect to attain upon earth to an union with Jesus, as perfect as that which is enjoyed by the blessed in heaven: however, we ought to seek to enter into their dispositions, and to increase our degree of grace. It may be a great one, if we judge by these words of St. Teresa. 'We who are in heaven,' said the saint, appearing to a Carmelite, 'and you who are on earth, ought to be equal in purity and love.' These words appear surprising to our misery, and yet they are rigorously just: for should not those who possess the God of heaven within them, be as pure as those who contemplate Him above?

Does he deserve our love less, when He descends from heaven to give Himself to us, than when He raises us up to Heaven to enjoy His presence there?

In order to acquire this necessary purity, we must adopt every means that may be suggested to us by our confessor, by our conscience, and by the inspirations of divine grace. Let us carefully avoid sin, and all voluntary imperfection. Let us pray unceasingly to our Lord to prepare our souls to receive Him. 'By Holy Communion,' said St. Francis of Sales, 'your soul will become quite beautiful, quite pure, and quite good.' But it is by continual watchfulness and earnest prayer that we must obtain that beauty, goodness, and purity, and we must also pray that grace may preserve to us the gifts of the Holy Eucharist.

O my Jesus, I am not so happy, while still on earth, as the angels, who cannot commit sin, nor so miserable as the devils, who are unable to repent. I commit many faults, but by the help of Thy grace I hope to correct them. Make me truly sorry for them:

and may my penitence recover that purity, in which alone I can be admitted to the banquet above. I implore Thee, O Lord, to wash away, in the water which issued from Thy side, all the sins wherewith I have stained my white baptismal robe: and may the grace of Thy presence hereafter preserve it and keep it white as snow. O my God, I would that my soul may be presented to Thee without spot or stain, at the Last Day: and now that I am coming to cast myself into the arms of Jesus at the Altar, I desire that it may be purified, even as if it were about to be carried into glory. Lord Jesus, Whom I am going to receive, heal my soul, and my body, and confer upon them the gift of perfect purity.

V. *Desiring to be united to Jesus Christ.*

No one can conceive a desire to receive Holy Communion, nor even an earnest desire for the love of God, except by the gift of the Holy Spirit. We can possess an infinite good only in proportion to the degree in which we desire it. But since we cannot desire what we do not know, it follows that we must acquire the knowledge and love of Jesus by means of Holy Communion. In order to communicate well, let us ask Him that we may desire It above all things; and that we may be always ready to sacrifice all things at the least intimation of His will.

Nothing makes me more fit to receive Jesus Christ than a holy desire to be united to Him. This desire is 'The fire which precedeth His coming.'* Jesus loves the fervour of our desires. 'No created intelligence can ever comprehend,' St. Eusebius says, 'the love and kindness with which our Lord comes to the soul which ardently desires to receive Him.' Direct then towards our Savour your whole heart. Give it to Him without reserve. If these thoughts do not

* Psalm xcvi.

arouse in you any pious effusion of love, borrow the language of the pious author of the *Imitation.*

'O my sweetest Jesus, whom I desire to receive with reverence and deep devotion, I come to find in Thee the remedy, the relief, and the consolation of my soul.

'I desire to receive Thee with all the tenderness of my heart, as so many of Thy saints, who in former times were dear to Thee because of their pure life and their fervent piety, desired to receive Thee.

'O my God, my only *Good*, I desire to receive Thee with all the feelings of reverence, piety, and love that inflamed the hearts of Thy greatest saints. And although I do not experience their exalted feelings, I offer Thee, in the hope of pleasing Thee, all that a pious soul can conceive and desire for Thy glory.

'O Lord my God, receive my earnest desire to offer unto Thee, by this Communion, the infinite praises due to Thy Sovereign Majesty.

'Why cannot I, thus inflamed by Thy presence, be transformed into Thee, in such a manner, that I may become one spirit with Thee, by the grace of an intimate union, and by the effusion of an ardent love.

'My whole desire is that I may be united to Thee, that my heart may be detached from all things on earth, and that it may learn from Thee to enjoy the heavenly doctrine of the Gospel.

'Grant these my desires, O Lord Jesus.'

Act of Thanksgiving.

At the solemn moment of Holy Communion our Lord, as at the Last Supper, repeats to His Father—

'Thou in me, and I in Thee, that they may also be one in us.'

You approach *quite close* to the throne of God; for Jesus Christ is the centre of intimate union between His Father and your soul.

This union forms, between Jesus Christ and your soul, a community of thoughts, wishes, interests, and affections.

You ought no longer to reserve anything for yourself in your heart.

Consider well these words.

I. *My union with Jesus Christ.*

Jesus compares the union which is formed in Holy Communion between Him and my soul, to His union with His Father: which is the greatest and most perfect union possible: for in the unity between God and His Son there is unity of substance in the distinction of Persons. 'I and My Father are One.' I venture to believe that the meaning of our Saviour's words is this: that by Holy Communion a true union is effected between Him and me, a union which the angels wonder at and admire.

My soul is now raised by our Lord to a union so *high*, that our thoughts are lost in the wonderful mystery! so *intimate*, that nothing on earth can equal it! so *perfect*, that no earthly union can approach unto it! so *stable*, that by the help of grace it may never be destroyed, and will receive fresh strength with every fresh Communion! so *removed from the laws of nature*, that none of the ordinary accidents of life can affect it in the least! so *profound*, that it rests in the Heart of Jesus Christ Himself. This Divine union, consummated in my heart, ought likewise to be consummated in my life, by a correspondence of my love, tendencies and actions to the Divine will. No circumstance of place or time can weaken this admirable union of Jesus Christ with the Holy Trinity, nor should they be suffered to diminish my union with Him.

O Lord my God, thoughts like these are astonishing to my reason: my faith accepts them without question: my heart reposes in them confidently: my

weak voice is not afraid to repeat without ceasing: I love Thee with my whole heart above all things; I prefer Thee to all things. Give me grace always to love Thee with a love of preference to all things. I close my eyes, my ears, my senses to all creatures without exception, that I may hear Thy voice in my heart, and contemplate Thee alone.

Speak Lord, make Thy servant obedient to Thy word.

II. *The duration of our union with Jesus.*

Holy Communion forms more than a passing union between Jesus Christ and our souls. His Real Presence disappears with the sacred species, but His supernatural grace subsists so long as we do not drive it out by the commission of any mortal sin. Since Jesus Christ has said, 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him,' it is not possible for us to doubt that our union with Jesus should last as long as our lives, as long as our eternity even, if only we use the means which are appointed to preserve us in a state of grace.

I hope that Jesus lives and abides in me. Nothing is wanting but my own will, cooperating with Divine grace, to make me live and dwell in Jesus, from one Communion to another, from time till eternity. If God had proposed to unite me in this manner with an angel, for my lifetime, if He had made me live by the very life of an angel, how splendid would such a destiny have appeared? But these princes of the heavenly host, trembling, veiling their faces before the Holy Table, behold in me the King of Angels, even Jesus, who gives Himself to me with joy! If I am not well prepared to receive this great happiness, the angels mourn over my inability to enter into the intimate union which is offered to me by their God.

My heart shall dwell long upon that sweet thought: Jesus Christ by His grace dwells continually in my *soul* to sanctify it, in my *mind* to enlighten it, in my *will* to excite it to fervour, in my *faculties* to rule them, in my *passions* to govern them, and in my *senses* to bring them under the control of reason. Jesus Christ is sufficient unto me. Ah! I need no more, either friendship or connection with this world: I have for my support, my friend, my all, Him who is infinitely great, holy, perfect. What can I place on a level with *Him* in my soul? Nothing. I want nothing but His Heart, and I will love nothing but my God.

My Jesus and my all! Oh, how deeply I feel the truth and the blessedness of these words! Thou art mine to-day, to-morrow, and for ever, without taking anything from others, without taking anything from Thyself. I am content to live in Thee, to know that Thou abidest in me. I can never find words to utter half Thy praise. Make all my thoughts, my words, my actions as it were divine, by producing them with me.

Abide with me, Lord Jesus! Thou art my happiness, be Thou also my act of thanksgiving, my strength in suffering, and my trust in time of trial and distress. My earthly life is drawing towards its close, but my soul, like an immortal flower, will bloom and flourish eternally in Thee.

III. *Promises attached to our union with Jesus Christ.*

Our Blessed Saviour, by most magnificent promises, urges us to persevere in the ineffable union that we have contracted with Him. 'If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you.' * How precious an effect of Holy Communion! Jesus can refuse nothing to the soul that abides with Him! St. Augustine gives the following reason for it—'Because it is impossible

* St. John xv. 7.

that the soul, which is united to our Lord by grace and by the Holy Eucharist, should ask anything contrary to the glory of God: it can only ask for what is useful, conformable to the Divine will, and to the soul's eternal salvation.' Every prayer offered up with such dispositions as these, receives a favourable hearing.

If I value and esteem my union with our Lord Jesus Christ, and if I desire to persevere in it, I shall earnestly entreat Him to make me faithfully accomplish all God's commandments, and obey the revealed will of God. If Jesus demands more than this from me, and if I see that He calls me evidently and plainly to the practice of the Evangelical Counsels, I will unite my will to His will. Jesus Christ, Who has set Himself before me as the rule and pattern of all my thoughts, desires, feelings, and actions, tells me plainly that I must not follow any call but that which speaks to me from His Sacred Heart.

O Jesus, I feel that I am drawn to abandon all things for Thee: I ask neither for honour nor contempt, neither for health nor sickness, neither for consolations nor sadness, neither for labour nor repose, neither for life nor death. I am ready to receive joy or grief with equal gratitude. But I beseech Thee to fill my heart with humility, that I may know myself; with prudence, that I may watch over my speech; with wisdom, that I may regulate my conduct. I ask for the one thing needful to my heart, even Thy most pure love: grant that I may love Thee only, and that I may preserve that precious gift of love through all time unto eternity.

IV. *The consequences of our union with Jesus Christ.*

The will of our Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly conformed to His Father's will. How dear did this conformity cost Him! Obedient to that Divine will, He took upon Himself the wondrous task of making repa-

ration to the Divine glory for the outrage offered to it by sin, and of saving man from eternal condemnation. At the time appointed He came upon earth, lived for thirty-three years a life of poverty and privation, and at length laid down His life upon the Cross for the world that God so loved.

But if by Holy Communion I am permitted to become one with Jesus, to live by His life, I must also have no other will but His. My heart must be ready to follow Jesus in His path of suffering, whithersoever He will. I must ask Him to make me His faithful servant and slave, that His love may have perfect dominion over me, and that our present union may be constant and complete. As Jesus Christ passed through the humiliations of the stable of Bethlehem before He entered the upper chamber in Jerusalem, as He endured the Cross of Calvary before He took up His abode in the tabernacle, so shall I pass from the contradictions of the daily trials of my life to the sweet repose of the Holy Eucharist, and from the sufferings of my heart, mind, and body to the enjoyment of the pure love of Jesus Christ. Thus will be accomplished all my desires, all my wishes; thus, also, my prayers will all be granted.

This union, which permits me to bear my part in the sorrows of Jesus Christ, gives me also the right to suffer for His glory, and to hope that, being a partaker of His sufferings here, He will make me a partaker of His glory hereafter. I will also determine, by the help of God's grace, to follow Jesus wherever His steps shall lead me; from the upper chamber to Calvary, from time to eternity, from the Cross to heaven.

Lord Jesus, grant that my will may complete our union. Then only shall I see and feel that Thou art in very truth the active principle of my life. The man that has but one spirit with Thee, cannot be satisfied with his self-love or with earthly things. Turn

my heart unto Thee, O my Saviour, since Thou hast looked upon me with an eye of mercy, and grant that all things may turn to my salvation. By Thy almighty power, may my present union with Thee be perpetuated in heaven. O my Jesus, I desire eternal life only that I may glorify Thee therein, and I desire my resurrection only that I may behold the realization of the promises of Thy love.

V. *The final results of our union with Jesus Christ.*

Jesus has given me a sure and certain promise of immortality in bestowing His Sacred Body upon me. 'This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.' * The Sacred Host which I have just received, those that I have received in time past, those that I expect to receive in the future, are all sure and certain pledges of that consoling hope.

After giving us this general assurance of safety from the danger of eternal death, Jesus declares expressly that 'If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever.' The life of Jesus will, then, be prolonged in me throughout all eternity! Finally, our Saviour assures us that 'Whoever eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood *hath* eternal life.' † The Sacred Host which brings into my heart the very God and His life, will preserve that life in me eternally.

These great assurances of life and eternal happiness are given to faith and to Holy Communion. I have received the gift of a lively faith; may it please Jesus to preserve it to me in all its purity, and to render it an *active* faith. I have received Holy Communion, I have therefore *the strongest possible reasons* to hope firmly that my death will confirm me in my union with Jesus Christ.

O Lord my God, Thy life should be manifested in all Thy elect until they ascend to heaven, where

* St. John vi. 50. † St. John vi. 55.

the Vision of God will complete their transfiguration. May each Communion increase my likeness to Thee. This prayer would be too bold, O my Jesus, were it not that Thou art pleased to see me desire to be so completely *Thou*, that I may be *myself* no more, and that it may be no more I that live, but Thou that livest in me. This prayer, which St. Paul realized by Thy grace, shows me that though in my own strength I can never attain unto it, yet I may, by Thy grace, be enabled to do everything with Thee, by Thee, like Thee, to the greater glory of God.

Conclusion.

If you abide in Jesus Christ, and Christ abideth in you, you will live by His life, and your whole being will be His; that is to say, your soul and all its powers, your heart and all its affections, your body and all its senses. But He will give you His Person, with His assistance, His graces, His example to encourage you, His hopes to animate you, His Blood to purify you, His Mother to protect you, His Cross to ensure your eternal salvation. Here you have sufficient reasons for desiring Holy Communion, and the sacrifices which render it fruitful.

NINTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

MARY'S PART IN THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION.

(St. Luke i.)

Preparation.

HOLY Communion may be compared to another Incarnation, in which, says St. Hilary, 'Jesus takes the flesh only of him who receives His own.' Bossuet, in another thought less profound, observes, 'We cannot be partakers of the fruits of the Incarnation, nor have truly Jesus for our Saviour, except we receive worthily His adorable Body and Blood.' What an inducement to communicate with fervour!

I. *The angel Gabriel was sent from God to Nazareth, to a virgin named Mary.*

God, when He condescended to assume our nature, and made Himself like unto us, chose out of all created beings, a mother, who was filled with the most sublime sanctity. When the angel appeared to the Blessed Virgin, she was engaged in prayer. Purity, recollectedness, and fervour; these were her preparations for the time when the great mystery of the Incarnation was to be revealed in her.

To make a good Communion, it is not necessary to perform great actions, but to perform our little ordinary actions in a holy spirit. Let Jesus Christ be the end of every one of your actions, even of the smallest. Apply yourself, as Mary did, to keep your soul pure, calm, and in a state of recollectedness before God, that Jesus, who draws you to the Holy Table, may Himself be drawn also towards you.

The Incarnation took place in a small house, in

one of the least important towns of Galilee. Our Lord entered this world in a condition of profound humility. He accepts a state of still greater humiliation in the Holy Eucharist. Beholding these His acts of prodigious self-abasement, prepare yourself for Holy Communion by the most profound humility: because that grace is the especial seal of the most Holy Sacrament, the chief point of evangelical doctrine, and the practice of the whole life of our Lord.

All acts of virtue done in the spirit of submission and humility are agreeable to Jesus. I will therefore multiply my acts of faith, hope, humility, and love, in order to unite myself to Him in proportion to the care which I shall take to approach, by these acts, as closely as possible to His Sacred Heart.

Lord, how great is Thy goodness in coming unto me! Thy condescension, also, how great it is! A high degree of sanctity might have been imposed by Thee as a condition of receiving Thee at the Holy Table; but since no person upon earth could then have dared approach Thee, Thou hast said, 'Come all of you unto Me!' Be Thou for ever blessed, O my God, and vouchsafe Thyself to prepare me worthily to receive my next Communion.

II. '*Hail, full of grace!*'

These words, which were addressed to a young virgin, by a messenger from the Most High God; words which had not appeared in any sacred texts, contain a new revelation to the world of the great dignity conferred upon Mary. The Word fitted the soul of her whom He had chosen for His Mother, with immense graces. He poured into her, out of the plenitude of His grace, all that she needed to make her worthy of so great a dignity.

If the least grace is equal to a whole world of wonders, what must those graces have been which were from all eternity prepared for the soul of Mary?

How happy we are to have so much to admire in Mary, and so much cause to praise her! But it is our Lord's will, that by great fidelity, I too, like Mary, may double the sum of the graces which He has bestowed upon me. I can do this in multiplying my interior acts of faith, hope, love, humility, and resignation; but especially the acts of those great theological virtues which are the foundation of all sanctity. Ah, how easy it is for me to repeat frequently: I believe! I hope! I love! I will pray that the grace of God may implant these virtues in my mind and in my heart.

O Mary, who by thy humility hast been chosen to become the Mother of the Most High, and the Queen of Angels, root out of my heart all attachment to my own will. Obtain for me this grace, that in all circumstances, and under every dispensation of the Divine will, I may accept them all with an entire conformity to thy humble submission, and that I may be every day, as ready to suffer according to the will of God, as to be present at His Holy Table.

III. '*The Lord is with Thee*' (St. Luke i. 28.).

The angel understood the presence of the Most High in Mary, not of that universal presence by which all creatures are in God; nor even of that sanctifying grace by which He inhabits our souls; but of such a superior presence as it was fitting that He should accord to her whom He had chosen to be the Mother of His Son. She could not be too pure, too perfect, in order to cooperate in this masterpiece of the power, the wisdom, and the love of God. All such souls, as are called to daily Communion, are favoured by the divine predilection. For it is certain that they receive special graces, in connection with the habitual reception of the Holy Eucharist.

They cannot be too pure, too well prepared for so intimate an union with the Incarnate Word. But

these graces are bestowed upon them only in proportion to the measure of their correspondence to the designs of God.

I know what God does for me; but what does He think of that which I do for Him? Ah, I shall never penetrate the depths of the mystery of my own weakness and sinfulness, in the light of the unsearchable mystery of Holy Communion, which places God *in me*, gives Him to me, makes Him my only good.

O my Jesus, cause Thy love to shine forth still more in me. Since knowing my inability to receive Thee well, Thou dost none the less abide with me in the absence of the homage which is Thy due. Ah, how justly may I henceforth desire on earth neither esteem, nor praise, but lose myself more than ever in the contemplation of Thy greatness. Grant me this grace, in order that I may be more closely united to Thee.

IV. '*Mary was troubled at these words, but the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God.*'

The word of an angel was sufficient to appease the trouble of Mary, because her soul was simple, and docile to grace. Although we have the Word of God Himself to calm our apprehensions when ascending to the Holy Table, it is not always sufficient to induce us to obey. How displeasing to Jesus is this resistance, since He seeks, above all things, simple and obedient souls to dwell with Him. Let us abandon our fears, at His re-assuring words, and let us remember that the devil has never yet caused the eternal destruction of any soul that has communicated according to the Divine will. If Mary had resisted His will, what would have been the fate of the human race?

And when we resist, to what peril do we not expose our souls, which have, so to say, as much need

of Holy Communion as the world had of the Incarnation.

As the Archangel was to Mary the interpreter of the designs of God, so is your confessor, or lawful superior, the mouthpiece of His will in your regard. He is the visible angel or messenger, who conveys to you the expression of the good pleasure of God to you. In one sense a priest is more than an angel to you; He has the authority of Jesus Christ to enlighten, direct, console, and re-assure you. Will you not obey your priest when God was obedient to a woman, and even now descends at the voice of a priest, upon the altar?

Ask our Lord then for grace to believe, without seeing; to hope, without feeling a joyful anticipation; to put your whole trust in God; and to expect everything needful for you from His mercy.

V. '*Behold the handmaid of the Lord*' (St. Luke i. 38).

No answer could possibly have been more humble, more submissive, more agreeable to God than this. And therefore was it instantly rewarded by the greatest of all favours, even the Divine Maternity. Our Lord wills that we should reply in a similar spirit to every proposition that He makes to us, whether it be joy, sorrow, afflictions, losses, privations, or the satisfaction of all our legitimate desires. If He finds us submissive to His will, and ready to receive whatever He may please to give us, He will enrich our souls with precious graces. I will fall upon my knees before our Lord, and I will entreat Him to look upon me as His devoted handmaid and servant, ready to serve Him according to His will, for His glory, and not for the satisfaction of my own tastes. Although Mary may have foreseen many sorrows in offering herself to fulfil the will of God, yet she never thought of drawing back, because she consulted her desire to please God rather than her own ease. It should be so with me

also: if I am called to suffer, to weep bitterly this day, I consent to all. If I am appointed to labour even unto utter weariness, I will throw my whole strength into my work, and perform it 'as unto God,' and not according to my own pleasure.

But now that the moment of Communion is fast approaching, I will surrender my whole heart to the joy of divine union, without suffering my thoughts to dwell any more upon trials that may be to come.

Lord Jesus, what dost Thou now desire of me? Is it a sacrifice of my mind, or of my heart? *Ecce ancilla.* Must I embrace my duties more courageously, or endure some mortification? *Ecce ancilla.* Must I endure suffering and weakness? *Ecce ancilla.* Am I called to poverty, to obedience, to a life of penitence and labour? *Ecce ancilla.* Dost Thou require yet other sacrifices? I accept them willingly, according to Thy merciful designs. Deign to accept my determination, at the hands of the Blessed Virgin.

O Mary, I come to finish my preparation for Communion at thy feet. I come to ask from you the good dispositions which are wanting in me. Oh, how can I present myself alone to Jesus, and endure the brightness of Him who is sanctity itself?

I have recourse to thy protection, now that I am about to enter into union with God. Blessed Mother, send me to thy Divine Son.

VI. '*Be it done to me according to Thy word*' (St. Luke i. 38).

By this act of self-abandonment to the Divine will, Mary, becoming Mother of the Word Incarnate, entered immediately into communication with God the Father. He subordinated to the humble *fiat* of a creature the most marvellous effects of His power and love. The Word came down from heaven: the Holy Spirit entered into her when her humble consent was given. Then also the angels adored this new

mystery, God abiding upon earth. On this little word *fiat*, so sublime in the mouth of Mary, how many divine joys depended. But also, how many sorrows. For myself, so many joys as I find at the Holy Table, so many are the crosses by which they will probably be followed. I often receive in the same day Communion and grief. But when I am assured of the possession of Jesus, I can say to every trial, *fiat*, since it pleases God that thus it should be. I find it sweet to please Him as perfectly as I am able. Jesus submitted Himself to the will of His Father in all that concerned the time, place, and manner of His Incarnation; He submits Himself to the priest in all things concerning His existence in the Holy Eucharist; and I submit myself absolutely to the will of God in all that concerns the manner of my sanctification and union with Him.

O my Jesus, who hast reserved nothing to Thyself in the Incarnation, not even Thy liberty, I adore Thee still more captive in the Holy Eucharist, and I say to Thee from the bottom of my heart, Behold Thine handmaid; may it be done unto me in every instant of my life according to Thy word. Accomplish Thy designs in me, as Thou hast satisfied my desire to receive Thee. I abandon myself wholly to Thy love, too happy that I have found favour in Thine eyes, poor and unworthy though I be.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Unite yourself to Mary's feelings while she possessed her God.

Consecrate yourself with her to Jesus, and do not take back the gift of yourself after you have made it.

Offer your Communion by the hands of Mary, and make it with feelings of charity to all, even as God, who comes to you, is charitable and merciful to all His creatures.

I. *The Word is made Flesh* (St. John i.).

The Word gives Himself to man upon earth: the Sacred Humanity appears on Mary's bosom, illumined with celestial light. Jesus, in this new manner of loving us, delights to make His eternal love for us more manifest. The Incarnation was an universal act of love to men, but its application is personal to each one of us. Holy Communion is an act of love personal to each of us, and which only the human will can make universal. The priest knows not who will receive the Hosts which he has consecrated; but our Lord knows on whom He will bestow Himself.

Without daring to draw a parallel between the admirable union which the Incarnate Word contracted with Mary, and that which He confers upon us in Holy Communion, we cannot help feeling that this last is most sweet and close and intimate. To confer upon me the real union which I have now entered into with Him, Jesus places His Sacred Person entirely in the hands of the priest. The links of that long chain of acts of obedience which first began in the little house at Nazareth, are extended even to the Altar. I am now profiting by their effects. Jesus is mine! He is in me! And if He will not remain in me as He did in Mary, yet He will return to me! Oh, how happy I am! How can I thank God for His great goodness? I can only venture to regard the sublime mystery of the Incarnation with reverential fear; but when I contemplate my God dwelling in me, as much to me almost as He was to Mary, I am affected even to tears.

O Divine Sacrament, ever renewed work of the Holy Spirit, given for my happiness as much as for my salvation; I adore, I admire, I am amazed, but above all, I love! May I dare to believe, O my Jesus, that I am at this moment the object of Thy love? I may; for Thou hast given to me more than

unto others, the grace to know myself beloved, and hast shown to me more clearly how to correspond to Thy love. O my Jesus, cause me to love still more tenderly the Holy Eucharist, by means of which I have learnt to know and love Thee. Make me also love my sorrows, by which I learn how near Thou wilt place me to Thyself in heaven.

II. *The Word is made Flesh.*

By virtue of His Divine nature the Word is infinite; by His human nature he became at the Incarnation on a level with ordinary children. Behold Him, then, the child, the captive of Mary. An almost imperceptible point, hidden in the obscurity of a mortal body, contains God! Thus veiled in flesh, He is more wonderful in the eyes of God and angels than all creation, than all the worlds upheld by His almighty power.

I adore the Word made Flesh, and I adore the Word made Victim.

When the priest has said to me, 'The Body of Jesus Christ preserve thee unto eternal life,' at that instant my God enters my heart in a more imperceptible manner than He entered into Mary at the Incarnation.

Since He delights to give me these proofs of His incomprehensible love, I will no longer fear to receive Him; I will no more fear to behold the marvels of His power and love. I will only think how I may show my gratitude to Him, by offering Him the feelings of Mary's heart, which are more agreeable to His Heart than any words of mine.

Thou art, then, really mine, O my Jesus, without ceasing to belong to others also; Thou wilt return again and again to give Thyself to all who love Thee, so wondrous is Thy love! I adore Thee; I love Thee; I offer Thee all that Mary's heart could give

of tenderest homage and most thankful praise. Grant that I may give Thee thanks better after this Communion, in which I have had so much cause for love, and thankfulness, and shame for my own unworthiness, and want of gratitude for such great benefits. But in Mary Thou wilt find all that is wanting in me, love, gratitude, and praise.

III. '*God is in thee*' (Isaias xlv. 14).

The Blessed Virgin, endowed with incomparable graces, assumed an incomprehensible magnificence before God at the moment when she received into her womb the Son of God. She could not be more closely united to the Holy Trinity than she became at that moment. And, as to God all things are present, He beholds her eternally, as she appeared at that instant, in the light of the hypostatic union of the Word, with the nature of man, and in the light of the relationship of a mother to her unborn child. So, also, God looks upon the soul that lives in Jesus and acts for Him alone, as clothed with an admirable beauty and dignity. Each Communion adds to our beauty before God, in proportion as we 'put on Christ,' in whom He beholds us.

Jesus in the womb of Mary, Jesus in me! What a contrast! It serves to display still more clearly the goodness of God, in humiliating Himself to me. But to what a high degree of perfection such a constant union with Jesus Christ ought to raise me! My heart is like a living ciborium, in which dwells my God. For these few short instants there is no difference between the tabernacle and my heart: God is in them both. To me, also, our Lord says, 'I am all thine.' And I have the right to reply to Him from the fulness of my heart, Lord, I am all Thine also.

Lord Jesus, I have always been profoundly affected by the thought that 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.' And it affects me no

less tenderly to know that 'God so loves me, that He gives me Jesus daily!' I would gladly add: I love my God so much, that I cannot live without Him; His presence is to my soul as the air I breathe is to my natural life. Let me die, my God, rather than lose Thy grace! Let me rather die than cease to love Thee above all!

IV. '*The Angel departed from Mary*' (St. Luke i. 38).

Before the MASTER present in Mary, the servant disappears! No created being must disturb Mary's first rapture of adoration. Even an angel is unable to enter into so mysterious an intimacy, and the celestial messenger departs as soon as Mary has given him the assurance of her adhesion to the designs of the Most High.

What a lesson of recollectedness should this teach me, especially at the moment of Communion, when it would be a distraction to glance even at an angel. How, then, can I suffer the *shadow* of a thought, or of a creature, to pass between Jesus and my heart, when the angel contemplated at a distance only, and in reverential silence, the ineffable mystery of the Incarnation? He respected Mary's happiness and silence, and when I see myself admitted to a favour in some degree resembling hers, what shame for me were I *negligently* to adore that great God, whom the angels serve and worship and glorify so perfectly!

I desire, O Lord, to suffer no created thing to interpose between my soul and Thee. Cause the light of Thy countenance to shine upon me. When shall the rays of Thy Divine light and love be so deeply imprinted in my heart, that I shall be able to pray to Thee from my heart without distractions, and praise Thy name without the help of a book? When I think that it is Thou, O my God, who hast given Thyself to me, I cannot do better than repeat

'My God, I thank Thee!' and I would utter these words with an emphasis which should make them equal to these other words, 'I love Thee with my whole heart;' and I shall be able to pray without distraction, and to express my gratitude in words of tenderness and praise.

My God, if for some reason known or unknown to myself I am unable to pray, will an interpreter be necessary between me and Thee? Will not Thy piercing eye read in my heart what my lips refuse to articulate? Surely, Thou dost not need to hear my voice: my heart speaketh to Thee. To multiplicity of words, Thou dost even prefer simplicity of heart. When my love is perfected, I shall be well able to say, because I shall say without fear, My God, I love Thee. Believe that henceforward this is truth.

V. *Jesus in Mary.*

Jesus lived in Mary, and His life was so perfectly identified with His Mother's, that they may be said to have lived one life. Being myself also united to the Incarnate word, I will imitate the Virgin His Mother. She humbled herself: she adored Him. She loved Him with a new love; for at that instant maternal affection awoke in her heart, she loved Jesus as His parent. Never has a God descended so low, yet never, even in heaven, has He received such pure homage.

If I could have seen Mary bearing my God and my Redeemer in her bosom, it seems to me that I should have been forced to prostrate myself before her. The priest has consecrated the Sacred Host: he brings it to me in his hand; and believing as firmly in the mystery of the Altar as firmly as I do in the mystery of the Incarnation, I believe and adore the mystery of love accomplished by a few words.

Mary is the Mother of God, and I am her handmaid, destined consequently, if she pleases, to the

most humble offices in her house; and I ought to receive them as He pleases, without prejudice to the joy of love and Divine union with which my heart may be overflowing. I will ask to be, like Mary, disposed not only to unite myself to our Lord, but to partake His destiny, whatever may be the trials and sufferings that I expect to meet, now or hereafter.

O Jesus! who hast chosen me to be especially united to Thee, make me to pray, act, love, and suffer in a manner worthy of Thee, worthy of the election with which I am called; and since Thou hast so frequently granted me the wonderful favour of receiving Thee, add to it the favour of filling my heart with gratitude.

VI. *Offering our thanksgiving by the hands of Mary.*

O my Jesus! I have approached Thee by Mary: by her I offer Thee my thanksgiving, adding to it the fervour and vivacity of her soul after her Communions. I offer Thee her joys when she beholds the Holy Eucharist bestowed upon a great number of souls. I offer Thee her thanksgivings during her life on earth and her eternal praises in heaven. I make them mine that they may thank Thee for me, better than I can do for myself. Were I to offer Thee the praises of earth and heaven, nothing could be so acceptable to Thee as a sigh, a tender look from Mary. Lord Jesus, look at Mary, and love in me her child, in whom Thou mayest trace some faint likeness of her beloved mother.

O Mary! Jesus has chosen you for His Mother; but He has also made you ours. Love me with that maternal love so dear to the Heart of Jesus, and grant that I may love you with that filial affection of Jesus so sweet to your heart. Having conceived the Son of God in your chaste bosom, you have never been separated from Him in thought or feeling. Grant that, communicating every day, I may never separate

myself from Jesus in heart or mind; that I may live in His Presence; that I may do everything for His glory; that I may lose myself in Him, so that He may reign alone in me.

O Mary! by you I may obtain this grace, which I ask by thee and hope to receive by your maternal pity. Make me always remember to ask for grace so to love the will of God, that I may be always eager to accomplish it.

Conclusion.

If the Word Incarnate had a right to demand of His Mother the most careful preparation, because it was due to His Sovereign Majesty, what does He not expect from us when we are preparing for Communion and after having received it? Make full use of the treasures of strength and generosity that are bestowed upon your soul by the grace of the Holy Eucharist. Let not your talent be buried in the earth; you will be called to render an account of it.

TENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

SOME QUALITIES OF THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST TOWARDS US.

Preparation.

We meet the love of God everywhere. We strike against it, so to speak, in every moment of our existence, and He strives to make it known to us in new ways and to give us fresh proofs of it, in order that we may neither be able to doubt its reality, nor to accustom ourselves to it as to a twice

told tale. The universe is like a book where we may read the works of God; but our soul is another and more secret book, and in it love is inscribed on every page. Let us study the qualities of the love which is manifested to us by Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. How carefully soever we may pursue this study, our minds and hearts will never be able to grasp this wondrous truth in all its fulness.

I. *Infinite love.*

Everything is infinite in Jesus Christ—His greatness, His goodness, His justice, and His holiness; but He delights to reveal to the soul the immensity of His works. Look at the tabernacle; can you doubt it then? Jesus dwells in the tabernacle, not because He needs the love of men, but because He is powerfully drawn to give Himself to us. His loving Heart uses His omnipotence as a means to enable Him to place Himself at our service all over the earth. It pleases Him to ordain that, in whatever place our condition in life may call us, there we, His sinful creatures, may be able to lift up our eyes unto Him, and to meet His eye of love ever watching over us for good. Yes; Jesus loves us with a love infinite as His mercy. Recall the proofs of His love that you have received since the time of your first Communion, and confess that you are utterly unable to love Him as He loves you.

I have desired to love and to be loved. I knew too late whose love was fixed on me; but by grace I now know it. I will never more content myself by expressing in tender words my love to Jesus; but I will make my whole life the evident proof of my love. I will, by the help of divine grace, cause all my tastes, my inclinations, my projects, to give way to His holy will; and I will reject all that does not receive the sanction of His Heart.

Lord Jesus, I am already blessed in knowing that

Thou desirest my love; more blessed in possessing thine. That I may be able to make amends for the time which I have lost by not loving Thee enough, grant me henceforth to love Thee with all the love that I am capable of, and never more to expose myself to the danger of losing thine. If even I should be deprived of all that I hold dear on earth, I could still, because of Thy love, say with truth, 'My God, I love Thee.' By faith I am assured that this is the only true happiness in the world.

II. *The merciful love of Christ.*

In the Holy Eucharist our Lord Jesus Christ offers to the Father, to appease His anger with the ungodly and disobedient world, the power of His humiliation, of His Blood, and of His sacrifices, and thus arrests the first effect of the anger of God. His intercession arises before God with a cry of love which resounds through the celestial halls. He suspends the decrees of justice by the merits of His Sacrifice, and by the repetition of those sweet words, 'Father, forgive them.' He has written our names in His Wounds. He offers for us the fruits of the great Sacrifice on Calvary.

O Jesus, when Thou dost observe the dispositions with which too many souls approach the Holy Table, wilt Thou not say, that the sorrows of death compass Thee about even now?

How numerous are the sinners for whom Thy Blood flows in vain upon the Altar! How often do the angels of Thy grace return with sorrow to heaven because the coldness of my feelings, my wandering thoughts, and many other faults render me unfit to receive the blessings they were charged to bring? This day Thou art at the Altar, ready to receive me; and I come to Thee, and Thou dost not reproach me, sinful though I be.

Pardon, O Lord, be merciful unto me, and may my

soul be sensible of the love and mercy which Thou art graciously pleased to bestow.

III. *The humble love of Christ.*

Hear these words from the mouth of our Lord, 'My burden is love.' See how, in the Incarnation, His love made Him equal to us His creatures; how it brought Him down from heaven to the stable; from the manger to the Cross; then from Calvary into the Holy Eucharist.

There He diminishes the proportions of His glorious Humanity, hides them from our eyes, fearing more to terrify the just by suffering a ray of His glory to pierce through the veil, than to expose Himself, under those sacred veils, to be insulted and outraged by sinful men. Could He, thus reduced to the appearance of Bread, descend to any more profound humiliation to prove to us His love?

This is not all; it was not enough that He abased Himself in general, but He has endured the contradiction and contempt of sinners with patience. He has loved them *long, all His life long.* He loves them still in the Holy Eucharist, because by means of it He can enter into your heart.

But alas, is He not humiliated still? even in your heart? What a train have you prepared therein to attend upon your Royal Guest! curiosity, idleness, sensuality, impatience, susceptibility! And self-love too, with its deep-striking roots, how great is its influence over your conduct? Are you not afraid of doing anything that might lower you in the eyes of the world? Are you not anxious for esteem, for reputation? Have you not many other faults which are known to yourself alone? Jesus Christ sees them all, and yet He comes to you, because He loves humility as much as humiliation.

O Jesus, the lowest place at Thy Holy Table is the one that suits me best, it is the only one which is fit

for one so sinful and so vile. I am content with this disgrace which I have deserved; but I detest the ingratitude and pride which have caused me to deserve it.

Reason alone can never gain the victory over self-love. I have much more of this than I know, and I have only begun to discover this fault more clearly since I have formed a resolution to fight against it. I should have received far more light to discover my faults had my will to amend them been better. Give me grace to strive diligently to practise humility. When I am glad to be humiliated, then only shall I truly love Thee; for the heart cannot be set at rest without love, and it is Thee, O my God, whom I desire to love for ever.

IV. *The patient love of Christ.*

Our Lord displayed His patience more particularly by the calm, gentle, and unruffled manner in which He endured the society of His Apostles, uncultivated men, whose baseness must often have offended His delicate feelings, and their importunities and ignorance have wearied Him. His abiding-place in the tabernacle exposes Him no less to contradictions and weariness; but He accepts them all, and will accept them until time shall be no more, with a patience which is unwearied, because it is divine.

Patience is a virtue very difficult to practise; the more so, perhaps, because it is so frequently required. Repeated acts of awkwardness on the part of those about us; idle questions or observations when we are busy; malicious remarks; criticisms upon our actions, all these things trouble us, disturb our peace of mind, and arouse our impatience. Sometimes those who love us fatigue us by their manifestations of tenderness. Our own feelings may thus help us to divine the immense patience of Jesus towards us.

I feel sometimes, as people say, quite *out of patience*,

and then I am obliged to be silent, for fear that the tone of my voice should betray the disturbance of my soul. Oh, henceforward I will look at the ciborium, and in the contemplation of eighteen centuries of patience I will endeavour to imitate the calmness of my God.

Lord Jesus, my life abounds in 'small occasions' of exercising patience towards my neighbour, and of giving him occasion to exercise it towards me. My house is a place where God should rule with a strong hand, for human nature is very strong and rebellious there. I also need to have patience with myself, when I see how much I exact from others. Give me, O Lord, in my relations with my neighbour that virtue which Thou dost so unfailingly exercise towards me. Give me that calmness which is the beginning of patience, that under its peaceful influence I may be able to *bear* everything, to *see* everything, to *endure* everything, without ever losing my self-possession and calmness.

V. *The indulgent love of Christ.*

Our Blessed Lord loves us with our defects, even with our faults, when our will is sincerely resolved to correct the one, and to avoid or repair the others. You have committed many faults during these last few days, even *yesterday*. Jesus hastens to call you to approach unto Him this morning, because you much need to find in His tenderness an encouragement to overcome your faults. You will never receive a severe reproof from our Lord, provided that you are truly penitent; the sorrow caused Him by your sins will never diminish the kindness and compassion of His Heart. Jesus only reproaches us for the sins which we mean to *go on committing*. He is offended by a settled determination to offend Him; and however small the fault to which we cling may be, He resents it as an offence to His sanctity.

I pass over in silence all such sacrilegious profanananations as cause a shudder. Do not be troubled at the sight of your infirmities, do not weaken your present happiness of receiving your Lord by an agitation which is but another form of self-love. Every thought which occupies you with yourself turns away your heart from your Lord present.

My God, I know not whether I be worthy of love or hatred; whether I have, or have not, sanctifying grace, but, notwithstanding my numberless faults and imperfections, I have never lost the desire of consecrating my strength and life to Thee. I often come to Thee with my mind full of trouble and anxiety, my heart moved by strange feelings, and Thou dost condescend to show me my faults in the light of Thy grace, and still to receive me into Thy Heart. What wondrous love! The more indulgent Thou art, Lord, the more I love Thee. May my love increase together with the proofs of Thy goodness.

VI. *The disinterested love of Jesus.*

God had not any need of me to increase His glory. My creation is the work of His goodness and of His desire for my happiness; my preservation is the same benefit perpetually renewed; and my sanctification is the fruit of the death of Jesus Christ alone. Since my creation I have been the object of our Lord's sweet and tender solicitude, in the Holy Eucharist He has bestowed upon me proofs innumerable of a more than maternal tenderness. What has He hitherto received, and what could He expect from me? Nothing but indifference and ingratitude! I am obliged to confess it with feelings of lively regret and shame. But how deeply does this avowal cause me to feel the disinterested love of Jesus? And how earnestly does it incite me to love Him! O my Jesus, after Thy death, were there not many and powerful affections to draw Thee away from earth?

But none of these could shake Thy desire to remain with us. Make me love Thee as much as it is Thy will to be loved by me. In a few moments more, when I receive the Sacred Host, I shall say to Thee: 'I give myself to Thee for ever, O my God!' May these words be the expression, not of my lips only, but of my whole heart and will.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore. Love Jesus Christ.

These acts are the most noble and the most important that we can possibly make: the most important, because they address God Himself; the most noble, because they spring from the best feelings of the heart. How sweet it is to repeat them before the Holy Eucharist!

Let your heart aspire to God in profound adoration and in acts of love.

I. *Perfect love.*

Self-sacrifice is at once the act to which a loving heart aspires, and the measure of the love wherewith it loves. The ineffable act of love by which Jesus gave Himself to the world in the Incarnation, was, according to St. Thomas, a kind of extension of the act by which God, from all eternity, produced the Word. By this act the Son of God received from His Father all that He is and all that He has. Thus, the first of these mysteries served as the model, and, as it were, the law of the Incarnation, and even of the ineffable Sacrament in which Jesus gives Himself more closely, more completely to us. In the Holy Eucharist Jesus lives but to give Himself to us, and reposes only in the absolute gift of Himself.

Love is not merely experiencing a delightful feeling, it is giving all that love requires from us: it is giving it joyfully, and not regretting the greatness of the gift. Jesus has given me everything, His Body, His

Soul, His Blood, His Heart, His Life, His Divinity; all His possessions, His Mother, one of His angels, time, and He promises to give me heaven in eternity! All that He has given me, assures me that His promises are true and faithful. But how great the responsibility of receiving so much, if I give Him nothing. Can I give myself to Jesus less absolutely than Jesus has given Himself to me? Lord Jesus, I adore Thee, I love Thee! I shall never be able to repeat these words as often as I ought in this world, nor as often as I would wish to do, in order that I may express to Thee the feelings of my heart. Grant that I may never grow weary of repeating to Thee my love, as Thou art never weary of hearing me declare it. The voice of the heart can always find new accents in which to speak its love: listen then to the voice of my heart which adores Thee, praises Thee, and loves Thee in company with the angels and the Blessed Virgin.

II. *The liberal love of Jesus.*

'When we give away a very valuable thing to one of our relations or friends, it is an act of liberality,' St. Thomas remarks, 'if we give it to servants, it is a greater act still: if we give it to strangers it is the extreme limit of liberalty; but to an emeny, that would be the *excess*. . . .' Our Blessed Saviour, in laying down His life and in instituting the Holy Eucharist, has certainly displayed Divine love and generosity.

When we ask ourselves what could have been the *motive* of our Lord's liberalty towards us: and when we can discover none but the very *excess* of His love, one would think that every generous heart must feel full to overflowing of admiration, gratitude, and love.

Before Jesus Christ demands anything from me, He begins by loading me with benefits. He hides

the hands that give, that we may think only of His Heart. The feeling of love, or *personal* devotedness, being superior to that feeling which leads us to abandon all that we possess, our Lord demonstrates the excess of His love by *giving Himself up* for us. By His perpetual immolation He has even gone far beyond the simple gift of Himself. This truth is enforced upon me by the consideration of Calvary, the Altar, and the Holy Communion.

When I reflect upon the immense value to me of these immortal monuments of the liberality of my Lord, I am lost in admiration and gratitude. But I have nothing but my liberty to offer in return. I submit it entirely to Jesus, and that I may yet more fully assure to Him the gift of my heart, *I will cease to love myself.*

My Jesus, I am poor. I have need of all things: and Thou hast left me nothing further to ask of Thee! For by Thy Cross, and by Holy Communion, hast Thou not given me all things? I thank Thee for *exhausting*, as it were, in my favour the riches of Thy grace. Since I can neither do anything for Thee nor give Thee anything, I acquit myself of this mighty debt, by offering to Thee Thy Heart, by which all has been bestowed upon me.

My God, receive the Heart of Thy dear Son. It will make amends for my poor and feeble praises and thanksgivings.

III. *The courageous love of Jesus.*

What great and wonderful courage must our Lord have been possessed of when He went boldly up to Jerusalem to endure His cruel sufferings and death. Does He need less courage to endure the crimes which are daily committed against His Divine Majesty? This courage proceeds from His Heart.

Our courage in suffering will be equal to the degree of love felt by us towards our Lord Jesus Christ.

But this love is inspired and given by the Holy Eucharist. Let us beseech our Lord to cause it to grow and increase in our hearts, and in the souls of all those whom we love. I must consent to all that God decrees for me, even should it be His will to strew my path with thorns, and to give me the cup of gall and bitterness to drink all my life long. If all my days are marked with the Cross, I must think that they are laying up a treasure for my soul, the full value of which will only be made known to me in heaven.

Lord Jesus, after receiving Thy crucified Body, I will remember that in deigning to give Thyself to us in the state of Sacrifice, Thou hast carried Thy love to its fullest extent. Certain that I too must suffer, if I desire to be made like unto Thee, I will bear all my trials with resignation. Without suffering, what could I know of the value of sorrow and of the depths of love to Thee it may awaken in my soul? Thy grace is indispensable to enable me to suffer courageously, but when I consider the love which honoured God by the Great Sacrifice, I cannot complain of my lesser sufferings.

IV. *The active love of Jesus.*

How great is the love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! He does not let a single moment pass without performing some act of love for us. Consecrations call Him down each instant upon the Altar. Communions call Him into the hearts of His people.

In all these acts of love our God desires to see His motives appreciated, His love returned, and His end attained. If Jesus had said to me: 'My child, I love thee, and desire to give the greatest possible proofs of My love,' I could never have imagined the gift of the Holy Eucharist, nor could I have formed the slightest idea of the love which It declares. Neither could I have ever had the audacity to reply:

I believe in Thine infinite love O my God, but give me some proof it which shall be within the reach of my comprehension.

If He had consented to do this, I could never have dreamed of proposing to Him, that He should hide His Divine Majesty under the appearances of bread and wine: that I might be able to quench my thirst in Him at the very Fount of Love. That which the mind of man could never have asked or imagined, God has resolved upon and accomplished! But Jesus did not call me to His Table, merely to leave me peacefully reposing at His Feet, He intends to associate me in His great work of saving souls. He intends to make me the instrument of His mercy, the apostle from His Heart to the world. Oh, how deeply should I be penetrated with the thoughts and feelings of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament! How my heart should be influenced in beholding His burning love and ardent desire for the salvation of the souls of men!

Lord Jesus, I am incapable of enlightening the minds or of attracting the hearts of sinners to Thee: but I desire by my life, to show forth the power of Thy love, and to devote all my powers of mind and body to Thy service. May I be ever ready to follow Thee in acts of mercy. Awaken in my cold heart the flame which burns in Thine. May it increase mightily, that my whole conduct may be actuated by love to sinners.

Let me not incur the danger of doing anything contrary to Thy will. May Thy Divine grace cause all my actions and my whole conduct to partake of a nature supernatural and divine.

V. *The immutable love of Jesus.*

Our Lord Jesus Christ, upon entering the world in our nature, gave Himself to us as an everlasting gift *never to be resumed*, in time or in eternity. By

His perpetual presence with us, He reminds us perpetually of His love. Let us consider this wondrous love, so constant that He receives us *tenderly*, even when we have but lately offended Him; and *joyfully*, though He knows that ere long we shall offend Him again. This love, so persevering, so strong, and yet so delicate in all its manifestations, which will not be discouraged by our unfaithfulness in the future, as it has not been discouraged by our offences in the past. When we have laid the burden of our sin at the feet of Jesus, He casts it into the depths of the sea, and it is no more remembered against us. Let us abide in His love. His Presence will establish and confirm our feelings of love and gratitude towards Him.

Jesus has now given me the true and certain proof of His wondrous love for me; His love which existed from all eternity. Ah! let me never be so faithless, so distrustful as to fear that, having thus surrounded my whole life with the tokens of His love and favour, He will withdraw that love from me at the hour of my death. If this fear arises from a sense of my responsibility, of the account which I must render for all the graces which His favour has lavished upon me, then the proofs of His love have only served to increase my ingratitude. The marks of affection which I receive from my friends on earth do not produce this effect upon me; why should the love of Jesus Christ, so far above that of creatures, inspire me with less confidence? Henceforth I will love our Saviour more, and I will fear Him less. It is not too much to love God all my life, when He loved me from all eternity.

O my Divine Master! the love of God, unlike all earthly affections, attains its full power over our hearts only when it becomes an overwhelming passion. Give me grace to love Thee with holy passionate fervour; to love Thee always; that my acts of love may be

no longer so quickly forgotten. Make me love Thee in time and to all eternity.

Conclusion.

Our love for Jesus must be subject to the natural laws of His imposing. If we love Him perfectly as we ought to do, His holy love will absorb all our thoughts and inspire all our actions. Let us be careful how we permit any unknown passion to oppose itself to that Divine love which sanctifies us, for sanctity proceeds from the love of God alone.

ELEVENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

Preparation.

THE institution of the Holy Eucharist was the commencement of a new era. Christ invisible taking the place of Christ visible amongst us. It restores to us in part the sweetness of His presence, in proposing to us important duties. One of the objects of frequent Communion is to encourage us to imitate Jesus Christ, to enter into His feelings, to conform our judgment to His, to practise some of His virtues; in a word, to render the presence of Jesus visible in our outward behaviour, His goodness visible in our actions. Let His patience be in all our movements, His gentleness upon our lips, that God may behold in us the image of His Son.

'*From my youth up I have been in trouble and suffering*' (Psalm lxxxvii. 16).

Jesus in His youth lived the ordinary life of an artisan. In His dress, under the appearance of a

workman, He attracted little attention. He may have worked for wages, and the Divine Hand, from which all our riches proceed, may have been extended to receive the price of His labour. His habits were as humble as His apparent condition; He ate of the bread earned by His daily labour; He knelt to pray upon the bare ground; He travelled on foot, exposed to all the variations of the season and climate; he suffered persecution from His youth up; his life was one continual scene of sadness.

All human lives are condemned to labour; none are exempt from grief. If we escape physical sufferings, we must endure mental ones. Your life will be marked with trials and sorrows; but these may be prevented and followed by grace. Look at Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament—Jesus suffering—and learn to consider that day the *happiest* which brings you most trials and griefs, because therein you can approach most closely to the Divine Pattern whom you strive to imitate. Afflictions trace in us His image. You have suffered much; you may have much yet to suffer. It is a special predestination to have been in sorrow from your youth up. You will see one day how much love there has been in the share of trials which has been awarded you.

O my Lord Jesus! in the name of my sorrows, as well as in the name of Thy love, I implore Thee to come unto me. I thank Thee for giving me enough suffering to embolden me to say, My heart is ready. And if it be not yet fitly prepared for Thy coming, supply all that is wanting by the crosses which Thou wilt yet send me. Before my *passion* of this day now beginning, give me the bread of the strong, the bread which prepared the martyrs for their torments. I entreat Thee, O my Jesus! give me grace to have that holy ardour for Communion and for suffering which is one of the surest marks of sanctity.

II. '*Which of you shall convince Me of sin?*
(St. John viii. 46.)

Our Lord is holiness itself. The minutest investigations of His enemies could find no fault in Him. He is nevertheless full of the tenderest indulgence for our weakness. His kindness adds to the feeling of our unworthiness. Notwithstanding this, let us go to Jesus without distrust. Let us approach His Holy Table with a reverential fear, not with *terror* of His justice. If we think only of our own unworthiness, we shall never dare to communicate at all. If we think only of the love of Jesus Christ, we shall soon lose sight of our own nothingness. The thought of our Lord's holiness and goodness unites in us two virtues : humility, when we consider the state in which we were plunged by sin ; confidence, in seeing our God descend to us, in order to raise us up to Him, and to form a perfect union between us and His Sacred Heart. Can you communicate often without becoming holy? Is it possible to receive Him who is essential sanctity, and yet show no reflection of it in yourself? How true are the words of St. John Chrysostom, that the mouth and heart which receive the most pure Body of Jesus ought to exceed in purity the purest rays of the sun.

Rejoice in the thought of receiving the very Source of Purity, and ask Him to make you perfectly holy.

O thrice holy God! I implore Thee to abase Thyself even unto me, to make me a sharer in Thy holiness. Why cannot I bring to the Holy Table a sanctity proportioned to the sanctity of the Host which I shall receive!

O Divine Host! in which the Word Incarnate veils Himself, sanctify my soul and body that I may worthily participate in this ineffable mystery.

O my Saviour! make me a partaker of Thy purity, and may the Body of the Spouse of Virgins, as a

celestial balm, purify my senses and preserve them from the very slightest stain. Inspire me with strong aversion to all impurity, and aid me to recover my innocence by penitential tears.

III. '*I am not of this world*' (St. John viii. 23).

I need not ask *why* our Lord declares Himself a stranger to the world. I know too well that the world first declared itself at enmity with God. But is there in my heart nothing of this world which can offend my God? On this subject I should make a careful review of my thoughts, my conversations, my tastes, my habits; for the world may have a part in any or all of these and become a tyrant to the soul which does not carefully exclude her. Worldly faults often assume the appearance of virtues. Pride calls itself elevation of mind; curiosity, love of science; idleness obtrudes itself under the guise of necessary repose; discontent mourns the loss of former enjoyments; luxury disguises itself under the plea of 'keeping up appearances;' but in none of these things are the love and the imitation of Jesus to be found.

How often may it not be said of me, that there is no appearance of the imitation or love of Jesus in my life. Though, by His special grace, I may have avoided or abjured those disorders to which the world in general is blind, I ought still to pity those who love the world, in which Jesus will never be found, and pray that their eyes may be opened to the danger of dying with their hearts still fixed upon it.

Lord Jesus, what grace Thou hast bestowed upon me in detaching me from the world! I do not love Thee as I ought, but I earnestly *desire* to love Thee. I am indignant with my own heart, that it feels so little for Thee; that being empty of love it does not hunger and thirst more ardently after that living Bread which alone can fill it with Thy love. Come to me,

my Jesus; my very poverty and wretchedness make me a fitter guest for the Banquet of thine infinite mercy. Come to heal my soul of the evils that it has contracted in the world. I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof; but say the word, and I will come to receive Thee with confidence.

IV. '*I judge not any man*' (St. John viii. 15).

Jesus perceived all the angry, improper, and perfidious thoughts of those with whom He had to deal, and yet He never lost His calmness and self-possession in conversing with them. Far from resenting these thoughts, He was affectionate and tender in all His ordinary relations. We behold Him respecting the secrecy of conscience, regarding the law of charity rather than that knowledge of the hearts of all men which He necessarily possessed, because such is the order of Divine Providence towards us. He feels no indignation now against such as despise and wish Him evil. He grieves for their bad dispositions, but He rejects them not; rather He strives yet more earnestly to win them to Himself, in a word, He treats us according to the law of mercy rather than of justice.

I have a very superficial knowledge of my failings and my faults. I often deceive myself in attempting to judge of my own actions; I ought therefore to distrust my hasty, ill-considered judgments on the conduct of others, and never to be suspicious of them or distrust their sincerity. It is equitable to make allowance for faults on both sides, and to leave it to the Lord alone, Who seeth the secrets of all hearts, to pronounce judgment upon our fellows.

I will no longer judge persons or things from my own point of view, nor according to their success, nor according to the various untrustworthy reports which I may have heard, without examining into their truth. I will respect the views and the intentions of others. I resolve to interpret all doubtful actions in a favour-

able sense, and like our Lord to lean rather towards charity than justice.

My God, I will endeavour to pay more attention to my own conduct than to that of my neighbours, with which I have nothing to do. Give me grace to persevere with vigour in all my good resolutions, and not to shrink from the humble confession of my sins, especially of those which I have committed against my neighbours.

V. '*The Son of Man hath not where to lay His head*' (St. Luke ix. 58).

These words ought to teach us a great lesson of detachment from temporal possessions. How can we consider these things so important, so necessary, when we remember that the Creator of the whole world had not where to lay His head, that in fact He was possessed in the world of nothing whatever? These words are true of Him still in the Holy Eucharist, where Jesus dwells in borrowed tabernacles, from which persecution may banish Him at any time, and oblige Him to hide in the meanest abodes, rather than withdraw from us His presence. But did not our Lord think sorrowfully that many hearts would refuse to give Him shelter in His state of Host, for the true tabernacle of Christ is *within us?* This thought should quicken exceedingly your desire of Holy Communion. Offer your heart to Jesus, not as a *loan*, but as a *gift*, that He may rest there. And that this gift may be an irrevocable one, ask Him to free you from all attachment to outward things. Make use of whatever the divine munificence may *send* you, with gratitude, but without affection, for the day approacheth when all these things must be *restored* to Him. Imitate our Lord in the choice that He made of poverty in earthly things, and, when you are able, always choose the poorest and humblest part for yourself. Your reward shall be great.

I will ask Jesus that I may be more faithful in offering Him the sacrifice of an immense number of little trifling things, which my love of ease has rendered indispensable to me. I will beseech Him to assist me, as my natural generosity is small, by permitting me to taste the supernatural joy of *giving something* to my God, from whom I have received everything, and who is now about to give Himself to me.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Pause, and let your soul remain in deep adoration before the thought of our Lord and Saviour now present in you. Learn with St. Paul to discern Christ in the Holy Eucharist, that is, seek to find Him in it, and rest your whole heart and hope upon Him.

Ask Him that you may imitate Him faithfully according to the measure of grace which is given unto you.

I. *'I do always those things that please My Father'* (St. John viii. 29).

How many thoughts are suggested to me by these words of the Divine Master. First, it is sweet to think that God takes pleasure in beholding His Divine Son in my heart, and that in giving Himself to me Jesus is performing an action which is agreeable to His Father. But since Jesus does always what is pleasing to His Father, I must not be surprised if in the disposition both of our spiritual and natural life, He should have less regard to our moral and physical aptitudes, to our desires or prayers, than to the Will of His Father, and to our real needs which are known to Himself alone. He does not always give me that which I desire most, but that which pleases God—that grace which I need to make me pleasing in His eyes. This is the cause of some strange events which appear to us inexplicable. But

His justice and mercy always direct these circumstances, which may remain unexplained on earth but will undoubtedly be revealed to us as to their cause and necessity in heaven.

It is necessary to pay continual homage to our Lord in all our actions, and to take as from His hand and heart those daily tribulations which would cast too dark a shade over our lives, were they not portions of the Cross of Jesus.

I will question Jesus heart to heart, and I will ask Him what I shall do for Him as my act of thanksgiving after Communion; what I ought to *add to*, or *cut off* from my life; what I ought *to bear*, or *to suffer*, what I ought *to reform*, or *to sanctify more fully;* in fine, what it may please Him to receive at my hands, and from my heart.

I thank Thee for the gift of Thy Body and Blood, O my Jesus; it is the very gift of love, for Thou art love itself. And as love has caused Thee to suffer here below in Thy adorable Flesh, so may it be in me the sanctifying principle of all my actions and sufferings. Act strongly upon my heart to make me accomplish Thy will. As nothing could at this moment separate my will from thine, so let not any cause of division exist between Thy soul and mine. May Thy thoughts be my thoughts, and Thy desires my desires. May my words be as it were an echo of thine, impressed with that humble, discreet, and charitable sweetness, which is the true characteristic of the Christian mind. Grant that henceforth I may be but as the instrument of Thy divine operation, and that I may act only under the influence of Thy Sacred Heart.

II. '*I seek not my own glory*' (St. John viii. 50).

In every soul humility is the fruit of a good Communion. Humility is the *touch-stone* of the abiding of Jesus in us. Examine yourself and see whether

you have any desire of *making an appearance in the world.*

If you steadfastly resist your lower impulses, and do nothing from a motive of vanity, or a secret desire of attracting observation, see also whether you love humility, *because* Jesus Christ set you the example of loving it. Learn from Him to fly vainglory, but also to hide nothing through a false humility. It is certain that the saints despised their own glory. Their keen apprehension of the ever present eye of God made them desirous to conceal themselves from the eye of men. St. Teresa observes with reason that humility does not prevent our recognizing the special graces that our Lord has been pleased to bestow upon us. 'The knowledge of these gifts,' she says, 'should be an assistance to our humility and gratitude, by convincing us that we are more unworthy to receive such favours than others. The most essential thing is to distinguish between that which is *our own* in us, and that which comes from God.'

Oh, my soul, far from imitating Jesus, thou hast sought the praise of men, thou hast loved that passing glory which disappears so soon, and leaves when faded so useless and mournful a regret. Hide thyself, then, in thy Saviour's Heart, in which only you can find arms to combat the suggestions of vanity, which are often caused by the simplest and even by the humblest actions. The weapon which He will give thee is that *contempt of self*, of which a perfect example may be seen in the Holy Eucharist.

I adore Thee, O my Saviour, for ever occupied about Thy Father's business, but I love the source of Thy zeal, even Thy love. I prostrate myself at Thy feet, and I love Thy mercy which lends a gracious ear to my petitions. I have sought the applause of creatures rather than Thy approbation, therefore am I so empty of graces and virtues. Nothing can so surely detach me from vanity as Thy divine love.

Draw me into Thy Sacred Heart, and may I there seek to please Thee only. When shall I be perfectly united to Thee? When wilt Thou be my all for evermore?

III. '*My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me*' (St. John iv. 34).

It cost our Blessed Lord very dear to conform Himself to His Father's will in the great work of reparation and our redemption. It cost Him dear to accomplish that work in every little detail for the space of thirty-three years. And yet He embraced it with so much ardour that it was to Him like His daily food.

My union with Jesus being a *real* union, I cannot suffer my will to rebel against Him without destroying that holy union. My will must be sustained and nourished by the will of God; it must bow to Him in all things; it must embrace it as its daily food. If I determine to seek out the divine will, and obey it faithfully in all things, I shall fit myself to enjoy and profit by my own union with Jesus Christ. And if I am obliged to make painful efforts in order to bring my will into accordance with His, I am assured that our Lord will bless those efforts and cause them to bring forth abundant fruit.

I must prefer to do whatever the order of Divine Providence may set before me, rather than follow the course of my own inclination; for if any derangement of my plans causes me to feel angry, it is a proof that I love to do my own will better than to obey the commands of God.

O my Divine Master and Example, grant that I may be able to bear witness to myself, that I have in all things sought Thy will, and not my own pleasure. Grant that I may listen less to my own selfish nature, and may be more careful to consult Thy laws, my duties, and Thy good pleasure, in all

things. Show me Thy will, and enable me to accomplish it faithfully. Grant me to love Thee, O my Jesus, to do Thy will, or to die. For I would no longer live without pleasing and loving Thee.

IV. '*I am in the midst of you as He that serveth*' (St. Luke xxii. 27).

Jesus took to Himself the lowest place on earth, He made Himself the servant of His creatures. We have seen Him washing the feet of His Apostles—a service usually rendered by domestics. 'Imitate Me,' He says (in the words of the pious author of the *Imitation*), 'Imitate Me, who being your God, have made Myself the servant of your soul. Like Me, take the lowest place. If you cannot act as a servant, learn to endure patiently whatever annoyances may be inseparable from your position.'

The sight of Jesus reduced to the condition of a servant may well make me blush for my unreasonable requirements from my servants, and pray for the love of humility. I have indeed reason to pray earnestly for true humility. Who is it that has caused me to be born in a position to command rather than serve?

Why can I not endure that a servant should neglect my orders, or perform his duties carelessly, when Jesus is never weary of hearing my requests, often too hasty and urgent; of listening to my complaints, my murmurs; when He never reproaches me for my distractions and wandering thoughts, which cause so many interruptions in my prayers? How ashamed I ought to be of making impatient answers to irrelevant remarks, or of suffering my annoyance to become visible in my face at any unforeseen or untimely interruption. O my soul, be gentle to thy neighbour, who annoys or irritates thee, because Jesus Christ is always gentle to thee, and serves thee in all thy needs, often even in thy fancies.

If we consider our sinful nature, and the dust out

of which God created us, we shall be ashamed of our unwillingness to conform our own feelings and inclinations to the habits of those with whom we are obliged to live.

I adore Thee, O my Jesus, in Thy abasements on earth, in the tabernacle, and in my heart. It is my sinful self whom Thou dost serve with such wonderful condescension at the Holy Table, and in all my needs. Thy humility instructs me, it affects me. Help me to sacrifice my pride at Thy feet, that I may perceive Thy presence in humility, silence, and peace.

V. *'I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you'* (St. John xiii. 15).

Our Lord does not require us to imitate Him by violent efforts, but He desires to *lead us gently* to the works of our calling. Each one of us should consult the state of his soul, his situation in life, the attraction of grace, the wise advice of others, and then proceed to act as under the eye of our Lord.

Associate yourself closely with Him in all your daily actions, saying, 'In this house of prayer Jesus prays by my mouth.' During your work say, 'Jesus labours by my hands.' In every action of your life say to yourself, 'Jesus makes use of me to reproduce as it were what He did during His life of thirty-three years on earth.' Then you will have the consoling hope that your life will be conformable to that of Jesus.

I should consider myself, with due respect, as an instrument employed by Jesus for His Father's glory; if I am permitted to think that Jesus, working in me by His grace, has united His life to mine.

An infinite variety of motives may persuade me to the imitation of Jesus Christ. My object is not to *appear*, but truly *to be*, what God, who knoweth the hearts of all men, wills that I should be. In a great many cases I have thought, spoken, acted, rather for the sake of *appearing to be* than of *being* a true

Christian, but henceforth I will endeavour rather *to be* than to *appear* to be a Christian!

Most sweet Saviour, perfect Example of my life, receive me unto Thy school, and teach me what I ought to do in order to resemble Thee. Reveal to me especially the secret of Thy humble, hidden, labours, and charitable life, which Thou ledst during thirty-three years, and which Thou still continuest in the tabernacle. Give me grace to bear in my soul a resemblance as close as possible to Thee.

Conclusion.

We ought to make a continual, serious, careful, practical, study of the conduct of our Blessed Lord. We ought to study it, in order to imitate it, to become united to Him in mind and heart. In all the accidents of life, which are so trying to our patience, let us look to Jesus and accept them all patiently. Let us ask this grace in Holy Communion, by which Jesus desires to make us like unto Him.

TWELFTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

JESUS AND ST. PETER AT THE SEA OF TIBERIAS. (St. Matt. xiv.)

Preparation.

The sea is an image of the world, and the boat tossed upon it an image of our hearts.

Rebellious passions, like the roaring waves of the sea, threaten to swallow it up. Let us have recourse to the Holy Eucharist, and all the storms which we so frequently encounter in our spiritual life will be succeeded by a perfect calm.

I. '*The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves*' (St. Matt. xiv. 24).

In this world our life is like a troubled sea, full of rocks, although they are partly hidden from our sight. Notwithstanding these dangers, I am more afraid of the storms within me than of the dangers in the world.

Pleasures and temptations provoke me to the combat, they force me to resist them. I defend myself, but too often my defence is in vain. I can escape these by flight, but wherever I go I carry within me an inward storm. Sometimes a word, a look, a letter is sufficient to let loose the raging waves. Now, indeed, very painfully my soul is tossed by the waves, but I know where to find my heavenly Pilot.

Deep is the night of my senses, and impenetrable the mystery that surrounds His Presence; but He is there. Although He is invisible, I know His eye is ever on me. His hand upholds the world. The tempest is the time of his power. The ocean is no more to Him than the drop of water with which an infant plays. I can understand the Apostles' anxiety

during the absence of their Divine Master, and I feel that I am doubly happy in never losing Him, for He is ever with us.

But for the tempest, I should not receive the special grace which enables me to contend with it; that grace which is sent me in answer to prayer, to overcome my wandering, my egotistical, my worldly thoughts.

It is in the midst of peril that I have most strongly felt the grace, unfailing as the promise of God, which is given in answer to prayer. Will not Jesus, the desire of my soul, enter and calm my troubled mind? In Him reigns eternal peace and harmony; in me all is confusion and distress. I call Jesus to my aid; He will restore calmness to my soul. And as my storms arise from the depths of my evil nature, Jesus alone can say to the troubled waves of passion, Peace, be still.

Lord, I have Thy grace in an earthen vessel, so frail that I may lose it at the slightest blow. Deliver me from vain thoughts and anxieties; from self-love, and all the rotten thoughts which spring from it; from all undue care and anxiety about earthly things. Forgive my sins, for which my repentance is still too imperfect, purify my soul from all worldly stains. And that I may obtain these graces, I offer Thee the infinite merits of Him by whom alone our prayers can obtain acceptance in Thy sight.

II. '*In the fourth watch of the night, Jesus came unto His disciples, walking on the sea.*'

The liquid element of water cannot support the weight of the human body. But Jesus made no difficulty of performing a miracle, in order to come to the aid of His disciples. He saw them fighting with the waves, at once He flew to help them. The sea lies between Him and His disciples; He walks upon the sea! The almighty power by which this abyss

was created, can make it uphold the feet of its Creator! How many miracles has Jesus performed in coming to seek me upon the troubled sea of the world? He descends into the hands of the priests; the sacred species does not uphold Him; He upholds the appearances.

It was about the end of the night, in the time of profoundest darkness, that our Lord approached His disciples. But for us, He provides two light-houses, to guide us on our way: in heaven, the Heart of Jesus; on earth, the Sacred Host; and these are sufficient to preserve us from shipwreck.

The darkness of the night resembles the mystery surrounding the Blessed Sacrament. 'Our Lord regards us through the veil of His Flesh.' He hides Himself from our bodily eyes, that we may learn to behold Him with the eye of faith. But at the rising of the Eternal Day, I, too, shall have risen from the grave to behold it, and then *I shall see* the God of my heart, the God who will save me by faith in His Word, and hope in His unfailing promises.

O Lord Jesus, I adore Thee under the cloud, which mercifully veils Thy glory here below. Although Thou dost not here appear to us *as Thou art*, I shall nevertheless receive *all that Thou art.* The rising of the sun, in the natural world, is heralded, says Bossuet, by a faint gleam or reflection of whiteness shed over the face of the earth; so should my soul, at the near approach of the Sun of Righteousness, believe more firmly, hope more ardently. Give me such a lively faith as shall be the dawn of eternal day, and leave not in my soul a hiding-place so remote that the rays of divine grace shall not illuminate it.

III. '*When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, It is a spirit.*'

Behold how easily the mind, which is busied about other things than Jesus, deceives itself; takes true

things for false; and conjures up false ideas about the truth, even about our Lord Himself. But it is Jesus only who crosses the waves to come to our assistance, when our bark is driven here and there by contrary waves and currents. He instructs us to approach Him by the way which He shall choose. He will always be ready to perform miracles in our favour if we have confidence in His mercy.

The Apostles were so terrified that they mistook Jesus for a spirit. However, according to St. Augustine, our souls preserve in themselves the true notion of things, even though they may seem through ignorance, or forgetfulness, or fear, to be ignorant of it, or to have forgotten it.

Experience and reason teach us to form our opinions with justice and moderation. The mind which despises frivolous occupations, and submits to the direction of grace, will attain to a great height. The soul that while it is still tossed to and fro on the stormy waves of life, looks fixedly at heaven, is best fitted to behold the things of earth in a true light.

Do not be afraid of approaching Jesus. 'He seems,' says St. Teresa, 'to send severe trials upon those who love Him, but He does so in order to reveal, in the greatness of the trial, the exceeding greatness of His love.' Do not be too much afraid of communicating, even though you may, through surprise or forgetfulness, have fallen into certain faults which you should have made more vigorous efforts to overcome; for you should remember that the Holy Eucharist confers upon us, not only an increase of love, but also of strength to conquer by little and little all inclination to venial sin.

I fear our Lord, but of what am I then afraid in Him? I desire nothing but His will. I wish to please Him in all things, I take pleasure in nothing so much as in His presence. I believe I love Him a little. How can I fail to love Him, since He never

ceases to do me good; since He has done me good all my life long, even when I have not thanked Him for it, and since He will do me good always, even for ever and ever? I love Him above all things, because He alone is worthy of being supremely loved.

I will ask Him to give me that perfect love, which casteth out fear.

O my Jesus, since Thou lovest me with all my faults, give me grace to endeavour more earnestly every day to correct my faults: that at the time of my death, nothing more may be left in me that shall be displeasing to Thee.

Grant, Lord, that I may never forget Thy presence, that I may ever remember, and be grateful for Thy mercies. Though I may often be obliged to leave Thee here, suffer me not to lose Thee for ever and ever.

IV. '*Be of good cheer, it is I; be not afraid.*'

When Jesus encourages, there is no more cause to fear. Why have we not more confidence in His Vicar, whose voice is not different from His.

These words, 'It is I,' express the sovereignty, the immensity, the plenitude of Being; they made the Apostles recognise at once the Master whose voice was so dear to them; who had so often in their presence commanded and received the ready submission of all the forces of nature. But how sweet are these words, when they issue from the tabernacle to comfort the afflicted and tempest-tossed soul! You are afraid; go then to the Holy Table, and there, receiving Jesus, your spirit will be calmed by His consoling voice. What have you to fear? You have received life and happiness, two gifts which come from heaven, and will accompany you there. Say then with confidence, Come, Lord Jesus, I love Thee, I hope in Thee, who art my strength, my support, my refuge, my Saviour, and my God.

O Jesus, I thank Thee that Thou hast not made Thy presence terrible to me. I thank Thee that during the time I knew Thee not, Thou didst keep me suspended between good and evil, until Thy grace, taking possession of my soul, and filling it with light, inspired me with feelings of love to the Holy Eucharist. My heart would have suffered far more in traversing the weary paths of life, had I not been comforted by Thy love in my afflictions. I am not worthy to live by Thy love, but my most ardent desire is to love Thee so well, that I should die of grief, for having been so long ignorant of Thee, and above all for having offended Thee.

V. '*Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water*' (St. Matt. xiv. 28, 29).

This doubt of our Lord's presence, expressed by St. Peter, causes me to feel still more deeply my own happiness, in knowing that Jesus is always near me, so that I need never say '*If* it be Thee Lord, in the Holy Eucharist, suffer me to come unto Thee. Since it is truly Jesus whom I am about to meet at the Holy Table, and to receive into my heart, should I not fear less to walk upon the salt waves, even upon my fears, if by so doing I am certain of meeting Him more directly? Doubtless, it is needful that Jesus should bid me come unto Him for I know that my sins have opened a great gulf between Him and my soul. However, if I seek Him with my whole heart, if love be the exciting cause of my desire for Holy Communion, our Lord will be pleased with the earnestness of my desires. From Peter's haste in quitting his bark to reach Jesus more quickly, I may learn that the soul which clings to worldly things will not attain to union with God, unless some sorrow, or unforeseen misfortune loosens its hold on earth, and brings it quickly to the feet of our Lord. I may learn also, that the soul which is inflamed with love

for Jesus Christ fears no obstacle, and is ready to confront every difficulty and danger, even to pass over the waves of the sea, or to suffer death that it may unite itself to the Lord. It is less perilous to walk upon the stormy sea of penitence, unto which the soul is plunged upon leaving the shores of attachment to this world, than to run gaily over the level plain of worldly comforts and pleasures. True love passes rapidly over the difficulties which it meets in the path of holiness, thinking only of the happiness of reaching the Saviour whom it loves. I should be inexcusable were I to suffer myself to be discouraged by any difficulty, when Jesus deigns to permit me to communicate so frequently.

Act of Thanksgiving

Make an act of faith in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in you.

Make an act of adoration and love.

Dwell upon those words of peace and holy consolation spoken by our Lord: I am thy God! I am thy salvation!

Prepare to make every sacrifice that Jesus may require of you.

Ask that His love may make your final perseverance sure.

I. '*Jesus said, Come.*'

This word Come, conveys the meaning, 'Fear nothing, for I am with thee.' With Me, you may dare according to the measure of your confidence. But when at each Communion Jesus says to me: Come to my Table: does He not also mean to say, you can attain to a higher degree of sanctity? Fear not *this* or *that.* With me all such obstacles will disappear. If then, I do not increase after each Communion in firm confidence in Jesus Christ; if I do not advance more firmly towards the end of my

labours, it must be that I am wanting in that holy boldness which is ready to dare all things, to possess Jesus Christ.

The reply of our Lord to Peter shows us that He is not displeased by even apparently indiscreet petitions which we address to Him, when they are dictated by fervent love. We may ask and obtain miracles even, if we observe the sweet condition which He imposed upon His Apostles. Ah, let us not turn our feet from Jesus, let us be always guided and attracted by His loving Heart, that so we may live and die 'looking unto Jesus.'

Jesus has said to me, Come to my Table, and He has given Himself there to me! He says to me always: Come! for though He may not have called me to *leave* this world, He wills me to *rise above it* in my desires and heart, and to disengage myself as much as possible from all purely earthly attachments.

II. '*And Peter, coming down out of the ship, walked on the water, to go to Jesus.*'

What courage is given by the presence of Jesus Christ! Peter, hearing his Master's voice, springs into the sea, though for aught he knows, the waves may straightway swallow him. O wondrous power of faith and love in the obedient soul; the waters form a solid pathway for the disciple to approach his Lord!

What greater proof could Jesus have given of the resources which he has prepared for us in time of danger in the most Holy Eucharist? It may be said of the faithful communicant, as St. Augustine says of one who loves God, 'If you love God, you may walk upon the water; the fear which the world knoweth is trodden under your feet! But if you love the world, it will swallow you up, for it does not support, but rather devours those who love it.'

Jesus grants our prayers, our desires, at the favour-

able time, because love never suffers repulse. But if we ask too boldly, He will enlighten our minds by His gentle chastisement, to teach us more humility. I need not then be afraid, even though my path be strewn with thorns; for Jesus Christ can make me walk upon those thorns without injury, just as easily as He enabled Peter to come to Him on the water. Neither have I cause to be afraid of the barriers raised by my own ignorance, by the world, or by the devil, between Jesus and my soul: for Jesus can overthrow a thousand walls with as much ease as He can prevent a man from drowning.

But Peter's eagerness to reach his Lord may teach me also, that courage is no less necessary to our spiritual perfection than submission to the Divine will. Never has a saint acted like a coward upon occasions of difficulty and danger. One look at his Lord and Master inspires him with courage; which is as much as to say that faith should be the first action of the supernatural life; hope, the last of earth; and love, the eternal act of the elect. I will endeavour to make unceasing acts of all these virtues.

O Jesus, if it were possible by multiplying the outward acts to increase the inward feelings of the heart, I would never cease to make acts of love to Thee. Give me grace to reiterate them frequently.

III. '*But when he saw the wind boisterous, Peter was afraid, and began to sink.*'

Let us always depend upon the power of Jesus, and always distrust our own strength. If we depend upon ourselves in ever so small a degree, we shall sink that instant into the abyss of pride. Nor let us imagine that we can easily escape from the dangers in which we have unadvisedly placed ourselves; for grace, which alone can enable us to do any good thing in the order of salvation, is as necessary for the continuation of a good action as for the commence-

ment of it. This grace is granted only in answer to prayer. As Mary has all power over the Heart of her Son, St. Bernard recommends us to have continual recourse to her protection. 'You know,' he says, 'that in this life we are more apt to be buffeted by waves and tempests, than to walk peacefully on solid ground. If you desire to be saved from destruction, never lose sight of the Star of the Sea. Invoke Mary. In time of doubt, in time of great temptation, in fear of sin, in all discouragements and perplexities, remember that Mary can give you aid: hasten to implore her assistance. By following Mary, you are sure of not missing the path which leads to salvation. Never despair when you have recommended yourself to her kindness. Supported by her, you cannot fall. If she protects you, you are sure to be safe; and if she guides you, you will reach the kingdom of heaven in safety.'

Lord Jesus, may the protection of Thy holy Mother defend me from the wind of lukewarmness; from the wind of inconstancy in Thy service; from the breath of pride; from the breath which brings to my ears an echo of the rumours or pleasures of the world; in short, from whatever can make me walk with unsteady, faltering steps in the road which leads to heaven.

O Mary, I fear myself even more than the temptations of the world, because they cannot hurt me unless my will entertains and consents to them. I entreat thee to enable me to overcome them all by thy continual assistance.

IV. '*He cried, saying, Lord, save me. And Jesus stretched out His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?*'

We see here an admirable illustration of the effect of our prayers upon the Heart of Jesus. 'The man who prays,' says St. Chrysostom, 'is closely united to the God who heareth prayer.' He begins by giving

us instant and powerful assistance, and only when the peril is past does He reproach us for our distrust of Him: for the fear expressed in our cry of terror and distress.

Let us rely wholly upon the Divine hand, stretched out to support us upon the bitter waters of trial; to withdraw us from the perils we incur in our passage through this world. Jesus comes full of tenderness and power: can we refuse to rest upon His Heart, whose love will never fail us, even when all else on earth should fail?

I have learnt by sad experience that my mind and heart are full of instability and deceit. I must have to support and guide me over the waves of life, the Hand, the Heart of Jesus, who always welcomes those who *fly to His arms for refuge*, with confidence in His love.

O Jesus, Thou art my succour; what have I to fear? Restrain me always when Thou seest that I am ready to fall unto sin. The tempest often rages in my soul, but I fear it not; for when I have communicated, Thy almighty power is within me, and upholds me. I shall not suffer shipwreck, although the weight of my sins might well sink me into the abyss of eternal destruction. Grant me, in all my sufferings, the tranquillity of faith, and may I always fly to Thee for succour when the stormy wind of temptation begins to blow.

V. '*Of a truth Thou art the Son of God.*'

This solemn act of faith, which was uttered by night, at the conclusion of a miracle which had struck the Apostles with astonishment and admiration, may show us how the time of trial, represented by *night*, is a time of grace also, during which the soul receives great light, and an increase of faith in the power of God.

To our eyes it is always night in the tabernacle,

nevertheless in its presence we receive great enlightenment, a lively faith in the divinity of Jesus, and deep feelings of love to Him. The obscurity of this great mystery obliges me to practise the three theological virtues indispensable to salvation in a peculiarly comforting manner; Faith convinces me of the Real Presence of our Lord; Hope raises the veil of silence in which He enshrouds Himself; Love would tear those veils asunder, were it not that the mercy of God has seen fit to hide from me the marvels which my weak nature would be unable to behold, and live. How could I possibly avoid feeling a strong, mysterious attraction to the Holy Eucharist, since though it veils Christ indeed from my bodily eyes, yet it brings me the full certainty of the Infinity, Omnipotence, and Eternity of the Being whom I adore? May I not think that our Lord abides in that sacramental obscurity, where He seems to be nearer to us; more disposed to listen to us than elsewhere, in order that I may be more recollected in His presence, less attracted towards outward things, more drawn to offer Him my adoration and love? Like the Venerable Carmelite, Anna of Jesus, who said, 'I would not exchange my condition for all the pleasures offered by the world,' I would not, for all its most brilliant pleasures, exchange one Communion, nor even one hour of prayer in the presence of Him who is my Sovereign Good.

Keep me, O my God, in this mind till death. Give me yet more love for the Holy Eucharist, and more contempt for worldly pleasures.

Conclusion.

After Holy Communion, let us shower all our distrusts, troubles, and sorrows into the Heart of Jesus. Let us forget ourselves in the contemplation of His mercy. But as it is difficult to withdraw our minds from the absorbing pre-occupation of self-love, let us

ask our angel guardian to help us in that labour, without which we cannot attain to a settled peace of the soul.

THIRTEENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE WIDOW OF NAIM.
(St. Luke vii.)

Preparation.

In the touching scene which took place at Naim, let us study the loving-kindness of the Heart of Jesus Christ. We shall learn, in all the afflictions of life, to expect everything from His Divine compassion, and to find in Holy Communion a sure resource in all adversity. However great our sufferings may be, the Holy Eucharist pours an unction into our souls which consoles us for all; and never did a resigned sufferer retire from the Holy Table without a fresh accession of life and courageous endurance.

I. '*Jesus went into a city called Naim.*'

This journey of Jesus to the city of Naim, at the very moment that a great affliction happened there, mercifully paved the way for a meeting between death and life. Our Lord delighted in the thought that He was on His way to console an inconsolable mourner, and He still takes delight in restoring life to souls, or in giving it more abundantly to those who already possess it.

Is He not always on His way from heaven to earth, for the purpose of supplying our wants and of consoling us in our sorrows?

Do I not know that the Heart of Jesus feels the same sympathy with my trials as with the bitter sorrow

of the poor widow of Naim? Not once only in my life have I found Him in the moment of my deepest agony; but as often as I suffer, as I weep, do I find Him waiting on the Altar to come and chase the sadness from my heart, filling it with the joy of His presence. He waits for me: I must not make Him wait in vain.

O my Jesus, I come to Thee because I am sad. I come to Thee because I suffer. I come to Thee because no created thing can give me consolation: because I feel the deepest need of Thy ineffable comfort. I come also to entreat Thee for patience and resignation, to make me suffer well. I offer unto Thee all the firmness of my faith, all the liveliness of my hope; I would that I could say also, all the ardour of my love. I offer myself entirely to Thee, that Thou mayest do unto me according to Thy great mercy. I desire to receive Thee, O Jesus, to obtain from Thy bounty the necessary grace of self-sacrifice. By faith I have perceived its necessity: I understand the supernatural joy of sacrificing myself, of sowing in grief to reap in gladness, not, indeed, in this land of exile, but in our paternal home in heaven. Prepare me for this Communion which I offer Thee, for the souls of those who afflict me, who overshadow my life with sadness and anxiety. I pray for them and for myself. May they love Thee hereafter in heaven with me!

II. '*When Jesus came near to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow, and much people of the city were with her.*'

The moment of final separation is always solemn. The hour in which we lose the being we love best on earth, without hope of ever again seeing him here below, is the saddest in our whole life. It is sorrow of the most overpowering kind to the soul which has

not tasted of that heavenly comfort which is to be found in the Holy Eucharist.

But if even death and the grave are open to the power of Him who can, when He pleases, bring the dead to life and cause the dry bones to live by His reviving breath, how much more wonderfully is His power displayed in the resurrection of the soul unto eternal life! It is to work this great, this much-needed miracle, that Jesus remains with us upon earth. It is to restore life to lost and wandering souls that He descends upon the Altar. His Heart longs to comfort the mourners and afflicted ones, and therefore He comes down to them, knowing that if we had to ascend into heaven to seek for Him we should not perhaps have strength to raise our weeping eyes to His throne of glory.

I have seen many of my beloved ones go before me into eternity, I mourn over their absence. But I have yet more cause for tears in beholding the blindness of those who are wandering in the paths of sin, without fear of *eternal* death. What misery to suffer without love, without becoming more fit for heaven, without glorifying Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, without being united to Jesus crucified! How great is the goodness of God in having preserved me from such a fall as this! The world knows nothing of this misery, nor can it lend me any aid in preserving those who are dear to me from the perils which surround them on every side. But from the Altar, Jesus sees my grief, His holy human Heart pities me, not only as the Almighty God, beholding all things, comprehending all things, but with the special regard of His holy Humanity. Not a feeling of sorrow arises in my heart, not a tear falls from my eyes, but they are numbered, and gathered up in the Heart of Jesus.

All my complaints are heard by Him. His ear is open to my prayers. I suffer; but I am going to Communion, Jesus will dry my tears. I suffer; but

Jesus loves me, and sympathizes in my sorrows. I suffer; but I look forward and hope for heaven. What can I desire more, when Jesus is at my side!

My God, I suffer deeply; I have great sorrows in the present, dark apprehensions for the future; but when I can pour forth my heart into Thy loving bosom, my sorrows are already half dissipated. Faith teaches me to regard all my trials in the light of a preparation for eternity; it bids me consider that they are working for my good, that the more I suffer the more happiness I may gain, and that the chastising hand which strikes me is that of a tender Father. My God, grant that faith and hope may bring me with gentle violence to the sincere love of Thy holy will, and that my sufferings may cause those great virtues to increase in me continually. Grant, Lord Jesus, that by this Communion I may obtain grace to love Thee more and more, even though I should die of grief, for then I shall be sure of arising to that eternal life which is all love.

III. '*And when the Lord saw her He had compassion on her.*'

Deep afflictions attract the compassionate regards of our Saviour. Amongst the crowd of mourners which followed the widow's son, He noticed only the weeping, inconsolable mother herself. This poor woman was so absorbed in her sorrow that she did not see Jesus. And though one of her companions may have said to her, Take courage, the Prophet is near, she doubtless had not the heart to lift up her eyes to Him; for it is difficult to believe in the possibility of consolation when we are in deep affliction, and even if comfort is presented to us, we feel at first indifferent to it. The voice of creatures is powerless, without doubt; but we can always go to Jesus upon the Altar, where He is ready to dry our tears and assuage our sorrows.

Our Lord, who sympathized so deeply at Naim with this poor widow, suffering the deepest affliction that the human heart can feel, is just as ready to take pity upon all such as are in a similar condition at the present time. Will not He be always ready to console the weeping mothers, alike by His power and His love? He only asks that we should tell Him all our sorrows, for one of His chief motives for dwelling with us on the Altar is to give consolation to all the afflicted. Know, poor mother, mourning over your departed child, that his absence is but for a moment. Open your grief-stricken heart to the Lord. The soul that has taken its flight to heaven is like the traveller who has journeyed into distant countries. But the traveller is not sure that he will ever return to his friends or see his native country, whereas the soul escaped from earth is certain to behold his loved ones again, when they shall rejoice him above. Hence before the throne of God he sees them all distinctly, he hears their words, he prays for them with a more perfect knowledge of their real wants, and a more earnest desire to give them assistance by his prayers.

O my Jesus, the chalice of my life overflows with grief. I might, like many others, have just touched it with my lips, instead of receiving it meekly at Thine hand, and thus I should have suffered even more, without gaining any consolation. But Thou hast willed otherwise. Oh, what gratitude I owe Thee for thus giving me, by the gift of Thy Heart, strength to bear my cross. Prepare me to approach the Holy Table with faith, humility and love, quickened by gratitude. I consent to suffer, if by that means I may better preserve Thy grace, or rather acknowledge it with more lively gratitude.

IV. '*Weep not.*

The suffering heart does not go in search of consolation, it waits for friends to discover and pity its

grief. It has not courage to speak about it. But we run great risk of self-deception by desiring human consolation, while we are unwilling to seek for it, for rare indeed is that friendly solicitude which observes the shade upon our brow, divining our griefs before we can speak of them, and entering into them with the profound and consoling sympathy of love. Nothing is more bitter than to weep for the sake of weeping; nothing more sweet than to weep before the Heart of Jesus.

If this widow's son, who was possibly cut off by death in the midst of some sinful indulgence, had had no mother, he would probably have perished everlastingly. But his mother wept, and Jesus beheld her tears. They were all powerful over His Heart. Let us believe that Jesus is not insensible to the tears we shed over the death of our beloved ones, or over the more terrible spiritual death of those who know Him not. When you have thrown yourself at the feet of our Lord in one of those paroxysms of grief which are sometimes caused by the events of our sad life here below, have you never heard His Divine voice saying to your soul in consoling accents, Weep not! Am I not thy God? Can I not restore thee all that thou hast lost? And have I not also endured cruel sufferings and grief? Shed thy tears upon My bosom, and trust confidently in My mercy and compassion.

Who can say to my heart, 'Weep not,' save Him who has power to bid all my sufferings cease? He alone can give true and efficacious consolation. Ah, Holy Communion is a certain consolation! I desire to receive Jesus, because though He may not at once dry up my tears, yet He always wipes them away. He suffers me to shed them on His Heart. He desires that I should prepare to receive Him by the exercise of *resignation.*

My God, grant me, I beseech Thee, Thy grace, not

to console, but to make me better, to inspire me with greater generosity. I desire far more than the calming of my sorrow, resignation, strength, and patience, true preparation for receiving Thee. I do not desire a passing consolation, which my weakness might render dangerous.

Behold thine handmaid, O Lord Jesus; raise her from the depression of sorrow, not that she may suffer less, but that she may pray more. Attract me strongly to the Holy Table, where I can always, even in deepest grief, find a joy that is not of earth. The oftener I appear at that Holy Table, all unworthy though I be to partake of it, the more deeply do I feel the blessedness of that heavenly feast. I come to it crushed beneath the weight of sorrow. But come, Lord Jesus, enter into my heart and I shall weep no more.

V. '*And Jesus drew near and touched the bier.*'

Death is no evil for one who is touched by the hand of Jesus Christ; the death of such a one is not so much a loss of life as a short sleep. If it was thus to the young man who had perhaps never seen our Lord, until he was carried to what might have been his last home, what should it be for us who are daily united to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament? Death will lay a gentle hand upon our bodies, predestined to a glorious resurrection. They are subject to death, it is true, but only because every Christian is a living sacrifice which must be offered up daily, and at length consumed upon the altar of suffering.

Death is a happy necessity to the soul that is fed frequently upon the adorable Eucharist. It is, then, a necessity for me to communicate. I must spend with Jesus my short time of freedom from wearisome cares and sorrows. He calls me, because He knows how much I need His presence The more I hunger for

that Sacred Bread, the more will God bestow upon me of His hidden presence.

Our Lord receives with pleasure every gift which my hand presents to Him, especially the prayer and sorrow which arise to Him from my sad heart.

Lord Jesus, come to a poor afflicted one; take for ever my heart which causes me so great suffering. Oh, that I could love Thee alone and nought else beside Thee! But Thou wilt not reject 'the broken heart.' It is indeed a favour to obtain a gracious regard from Thee. I reproach myself, O my God! for having feared and regretted to possess this claim to Thy mercy. Ah! if this 'broken heart' be the means of drawing me more frequently to Thy Holy Table, I will welcome it gladly. Take not away, Lord, this title to Thy compassion. I know not whether I love Thee, but I desire to speak to Thee in the accents of love; and I repeat that I love Thee, and offer all I am and have to Thee—my thoughts, my words, and my heart.

Act of thanksgiving.

Adore our Lord; thank Him for having come into your heart.

Listen to His words, and endeavour to forget yourself. If you cannot restrain your tears, shed them on His bosom, but do not be discouraged by the persistence of your afflictions. Jesus endures them with you.

Show some love to our Lord. It was upon the Cross that He espoused your soul unto Himself, even when as yet it had no existence. It is in your heart that He awaits the accomplishment of those sacred engagements. Let them be signed and sealed in your heart's blood.

I. '*Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.*'

All communicants may hear these Divine words. The immortal soul is always young. Years cannot

wither it. It may be weighed down by the pressure of the senses, which are affected by old age or suffering, but its substance undergoes no change. In its union with the Heart that loved us even unto death and *beyond* death, it finds fresh life and strength. The apparent severity of poverty is forgotten when it possesses and enjoys the blessed gift of the Holy Eucharist. Jesus does not weaken or condemn the sensibility of our feelings. He only gently reproves that excessive indulgence in them which leads to rebellion against His will. We ought to be grateful for the benefits which our trials obtain for us, and never wish them to be less while we have the comfort of the Holy Eucharist.

Jesus has called me. I have arisen, and I possess the true life in myself. What a favour to have been invited to the banquet of angels, who keep account in heaven of the number of times that I receive it on earth! How earnestly I should ask our Lord to leave me His life, and to restore it to those souls that have lost it. Ah! if I could obtain the conversion of one sinner at each of my Communions, should I not be amply recompensed for the vacancies which death has made among my friends?

O my Jesus! I love Thee. I believe in my own happy union with Thee, and I would not that Thou shouldst see me less joyful for this favour than sorrowful for my own trials, more sad than grateful for having some sacrifice to offer unto Thee. I weep neither for my sufferings nor for my obedience to Thy will, because nothing can befall me that does not declare that will to me and give me strength to accomplish it. I thank Thee because Thou didst suffer for me a thousand times more than Thou didst require me to suffer for Thee.

II. '*He that was dead sat up and began to speak.*'

The Gospel points out that *movement*, the first sign of life, returned first to this young man, and *speech* afterwards, that he might consecrate the first-fruits of his new existence to the glory of Him who was its Author.

In a moment of unlooked-for happiness, gratitude is our most natural emotion. But if gratitude was very strong in the heart of this young man just raised from the dead; if it was ardent in the bosom of his mother on receiving back her only son from the dead, although it was but a fleeting gift, since our life at best is like a dream that passeth away, what ought not to be my gratitude to our Lord who offers me the gift of everlasting life in Him?

I will express my gratitude by my actions; by prayer, by acts of duty; and a sorrowful resignation shall be my best act of thanksgiving. If only this great miracle could make me comprehend the *worth* of all my afflictions. At this moment our Lord does no less for me, as a frequent communicant, than He did for that poor woman who was, perhaps, an entire stranger to Him. Only the Holy Eucharist and sorrow are benefits of different orders, equally hidden from our senses, and both deserving our gratitude and praise. Would not any one consider it an act of monstrous indifference to omit our thanksgiving after Communion? Why, then, should we not render Him thanks for the sorrows which also lead us to Him? Besides, the Holy Eucharist deadens the sting of sorrow, and gives me to feel its happiness, even in the midst of my tears. I have suffered, but I have communicated. Under the shadow of my griefs, both past and present appear very dark to me. But when I reckon up my Communions, so many peaceful hours passed at the foot of the Altar, are not they compensation for all? How great would be my ingratitude, were I not ready to meet all events

with a tranquillity which shall prove to Jesus how boldly and utterly I cast myself upon His Sacred Heart? O Jesus! my only hope, do with me according to Thy mercy. Increase in my heart the pure flame of Thy love and a true desire to please Thee. However great my weakness, and how unconsolable soever my sadness may be, I trust that Thou wilt dispel and strengthen them. If Thy voice recalled the dead to life, what may not the power of Thy Sacred Body effect in me? I trust that it will rule my passions, appease their violence, and give me strength to be faithful to Thee.

My Lord and my God, why have I passed so many years without loving Thee? But how I bless the mercy that has waited so long for me! I consecrate my heart and all my words to Thee. And as Thou didst bestow upon me many favours when I was indifferent to Thy love, so I desire to offer Thee many thanks and ardent praise for all Thy mercies, and especially that Thou hast aroused my love by sorrow.

III. '*Jesus delivered him to his mother.*'

What joy this poor widow felt on thus receiving, full of life, the son whom she had mourned as dead. She became, so to speak, as mother a second time by the tears which the Master of Life had dried so marvellously. For her this trial was the occasion of amazing happiness, but a fragile happiness and an ephemeral joy, which may have been succeeded by well-founded fears, deep sadness, and uneasy repose, since all earthly happiness is liable to be changed into sorrow. The joy of earth sometimes makes too strong an impression upon our weak nature. It has caused suffering, even death. But the joys of Holy Communion are immense, without any admixture of pain, because they are divine.

What heavenly joys have been conferred on me!

Jesus Christ renders me more and more the child of God—of Mary. Just as the widow's son, at his resurrection, resumed his rank, his property, his place in his mother's love, so does Jesus restore me to Mary, my true mother, afflicted by sins, as often as absolution restores to me the life of grace. How often has Mary had cause to weep over my spiritual death, and to rejoice again over my spiritual resurrection. The number of these times is known only to my own heart.

But as often as I have committed mortal sin I have owed to the prayers of my celestial mother the benefit of a life far more precious than the life of time.

I owe also to her the favour of having received from God Himself the precious gift of His own Son. In this gift, bestowed upon me so frequently in Holy Communion, is there not a joy which the adversities of time cannot take away, an efficacious consolation in every affliction?

My God, I rejoice in Thy presence; in Thee who dost love me, in Thee whom I love, in Thee whom I possess in my inmost soul. I rejoice to think that my affliction, which is profitable for me, removes from sinners a suffering which would bring neither merit to them nor glory to Thee, because they are not in Thy grace.

Lord, make me thoroughly understand that we have always time enough for rejoicing, because our life in eternity will be filled with joy; but as I shall then be no longer able to suffer for Thee, let me not have cause to regret that I did not use my present opportunities of doing so with a *generous* love. Give me grace to suffer like Mary at the foot of the Cross, never weary of her sufferings, because she never for an instant ceased to love.

IV. '*They all feared, and glorified God, saying, that a great prophet is risen up amongst us.*'

Great amazement was the effect produced on earth by a great prodigy; but in heaven, what admiration is excited by the effect of the Holy Eucharist in the soul of every worthy communicant.

Ah! it is because Jesus, entering into us, augments in us sanctifying grace and virtues; the Holy Spirit penetrates more powerfully into our souls, and brings to perfection the virtues of faith, hope, and charity, thereby adding to us so many features of resemblance to our Blessed Lord. Excite, O Jesus, in my soul, nourished by Thy adorable Body, a lively desire to make more rapid progress in the path of holiness. Make me use my limbs and senses to obey the holy motions of faith, hope, and charity. Make me believe more firmly, hope more boldly, love more ardently, and act with more prudence, strength, justice, and temperance, and deign to convert my whole being into the instrument of these virtues.

V. '*God hath visited his people.*'

Yes; the tabernacle assures me that, in a permanent manner, God hath visited His people.

I know when I look at the Holy Table, when I feel the sweet perfume of the Presence of our Saviour within me, that I have been favoured with His visit. Sorrow is another of His merciful modes of visiting us. I ought, then, to receive it as a new presence of Jesus Christ in me. Could I wish to have less certainty of possessing my God? Jesus does not send me sorrow without at the same time attaching immense advantages to its visit.

The hours consumed in woe represent an equal sum of glory to God and of happiness to me. Each day of my life in which I have faithfully borne my cross tears out one page of sorrow, and inserts one

of perfect felicity in the book of life. Do I wish to-day that I had suffered less yesterday? When I look at my crucified Lord, can I wish not to suffer to-morrow? God is very good in respecting my Christian desires rather than my natural feelings.

I will keep, then, as a memorial of the visit of Jesus the consoling hope that He will soon return to me again. If this hope does not always console me, it must be because I do not come to Jesus for consolation so often as I ought, and that I expect from creatures what they are incapable of affording me. But this Communion revives my faith. I believe in the mercy that chastises, as much as in the mercy that heals; in afflicting as well as consoling mercy. I know not which is necessary for me, but Jesus knows, and he will give it me; my part is only to make a good use of it.

O Jesus, God of my soul, may the end of my sad life be an incessant act of thanksgiving for the sorrows which have led me to a good hope of immortal life! This hope grows stronger in the accumulated bitterness of numerous griefs. They have been the source of peculiar graces which have conducted my soul to Thee. They have taught me a deeper knowledge of the love that changeth not, that perisheth not; the love that no separations, ingratitude, or injuries can alter; the love that always pardons. I am consoled by believing in the compassion of Thy Heart; and I thank Thee, O my Jesus, for having made me suffer so much, because everything that Thy hand bestows upon me is a fresh gift of grace to lead me to the fount of happiness.

O my God! grant that I may love Thee.

Grant that I may love Thee more during my sufferings.

Grant that I may love Thee much because my heart suffers much.

Grant that I may love Thee because Thou lovest

me so much that Thou wilt send me yet more suffering.

My God, grant that I may love Thee, and then, notwithstanding all my sufferings, my soul will be possessed of the key to happiness. Instead of fearing trial, I shall only fear lest I should not bear it well enough in sight of the Holy Eucharist and of heaven. Give me that holy fear and a sincere desire to please Thee.

Conclusion.

Let us, in time of trouble, accustom ourselves to depend only upon heavenly consolations which never pass away. Jesus Christ alone can give peace and calmness in trouble, because He is peace itself. Holy Communion, by which we really possess God, ought surely to be sufficient to give us joy for twenty-four hours, since the vision of God can give eternal joy to angels. When the light of heaven shines upon our souls, what matters it how many dark clouds are accumulated in our minds? Let us behold everything by the bright light of faith, and may that faith sustain our love, while our sorrows defer our happiness for 'a little while.'

FOURTEENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE DEAF AND DUMB.
(St. Mark viii.)

Preparation.

If we had continued in our original state of purity, the senses would have retained their primitive perfection. But they paved the way for our fall, and their infirmity is its natural result and just chastisement. Our Lord, in the Holy Eucharist, restores to us the means of recovering our lost holiness. The grace of Holy Communion disposes our bodily organs to submit themselves to the law of mortification, as a means of repairing those faults of which they are the instruments. Let us ask our Lord to make us holy in soul and in body.

I. *'They brought a deaf and dumb man to Jesus.'*

In the order of nature, these two infirmities are frequently united, but in the dispensation of grace we do not become *dumb* before God unless we have previously turned a *deaf ear* to His inspirations, or deadened the sound of His voice in the giddy whirl of this world. How many souls have never heard the great voices of Creation, which incessantly declare the power of God!

Every creature has a voice to praise the Lord. We ourselves speak continually either *for* or *against* His glory. Even when our tongues are silent, our thoughts and actions speak: nor is it possible for us to destroy our faculty of causing every act of ours to reach the ear of God. Nothing is more dangerous than to be deaf to the voice of our Lord. and to the language of His grace and love. How

can the soul be converted, that is accustomed not to listen when God speaks? It is just as dangerous also to be dumb, or to show no gratitude to Him for all His mercies.

My soul was once reduced to that disastrous condition. My ears were filled with the vain murmurs of this world's pleasures, so that I listened not to the solemn voice of Eternal Truth, nor to the interior voice of the Divine Master, to which even the most insensible beings render prompt obedience. I talked much in the world, but I was silent in prayer and the praises of God. How deeply I feel my need of drawing near to Jesus Christ for help, when I remember that sad time and the danger of falling back into such a dangerous state.

O Divine Author of my being, suffer me to present myself to Thee with all the defects of my soul and of my senses. I entreat Thee to deliver me from spiritual deafness and dumbness: two infirmities which prevent the soul from hearing Thy Word, and from addressing Thee in prayer; may I turn a deaf ear to the vanities of the world; to all arguments against the Faith: to all attacks upon the Holy Catholic Church and the infallible authority of the Sovereign Pontiff. Make me deaf to all light, satirical, malignant, or sinful words, especially to every word that is contrary to purity or charity. May my tongue be bound with silence when I am tempted to utter careless or revengeful words which might offend my neighbour. Let me know how to be prudently silent, and never to utter a word contrary to wisdom and discretion.

II. '*Jesus took him aside from the multitude.*'

It is remarkable that our Lord accomplished His greatest works, both in the natural and moral world, '*aside* from the multitude.' He draws 'aside from the multitude' all those to whom He desires to speak,

and by whom He wishes to be understood. He knows that it is difficult to speak to God, and to listen attentively to His voice in the midst of a restless and noisy crowd. He takes *aside* the soul on which He desires to bestow His special grace. Retreat or solitude is a powerful means to recover health and liberty.

It is not by our own unassisted will that we can begin to follow Jesus. It is He who must first draw us out of the world, because our first step towards salvation must be to *draw aside* from the worldly crowd, that lives according to the maxims of this world and not according to Christ. Upon the Altar, our Lord is *in* the world indeed, but He is withdrawn *aside* from the world. He stretches out His hand to us from the tabernacle to withdraw us from dangerous paths where we might stumble and fall into the abyss of destruction. Happy am I that our Lord has detached my heart from outward things? But if I profited more fully by His grace, I should have my mind always filled with the thought of Jesus, I should lose none of His inspirations: I should be always ready to submit to the leading of His grace. Accustomed to divine things, my soul would be ever ready to pour itself out in prayer, as before Jesus in the tabernacle; but ought I not also to remember that unless my tongue is accustomed to speak benevolently and gently of my neighbour it will not be favourably regarded by Jesus.

III. '*Jesus put His fingers into his ears, and spitting He touched his tongue*' (St. Mark vii. 33).

Our Lord did not disdain to touch the ears of this poor man with His wonder-working fingers, nor to impregnate that silent tongue with His saliva, a figure of His Divine Wisdom: and this He did with the purpose of showing the vivifying and salutary property of everything that proceeds from His person.

He placed His fingers in the deaf man's ears, so that, deaf until now to all things earthly, they might be opened to hear His voice. He made use of two ways of healing this man's infirmity: to teach us that spiritual deafness is at once difficult to cure, and of a very dangerous nature, inasmuch as it leads to the hardening of the heart.

Do not fear, as some do, the means which Jesus takes to do you good. He wounds and humiliates us. But His wounds are salutary, and His chastisements are for our good. Do not fear, at Holy Communion, to behold the outburst of a love which shall burn you as with 'a consuming fire.' But know that if you fear the love that comes to you, that desires to enter in and dwell with you, your resistance will not leave you less responsible for the great love that you thus reject. Our Blessed Lord has acted towards me in this charitable manner.

The loss of friends at one time; an illness at another, have been (like His Divine fingers upon the deaf man) upon my ears to close them to the world; upon my heart to withdraw it from earthly affections; and upon my senses to oblige them through sorrow to abstain from all sensual gratifications. These means, painful to my nature, oblige me to call in the aid of Faith; by the light of which I can see how much my soul needed the application of such powerful remedies. What would have become of me, if I had been left alone, to find my everlasting ruin in the deceptions of earth.

Lord Jesus, deign to touch my soul and my body with Thy Divine hands: leave not, I beseech Thee, my spiritual infirmity in me. Shed upon me, in whatever manner may be pleasing to Thee, that heavenly virtue which has healed so many sick, and may its influence act even more strongly on my soul than on my body!

IV. '*And looking up to heaven, He sighed.*'

The smallest actions of our Lord are worthy of attention. He raised His eyes to heaven, because our eyes, as well as our thoughts and our desires ought to be raised *on high:* because we ought to look to heaven for succour, and never place confidence in ourselves or in created things.

Before pronouncing the words which were to effect so great a miracle, Jesus *sighed:* perhaps from thinking of all the sins which enter by *hearing* into the heart of man, or regretting, perhaps, that our unworthiness should so often deprive us of His grace, or that so few souls should permit Him to act towards them according to the full extent of His power and mercy. 'He sighed,' perchance, at the sight of the multitude of souls attacked by such diseases of which they are not willing to be healed; or, perhaps, at the thought that I should be of the number of those careless souls, and that I should delay long before presenting myself to the Great Physician.

Let us not be of the number who cause such sorrow to our Divine Master. Let us give Him the joy of doing us good, as much good as He desires to bestow. O what progress we should make in perfection did we not so often tie the hands of Jesus, as it were, with regard to us!

Before commencing any undertaking, look *straight up to Jesus:* then you will soon learn what He requires you to do. Act always as under His immediate eye, under His influence: that it may be in some sort Jesus Himself that thinks, speaks, and prays in your thoughts, your words, and your prayers.

O Jesus, when I look up to Thee, I desire to receive Thee; but when I look at myself, I fear that Thou wilt *sigh* in coming to me. I have done many things to cause Thee grief: and I would not that the moment of our union should be shaded

by Thy regret for my unfaithfulness. But if true repentance be agreeable to Thee, accept my repentance, it is sincere. If the desire of my heart to love Thee be acceptable, then come into mine, for with each succeeding Communion I desire to love Thee more.

I cannot but desire Thee, although I am unworthy to come into Thy presence. I implore Thee to come unto me, if humility can be to Thy greater glory: but however great my desire of communicating may be, I would retire from it in an instant, if I knew that I should cause Thee an instant's suffering by presenting myself. How could I resolve to make that Being suffer whom I love above all?

Act of Thanksgiving.

Remain at the feet of our Lord in deep silence.

Place your soul and all its faculties, your body and all its senses, at the disposition of His Sacred Heart.

Endeavour to draw upon yourself His merciful regard, which He grants to the humble.

Second His merciful designs upon your soul by putting your whole confidence in Him alone.

Ask that your peace of soul may be preserved in all the sufferings of your mind and heart; ask also for patience under bodily afflictions.

Ask that you may be perfectly united in spirit to the *present* will of our Lord in regard to you.

I. '*Ephpheta! that is to say, Be opened.*'

By this word of power our Lord opened the ears of a man who was deaf to all the sounds of this world; but when He enters my heart He opens it to His grace, to His love, to His Divine Person, and He desires to find it always open to His benefits and inspirations. Jesus asks me for my heart, as a throne from which to rule over the little world of my soul and body.

I have received Jesus: what holiness have I then received! Although in His tender compassion for my weakness, our Lord no longer warns me in a loud voice that 'Holy things are for holy persons,' yet I ought to consider no less deeply the great holiness of my God, and thereby awaken in my heart a lively desire to possess a more perfect purity.

'Think not that you do enough,' says St. John Chrysostom, 'in gilding the outside of the cup and offering it to Jesus; your whole soul should be of gold, in order to receive rightly His sacrament of love; for how pure should that mouth be which often receives the Blood of our Lord!' My mouth is the passage by which Jesus has chosen to enter the depths of my soul. The road which Jesus takes on His way to visit my soul should be adorned with virtue, not soiled by sin. Truth, purity, and justice have entered my mouth with Jesus; I would retain these, His inseparable companions, that their traces may be imprinted upon every word I speak.

O Jesus, how necessary it is that Thou shouldst give me Thy sacred Body, so perfect in all its organs, to purify and to reform the use which I make of my senses. I entreat Thee to restore my nature to its pristine beauty, that so it may be less unworthy of Thy adorable mysteries.

II. '*And straightway his ears were opened.*'

This deaf and dumb man was healed by the simple contact of the fingers of our Blessed Lord. If we had a lively faith, it is certain that Jesus being within us would perform miracles and bestow upon us whatever we should ask of Him in believing prayer. He never fails to bestow a large reward upon the soul that receives Him joyfully. He comes to us under veils, but those veils are not so deep as to hide Him *altogether* from the faithful recipient: He will manifest Himself in various manners and degrees, according to

the faith of the communicant, but He will always manifest Himself by a blessing.

To preserve the grace of this Communion it will be necessary that after listening to Jesus I should *stop my ears with thorns* to protect me from hearing evil tongues.

Words uttered out of pure ill-feeling and desire to injure others, unreflecting, light, and idle words, are like so many assaults committed by my ears upon my conscience. I ought not to listen too much even to my own mind, for unkind and malicious thoughts of my neighbour inflict sharp wounds upon my soul.

O Word of our Heavenly Father, display upon me Thy power, that those words of life eternal which Thou hast pronounced may sink deep into my soul; grant that I may hear and understand and obey them promptly.

III. '*The string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke distinctly.*'

No one can receive rightly the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ without at the same time obtaining grace proportioned to their present state and need. May your soul be loosed from its bonds, now that the mercy of God has come down upon you.

It is said of him who was cured that he spoke plainly. We speak well in prayer and conversation, when Jesus has opened the ears of the heart. The tongue that is often permitted to bear the Eternal Word, the uncreated Son of God from all eternity, ought always to speak wisely and judiciously. From my lips, which have been opened to receive the Holy of Holies, no idle words should ever issue, but piety and wisdom should regulate my speech; for we may regret that we have spoken *too soon*, *too long*, and *too loud*. Those who err in their words deceive their own souls.

I will ask our Lord to place the bridle of discretion, prudence, and modesty upon my tongue, and to pre-

serve it in His holy presence from that dumbness by which many graces which it might have obtained by humble solicitations will be lost to it.

My God, my thanksgiving often distresses me, because my mind is wandering, and my barren and cold heart seems as if it were dead to Thy love, because my thoughts wander away from Thee, and the dryness and sterility of my mind cause me to fear that I do not love Thee as I ought. I find so many things every day to say to those I love. And one quarter of an hour passed at Thy feet, heart to heart with Thee, leaves me cold and empty of all thought! And yet, how much I have to thank Thee for! Thou hast shown me such great favour in certain events which I can never forget. Yet my heart, the object of Thy favours, saddens Thee by its inconstancy. I have thanked Thee very little for my Communions, I forget them too quickly; my sorrow for this neglect has not yet helped me to repair it. While I was forgetting past graces, Thou wast preparing for me the Communion that I have just received. O Jesus, I love Thee, and although my lightness may be great, yet I could never console myself were I to lose one Communion through my own fault. Nevertheless, I dare not say that this day, even in which I have received Thee, I would make great sacrifices to obtain a single Communion. Pity the variableness of my feelings, and set my feet upon the Rock.

IV. '*Jesus charged them that they should tell no man of this miracle.*'

Our Blessed Saviour forbids us to make our own good deeds known. But we cannot be expected to keep silence respecting the benefits that God gives to us. It is your duty, after receiving many benefits, more signal than even this great miracle, to make your gratitude known; to publish abroad the praises of your Almighty Benefactor. Obtain by your prayers

that Jesus may increase the number of souls which He heals of their infirmities. Bring to Him, while He is yet dwelling in you, some of those *deaf* and *dumb* people who are still in the world, and in whom nobody takes any interest. Beseech Him to stretch out His hand towards them in blessing, to draw them to Himself, to enlighten their minds with the verities of our holy Faith, and to animate their tongues with the spirit of prayer and supplication.

O Jesus, I praise Thee for all Thy mercies. If there still remains in me some desire of earthly good, extinguish it in me, O my Lord. I present to Thee, all the holy sacrifices and Communions offered this day in Thy Holy Church throughout the world, with my prayers, for those who are spiritually sick, and who desire my prayers. I pray Thee, not only to heal them, but also to come to them by the sovereign grace of the Holy Eucharist. Grant me grace to be never more deaf to Thy holy inspirations, nor dumb in prayer, but may I pray in all times of temptation, of affliction, and of especial need. Grant above all that I may remember to recommend myself to Thee, and to expect all that I may need or desire from Thee, and from Thy Holy Mother alone.

Conclusion.

During our thanksgiving let us think less of ourselves, than of Jesus present. We have all the day before us to look at our own miseries; it is very right to have so much confidence in God who comes to heal them, as to abandon ourselves entirely into His hands; let Him do according to His will, it is certain that He will do all things for our good. Let us at least have so much confidence as this in Jesus, whose mercy has brought Him down to dwell with us; whose love enters into the closest union with us, who is united to us here by love; and whom we hope hereafter to possess eternally.

FIFTEENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

MARTHA AND MARY.

(St. Luke x.)

Preparation.

SINCE Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament has entered into the world by the consecration of bread and wine, the pious soul chiefly thinks how she can pay Him all due *honour* in His exile. It is in this manner that the Gospel characters of Martha and Mary have become, as it were, perpetuated amongst us. Although their vocations were different, both were pleasing to the Lord. Jesus comes very gladly into such souls as resemble them.

I. '*Jesus entered into a village, and a woman named Martha received Him into her house.*'

We should remark, with the Evangelist, the signal honour which was conferred upon Martha, when the Son of God, in person, went *to visit her;* and the ecstasy of joy with which that holy woman received the Divine Guest who claimed hospitality at her hands.

Let us consider the immense honour that Jesus confers upon us, in demanding from our hearts a hospitality which He also exercises towards us, in giving us to eat His Sacred Body, and to drink His Blood. By this means, 'our bodies are peculiarly the Lord's, as the Lord is ours. We glorify Him in our bodies, and we truly, really, bear Christ in us,' and we become one body, one mind, one *all* with Him. What reasons for desiring to communicate frequently! Jesus felt an attraction towards this house, because

He found in it virginity, and penitence; for Martha was the pattern of virginity, and Mary Magdalene of penitence; and they were both animated by the same ardent love. These two sisters had broken off all connection with the world, and with sin, and lived in perfect union together.

Their greatest happiness was to receive the Word of God, not only visibly in their house, but still more invisibly into their hearts. Jesus felt at ease amid all these virtues, and in this quiet house, which was always open to Him. He found the ornament which is most precious in His eyes, the ornament of sanctity.

Adorn with acts of charity the *domicile* in which your Saviour desires repose. Your heart is a place dear to Him. Oh, how ardently He desires to descend into our hearts, this sovereign friend of purity! O Jesus, give me grace to receive Thee with a simplicity that shall be more rejoiced at Thy coming, than uneasy about making preparation for it. Come into a heart that adores and loves Thee, and whose sole ambition is to be adorned with the virtues which are dear to Thee.

II. '*Martha had a sister called Mary, who sat at the feet of the Lord, and heard His Words.*'

Remark with pious care, before you go to Communion, all that Mary did while her sister was busied in the other rooms of the house. She approached our Lord; she remained calm and composed beside Jesus, forgetting every cause of curiosity, or uneasiness. When our Lord began to speak, she came to *sit* at His feet, for fear of losing one of His words. In this attitude, she directed all her faculties towards Jesus; listening to Him, above all, with the ear of her heart. The attentive listener comprehends what he hears, almost without effort. Thus the soul that keeps close to our Blessed Lord, receives the feelings and graces which He communicates to her, and feeds upon them

with joy and thankfulness. Mary, thus prepared to be sanctified by the word of the Lord, offered Him in her soul a refreshment far more noble, and more worthy of Him, than the most costly feast that Martha's anxious cares could provide. Martha thought chiefly of feeding the body of Jesus; Mary thought only of satisfying His Heart. Although our Lord may be graciously pleased to accept the offering of a part of our fortune, of our time, and of our cares, He takes far more delight in the earnest desire of our hearts to live only to do His will.

The world has unjustly applied the name of *idleness* to that life of repose, silence, and prayer, or contemplation, which St. Francis of Sales defines as being 'a simple and permanent attention of the mind to divine things.' Many and great things may be accomplished in this silence and spirit of prayer; the soul fears, hopes, humbles itself, loves, advances towards heaven; because it acts with greater purity of motive when all its works are secret.

Be like Mary in time of prayer and Communion. Prepare yourself to hear, and to receive, all that our Lord desires to tell you, or to give you. Mary only expected a word, a look from Jesus, and you hope to possess Him wholly. Your state is the best, and more to be envied than hers, but be also truly the soul that *hears*, *loves*, *prays*, and *keeps silence.*

Lord Jesus, give me grace to listen unto Thee attentively, to retain all Thy words, and above all to know how to await peacefully the moment in which Thou shalt speak to my soul.

III. '*Jesus loved Martha, and Mary her sister*' (St. John xi. 5).

If our Lord had a tender affection for these two sisters, it was because they loved Him with the purest love. It was His will that His predilection for these most happy sisters, should be made known to the

remotest ages, in order to convince us that 'He loves those that love Him,' as He has declared in Holy Scripture. The love of Martha and Mary for our Blessed Lord did not expend itself in useless protestations; they surrounded Him with the most delicate and careful attentions, and placed at His disposal their *fortune*, their *house*, and their *persons*. In a word, they constituted Him the Sovereign Master of their possessions, and their lives. There was a time when I first began to feel that I no longer loved the world, that my heart had withdrawn itself from the pleasures of vanity. It was Jesus, who thus cooled my love for creatures, desiring to draw me unto Himself, and who, though I knew it not, was even then beginning to take full possession of my soul. O happy day, when Jesus became my All! But, to preserve His love, I will give Him formal proofs of mine; and I will receive Him as He was welcomed by the hospitable sisters of Bethany. To make a good Communion, I must do four things: I must utterly renounce Satan, by sincere hatred for sin; I must revive my faith by the practice of every good work; I must serve Jesus by the exact accomplishment of His will; and, finally, by offering up all I have and am to Him, I must acknowledge Him as Sovereign Master of my body and soul.

Lord Jesus, it was Thy love for these sisters, that caused Thee to visit them so often. It is then Thy love for me that has caused Thee to give me so ardent a desire for frequent Communion. Ah, hadst Thou not loved me, should I ever have received these innumerable graces which have drawn me out of the world; causing me to prefer the silence of the tabernacle to the noise of worldly pleasures? I fear one thing only, O my Jesus, it is that I should not fully comprehend the greatness of Thy love to me. However strong may be the attraction that leads me to Holy Communion, I fear that I may not be as pleas-

ing to Thee as I should be, that I may not be capable of fully entering into the union which Thou hast prepared for me. Grant that I may do at this moment the acts that shall please Thee best, and give me the graces necessary to enable me to testify my love.

IV. '*Martha was careful, and troubled about many things.*

We ought not to forget that Jesus lived upon earth as a stranger and pilgrim, doubtless with the intention of manifesting His desire of taking up His abode in our hearts. Martha, in her faithful and loving care for the bodily wants of Jesus, is a perfect model of Christian charity. We to whom it has been said, 'Jesus came unto His own, and His own received Him not,' have powerful reasons to honour Him in His poor, by whom He is always represented among us, independently of the happiness, which angels desire, of receiving Him in Holy Communion, and of serving Him in the care of the churches, altars, and sacred vessels. The spiritual works of mercy are by far the most important, in respect of the superiority of the soul over the body, for the temporal advantages which we procure for any person are nothing compared to those advantages which are assured to him in eternity. To associate ourselves with the work of Jesus Christ, in the conversion of souls, is, according to St. Denys, 'the most divine of all divine things.' Only we must remember that the most sacred works cease to be salutary the instant they begin to absorb our minds in time of prayer; or that we become over anxious and eager about them, so as to be betrayed into haste and impatience.

I came to offer myself to Thee, O Lord, as the only Master and Ruler of my services and my life. Thy commands are never impossible, and Thy grace will make their execution easy. I renounce all those useless cares, those vain inquietudes that distract and trouble me. And when I behold Thee overthrowing

the order of nature for my sake, in the Holy Eucharist, I will no longer be careful about anything, except the things which concern Thy service. Make me to keep this resolution faithfully.

V. '*Lord, seest Thou not that my sister hath left me to serve alone?*'

Martha in these words conveys a tacit reproach to her sister for idleness, and for not troubling herself to prepare a hospitable reception for the Master, who honoured them by a visit. A good opinion of her own conduct is apparent in the complaint she makes of her sister. She adds with too little respect for Jesus, 'Bid her therefore that she help me.' It is a gross mistake to imagine that every mind ought to follow the same road and pursue the same line of action. We never find two faces exactly resembling each other, the same diversity exists among souls, and consequently the *means* of their sanctification must be different also, although the *end* is the same in all.

Let us not regard what others are doing, but let us speak of our *own* affairs with confidence to our Lord. Tell Him everything that weighs upon your heart, just as if you were speaking to a friend, and telling him all your concerns. Bring your troubles to Jesus. Tell Him all your difficulties, even your dislikes. Confess to Him your faults and temptations.

Tell Him that your love of self often makes you behave unjustly to your neighbour; that your pride takes refuge under many disguises, and deceives yourself as well as others. When you have told Him all, still more will remain untold, but your heart will be relieved of a weight, and more light and joyful to receive our Lord.

My good Master, in opening my heart to Thee, I desire only to attract Thy attention to its wants and business. Its innumerable faults are known to Thee far better than to myself; those of which I am igno

ant are all open to Thy sight. I find in myself many sources of corruption; my mind is full of errors, my whole being is an assemblage of contradictions; my life, always exposed to the possibility of painful surprises, is a continual temptation. When I consider the dangers which surround my soul, my tendency to egotism, the blindness and indocility which are caused by my self-love, the snares which are laid for my weakness and ignorance, I can but cast myself at Thy feet, and implore Thy merciful aid. In Thy great love and mercy Thou wilt hear and grant my petition speedily, for my needs are pressing, tarry not, O my God.

Bend my stubborn will, strengthen my good resolutions, and when my self-love rebels against Thy will, give me courage to gain the victory over it; to humble myself for my faults, and to confess them with sincerity. Destroy my illusions, submit my mind to the direction of my spiritual guide, and give me an humble, meek, and gentle heart, that I may follow Thee in all simplicity.

Act of Thanksgiving.

O celestial moment of Holy Communion when by faith the soul regards and embraces Him who is infinite beauty, is enriched by Him who is perfect goodness, and receives the treasures of the riches of His grace.

Consecrate your heart to Jesus Christ. In so doing you give Him *all*, for the heart governs the whole body. Aspire with all your desires to love Jesus Christ perfectly. St. Bonaventure says, 'The soul that breathes for Him, that soul is full of Jesus Christ.' The heart that loves Him feels the truth of these words.

Say to our Blessed Saviour: My God, what I desire before all things is that I may be pure in Thy sight.

I. '*Martha, Martha.*'

Before He replies to His hostess, our Lord begins by calling her twice by her name, for the purpose rather of showing His affectionate familiarity, and of drawing her attention to what He was about to say, than of reproving or blaming her. If while our Lord was still present upon the altar I were to hear Him thus pronounce my name, how would His voice cause me to thrill with joy.

How eagerly should I collect my thoughts to listen to Him; how should I lay my will at His feet, too happy to perform whatever He should command. Nothing would seem difficult to me then. Why should I be less submissive to the warnings which are delivered to me in the name of Jesus, and sanctioned by Him; and although Jesus Christ cannot be seen by my eyes, or heard by my bodily ears, should I be therefore less obedient, less attentive? He is in me, for me alone. No one divides His visit with me. And shall I not declare to Him my fidelity, my love. O my Jesus, I should indeed esteem myself happy didst Thou condescend to speak to me, but Thou art perhaps silent because I know not how to listen to Thee. Thy presence causes me to observe a reverential silence, and it seems to me that my silence is not prayerful. If I were to speak, I would not hear Thy voice. Teach me, O my Divine Master, to be silent and to listen to Thee, for Thou hast the words of eternal life. I would testify my gratitude by joining my homage to that of those chosen souls who never cease to praise Thee. Suffer me to say that I love Thee. I cannot employ my time better than in reiterating the assurance of my love. It is still more necessary that I should repeat it often, for alas my conduct too often seems to contradict my words.

II. '*Thou art careful and troubled about many things.*'

St. Augustine bids us observe the reason given by our Lord for endeavouring to turn the mind of Martha from the various cares which troubled her. 'That which is temporal has an end,' he says, 'that which is wanting in anything is not all; that which is not all, presupposes the absence of other things.'

Consequently we can never find complete satisfaction in creatures; something will still be wanting. It is probable that Martha's cares and anxiety reminded our Lord of the immense number of souls that suffer themselves to be absorbed by the multitudinous cares and occupations of this life and forget the care of their souls and their preparation for life eternal. Grieving deeply over their lamentable error, He addresses a salutary warning to them in His address to Martha. He does not reproach her for her activity, which was a quality deserving of praise, but for the anxiety and agitation which she mingled with her activity. He does not blame her eagerness to serve Him well, but He gently warns her that every supernatural action ought to be accomplished with calmness and humility; that the love of the heart serves and pleases Him better than the labour of the mind and of the hands.

This lesson is even more suitable to me than it was to Martha. I am sometimes troubled in the presence of our Lord, even after Holy Communion, because my mind is taken up with a number of things which do not concern me, or which I have no good cause to remember at that precious moment. I am troubled in my actions, at one time because I act too hastily, at others because I do more than one thing at a time, not keeping my mind steadfastly fixed upon God. What we do without Jesus is not well done; it brings no peace to the conscience, no happiness to the mind. How often have I felt this, when, instead of

thinking only of the presence of God, I have feared or desired the approval or blame of men, according as my undertakings have appeared unfortunate or successful.

I am troubled again because I cannot find enough consolation in my prayers and pious exercises. And this is because I perform them with an agitated mind, with too little deference to the advice of my spiritual guide; therefore our Lord leaves me to feel the bitter effects of a line of conduct which springs entirely from the impulse of my own mind.

Lord Jesus, 'Thine eyes have seen all my imperfections,' and without openly reproving, Thou dost gently cause my conscience to become aware of what is displeasing to Thee. I will endeavour henceforth to deserve Thy reproaches less frequently, and to manifest my gratitude for receiving Thee by more perfect submission to Thy will.

III. '*One thing is needful.*'

God, who in Himself is ONE and ALL, is the 'one thing needful' to our souls; He alone can satisfy our hearts and minds, and He alone is worthy to be the object of all our solicitude in time and in eternity. The Prophet has declared this truth in the words: 'What have I in heaven but Thee? and there is nothing upon earth that I desire in comparison of Thee. Thou art the God of my heart, and my portion for ever.' Therefore our Blessed Saviour proposes to us the possession of God, by grace and love, as the one thing needful to our happiness in earth and heaven.

Our only good upon *earth* is Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament; in *heaven* it is God seen face to face, with the certainty of enjoying His presence for ever. But if we seek Jesus only upon earth, if by Holy Communion He has become indeed the God of our heart, He will also be our God and portion to all eternity.

I possess at this moment Jesus, the ONE THING needful, *indispensable* even, to my happiness in time and in eternity. But my weakness gives me warning that I may lose Him. I must, then, concentrate upon Him all my cares, all my prayers. Since I have communicated I have truly felt that Jesus alone is needful to me, that without Him I must be miserable in time and in eternity.

Mary had felt the Divinity encompassing the Holy Humanity of Jesus; she had breathed that divine atmosphere which inspires us with the love of God and of virtue, and therefore she wished to approach as closely as possible to the feet of Jesus. And I also will approach as closely as possible to His Heart, because I possess Jesus heart to heart, soul to soul; why can I not say, with an equal love?

IV. '*One thing is needful.*'

These divine words are like a sword to cut off all the superfluous cares of life, to leave us free to attend to our eternal interests; for there is nothing *needful* but our salvation. What matters all the rest? At the time of our death how plainly shall we see the vanity of all things but such as lead to Jesus and assure the possession of Him to our souls!

If I had hitherto confined myself to what was strictly necessary to my condition, in my clothing, my furniture, my table, how many anxieties should I not have been spared! How few things suffice for my real wants; for the frivolities which have seemed indispensable, in adding *a little* to my comfort have added NOTHING to my happiness, and have even diminished it by increasing my cares. If I made the sacrifice of them all, how much time and liberty I should gain to devote to the far more serious cares of my everlasting salvation.

This important business, which is in reality my only concern on earth, shall henceforth have all my atten-

tion. By the help of light from on high I will perform calmly, according to the measure of my strength, whatever work the Providence of God shall set before me. I will let the rest go by without regretting it, because the rest is not my real good. It is useless to vary continually my occupations and my pleasures; I have found that my cares are succeeded by fresh troubles, that one anxiety only gives place to another, and that all are followed by incessant cares, and even fresh anxieties or regrets. Peace can be found only at the feet of Jesus Christ.

O my Jesus, I am so frivolous in my tastes, so vain in my habits, that it is only by means of Holy Communion I have been led to understand that Thou art my 'one thing needful.' But now I desire to prove to Thee how deeply I feel it, for it seems to me that with the help of Thy grace I am ready to sacrifice everything for the Sacred Host. Cause me to act upon the firm conviction of Thy love, and may my conduct evidently prove that Thou art my only good.

V. '*Mary has chosen the better part, that shall not be taken away from her.*'

Jesus being called upon to decide between the two sisters in the matter of their differing conduct towards Him, pronounced that judgment which has been preserved in the Church as a model for ours.

He praised the part which Mary had chosen, because it could not be taken away from her; thus pointing out the fatal error of those who attach themselves to the things of this world, of which they must soon be inexorably deprived by death. He teaches us by this sentence that we cannot find in ourselves the necessary aliment for our intellect and reason, which is His word, or the truth; nor can we find the necessary aliment for the heart, which is the Holy Eucharist; but that we must seek for all these things *out* of ourselves.

He thus declares that the *contemplative* life, by which is meant a life dedicated entirely to prayer and love, is superior to the *active* life, because it is the most fertile of the two in great spiritual works. Prayer obtains more from God than labour; but the true perfection consists in the union of these two lives, and such was the life of Jesus upon earth.

Since Jesus in Holy Communion has become almost my *daily* Bread, I feel more strongly than ever my folly in having ever asked from the world what God alone can give. Too long have I wasted in vain pleasures the *better part* of my days which I owed to God. The time thus spent in useless amusements is lost to me, alike in time and in eternity. I will not waste my time in useless regrets, but henceforth I will turn all my desires *every moment* towards Jesus Christ. And because to be constant in prayer and attendance upon Him is the *better part*, both on earth and in heaven, I will devote to Him as much of my time as my daily duties will permit.

Lord Jesus, be Thou my part, in time and in eternity; let me desire no other part, and let me not divide it by divided feelings. My God, who hast chosen by the Holy Eucharist to reveal to me all that Thou art to us in this world and hereafter, make my gratitude equal to Thy wondrous gifts to me.

Conclusion.

Let us follow faithfully the path of perfection into which the will of God has called us. If you are called to an active life, employ yourself therein without fear or inquietude. If you are attracted to the contemplative life, despise not the exterior life of others. We do not increase supernatural gifts by despising those which are natural. This is an illusion, as great as that which consists in allowing ourselves to be carried away by the attraction of some higher degree of grace than that which has been allotted to us. Let us

endeavour to unite in our conduct the virtues of active life with those of heavenly contemplation; an union which Jesus blessed in the persons of those two great saints, Martha and Mary.

SIXTEENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

(St. John x.)

Preparation.

THE title of Shepherd, which Jesus here assumes, presents Him to us under an image most peculiarly fitted to excite our confidence, because it depicts His love towards us so admirably. As He daily immolates Himself upon the Altar for the salvation of His sheep, and to bestow His Flesh upon them for their daily food, so let us receive that Divine Food at the Holy Table, and live by the life which He bestows upon us.

I. *I am the Good Shepherd.*

It is especially at the Altar and at Holy Communion that Jesus shows Himself our Shepherd, and acts as such towards us. But He does more than any shepherd has ever done. Instead of feeding upon the flesh of His flock, He feeds His flock with His Flesh, and gives them to drink of His Precious Blood. 'How sweet it is,' cries St. Teresa, 'to see the Shepherd become the Lamb! He is the Shepherd because He feeds His sheep. He is the Lamb because He is our food. When we ask for *our daily bread*, we are asking that the Shepherd may be our food and nourishment.'

Without the Holy Eucharist, something would have been wanting to the reality of that title of Shepherd which Jesus has assumed. The Sacred Host endows Him with a character so touching that in meditating upon all that Jesus does for us the pious heart is melted into tears of love and devotion before the Altar.

The Divine Shepherd abides with us always; the tabernacle is His tent. During the long hours of the day and night He watches and guards us; He protects and defends His sheep. From the quiet sanctuary He extends His vigilant protection over each one of us. His look of love follows us; and when, our prayers ended, we return to our several occupations, He blesses us, He accompanies us, and soon His gentle grace brings us back again to His feet.

O Jesus, give me grace to remain near Thee, and, like a sickly, feeble sheep, needing Thy constant care, take me close to Thy Sacred Heart. Thou knowest the depths of my nature, Thou has taken pity upon my weakness. I cannot pardon myself for those acts of unfaithfulness which Thou hast pardoned. How great is my need of finding in Holy Communion the remedies to heal my sickness, the strength to keep me from falling again! Sustain me in the painful journey which I have to make in this world, and rather than leave me to perish in my sin and cowardice, may affliction urge me onward in the path of holiness until I reach the road of perfection. Come, Lord, heal me, feed me, lead me, save me, for salvation is the end and object of all Thy graces. My salvation is dear to Thee, for Thou lovest me as a part of Thyself.

II. *The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep.*

Jesus did not flee from the face of death; His love led Him even to the Cross, from whence His Blood has flowed upon His sheep-fold, which is His Church.

He embraces with joy upon the Altar the daily sacrifice of His whole being. He does not hide Himself from the humiliation, insult, and raillery which have too often been His portion in the tabernacle. Even now, were it necessary, He would give His life again for the conversion of every sinful soul. But He can die no more, for His one perfect Sacrifice abideth for ever; and we can apply it to ourselves by means of the sacraments, especially by means of Holy Communion.

Jesus Christ redeemed us by the oblation and immolation of Himself; as our Shepherd He gives and offers Himself for us still. This is why the spirit of immolation pervades all the Gospel. The Altar reproduces the same inventions of love. Should not all our works be impressed with the same mystic seal?

O my soul, open the eyes of faith to see the adorable Wounds of Jesus in the Sacred Host.

Think of the generosity of our Shepherd: to give thee His life this day in Holy Communion, He will begin by offering Himself, and He will give you life by the destruction of His own mystical existence. Think, then, that prayer alone is not preparation enough; you have but to ask, and God gives you Himself. Add to your prayer self-sacrifice, and God will deign to receive it, in permitting you to offer it to Him.

Divine Shepherd of the sheep, we must be insensible indeed if we promise not an inviolable attachment to Thy Heart! After having given Thy Blood, Thy life for my salvation, Thou dost return to offer Thyself anew, as if the virtue of Thy first Sacrifice were not all-sufficient. Cause me to learn, from the daily representation of Thy Sacrifice, and the frequent repetition of my Communions, that a small number of privations, scattered here and there over my life are not sufficient to prove my love. In giving myself to Thee I must sacrifice myself unshrinkingly, without

drawing back or struggling under the sacrificial knife. Grant me the Christian spirit that learns the art of self-sacrifice, and the spirit of prayer that obtains grace to continue that self-sacrifice always, in union with Thine.

III. '*I know my sheep, and I am known by them.*'

Jesus knows all His sheep. He calls them all by their *name;* the name under which they have been confided to the care of the Church and the ministry of their guardian angel. He watches unceasingly over His flock. He comes down into the midst of His sheep, walks through their thickly serried ranks, caresses some, listens to others; heals the wounds of one, and gives consolation to another. The proper effect of the Holy Eucharist is to apply particularly to each individual soul the benefits of what Jesus has done *once* and *for all.* Do you not feel when Jesus descends from the Altar to give Himself to you that He is your Shepherd, and that He watches over you with devoted tenderness?

I venture to believe that in the mysteries of the Incarnation and of Redemption, our Lord thought of me as distinct from others, and the Holy Eucharist permits me to hope that He still watches over me in an especial manner. His graces tell me that upon the Cross He saw my soul *afar off* and distinguished it among many others; but at this moment when He renews the sacrifice of Himself, He is preparing to apply it to me directly and personally.

The consecration is completed: there are in the ciborium one or more hosts that bear my name; they are for me; Jesus intends them for me; He will give them to me; I have only to come and ask for them.

O my beloved Shepherd, give me that Sacred Host which my heart desires! that which Thou has chosen for me, that Host by which Thy Heart intends to feed me and to come to me. Thou canst do more than I

am able to comprehend. Thou, in the performance of prodigies above our reason, dost grant our prayers by conferring signal benefits upon us. Discover Thyself to my heart in this Communion, that I may never more be tempted to wander from Thy fold. May I never refuse to follow the guidance of Thy Shepherd's staff and rod, when I have wandered from it, or to urge me on when I am inclined to linger by the way.

O my Divine Master, on whom I should always fix my eyes, deign never to lose sight of me. Thou knowest the *strong* as well as the *weak points* of my soul, of my resolutions, and of my actions, and I reproach myself for having, on certain occasions, consulted my own wishes rather than Thy good pleasure: my enjoyment rather than my duty: or, if I have sought to know Thy will, I have performed it with culpable indolence. O Jesus, grant that I may know Thee and love Thee with a knowledge as deep as the love which I beseech Thee to bestow upon me.

IV. *The Good Shepherd walketh before His sheep.*

Instead of driving His flock before Him, our Lord draws them gently after Him, as He walks before to clear and smooth the way. But *where* does He lead His sheep? He leads them to heaven, by the upper chamber and by Calvary. He does not preserve them from suffering, but He helps them to endure it. He pays frequent visits to the sick among His flock. He precedes us in the path of perfection, for He is Himself the perfect Example and Pattern of every virtue.

If you desire to comprehend all that our heavenly Shepherd does for us, listen to the words of St. Paul, who learnt from the Heart of Jesus that fervent love which animated him towards all the faithful flock of Christ, 'Who is weak, and I am not weak, who is offended, and I burn not? I will very gladly spend

and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved! Our mouth is opened unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but in yourselves; for I seek not yours, but you.'

Jesus does not speak audibly in our ears such words as these, but He does a thousand times more for us than St. Paul strove to do for the Corinthians. I know that *love* alone has led the Good Shepherd to seek for my soul with unwearied solicitude, with unabating constancy, with tenderness that no coldness on my own part can chill or overcome. These gentle persuasions seem to be applied to my soul in Holy Communion: I feel that no one can resist Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. He overcomes my resistance only to make me more happy: and when He has sought me so long and so far, it is but just that I should seek Him in my turn, and approach as close as possible to His Heart.

O sweet Shepherd, how great a price hast Thou paid for me, Thy poor sheep. How hast Thou wearied Thyself in bringing me into Thy fold, not once only but many times, when I have foolishly strayed away from it. I am sorry for Thy sufferings and fatigues. I will follow Thee wheresoever Thou shalt see fit to lead. I will never more wander from Thy ways. Yes; I return to Thee, confiding in Thy love, sure of meeting a tender reception. The earthly shepherd feeds his favourite sheep with some choice morsel from his hand. But Jesus does far more, for He gives us, with His own hand, Himself for our daily food.

V. *And His sheep follow Him.*

Jesus walks before us as our Guide, and calls us to follow Him. Our formal duty is to walk in His steps. '*We must* follow Jesus,' says St. Augustine, 'because He leads His sheep in wholesome pastures,

and brings them to the purest fountains to quench their thirst. It is a very simple thing to follow Jesus, it is to go wherever He has gone, to endure fatigue patiently, because Jesus did so; to forgive injuries, because Jesus every day forgives us our trespasses; it is to pray with Jesus; it is to ascend with Him to the Mount of Calvary by our sufferings, and to Mount Tabor by His consolations. In a word, to follow Jesus is to put our hearts in His, and, when God demands it, to be crucified with Him.

'Let us endeavour,' said St. Teresa, 'not to wander far from our dear Shepherd, for the sheep that keep near the Shepherd are always the most caressed, the best fed, and they often receive some chosen dainty from the shepherd's own repast.' Let our fidelity entitle us to receive some tender caress from Jesus. Can anything be more sweet than to receive a mark of His affection? The world intervenes to entice us away from our Shepherd, but the faithful sheep know not the voice of strangers. The accent of the world, its maxims, its judgments seem to them like unknown voices which speak a strange idiom, and the sheep fears them, flies from them. Becoming identified with the doctrine, thoughts, and feelings of the Good Shepherd, the language of the world is forgotten by the faithful sheep. Knowing the dangers from which Jesus has delivered her, she resolves henceforth to follow Him *alone*, and to follow Him *as closely as she can*. His wisdom and His love assure her that He leads His sheep by the right way to the 'City of habitation.' If difficulties arise in our path, if we are disheartened, wearied, or dismayed, let us never lose confidence in our Divine Master, for if our dangers increase, so will His aid. He is ever near to support and guide our trembling steps. He will lead us safely to our journey's end. Let us only trust confidently in Him, and if anxieties for our eternal welfare distress our souls, let us say like

faithful sheep, I know my Leader. I know whither my Shepherd will conduct me. He has come down from heaven to take me there. This very moment He comes to the Altar that I may open to Him my heart.

O my Sovereign Shepherd, open the eyes of my faith, that I may be able to see Thee and follow Thee. Turn my eyes ever upon Thee. Turn unto us Thine eyes, and Thy Heart overflowing with infinite love. Penetrate to the centre of my poor heart. See how much it longs for Thee, how much it fears to lose Thee. Come unto me, for without Thee, I cannot take a single step towards heaven. Since Thou hast so often raised me from falling, sought me in my wanderings, and brought me back to Thy fold, grant that by receiving Thee I may never fall again. Give me strength to follow Thee to the Cross. I deserve punishment because I have so often offended Thee, but my sorrow is so great that I could not endure it without Communion. Come to me, O my Jesus, and I will walk with docility in the path of love and gratitude, though it be marked with my blood. The Sacred Host will calm all my sorrows, and heal all my wounds.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Regard, with the eyes of faith, Jesus present in you. Adore Him as your Saviour and your Shepherd. Rejoice in the goodness and liberality which our Lord displays towards you.

Desire always to know and to love Him better, to become like unto Him; and pray that many souls may partake of the blessings contained in the Holy Eucharist.

I. '*I am the Door of the sheep.*'

It is especially now, in the moment of my possessing Jesus, that I feel how truly He is the Door of ever-

lasting happiness, the Door of eternal life. But I much need that He should also constitute Himself the Door of my heart, to prevent any feelings from entering or leaving it but such as have Him for their sole object and aim, and proceed from His holy inspiration. I have not yet attained to the highest degree of happiness, although the Tabernacle is opened and remains open to me, yet heaven is always closed. But Jesus is the Door of heaven also. That Door will be opened in the day when all veils shall be for ever withdrawn. I have received the Sacred Host, and I look for heaven. Following Jesus, pressed to His Heart, I hope to reach that eternal fold where all His sheep shall be assembled for ever, not one shall be found wanting.

Holy Communion does not make us forget our heavenly home; it only makes us desire it more ardently. How could we not desire to know Him who, even in hiding Himself, displays such wonderful sweetness and charity? Communion excites our ardour; and when I contemplate the tabernacle where Jesus is contained, I think of the heaven in which He visibly dwells, and which He will soon unclose for me.

When shall I attain unto Thee, O Lord my God? When shall I see Thee face to face? When shall I behold Thy Heart, which I have loved so much, which I love because It has loved me much, and is supremely worthy of being loved? Must my thanksgiving be naught but one long sigh of entreaty? Must I, possessing all, yet earnestly desire more?

O my Jesus, my soul is penetrated with the love that brings Thee down to me, and can only express its gratitude by a yet more lively desire to remain united to Thee.

I adore Thee, Lord, with my whole heart. May the sincerity of my devotion be pleasing to Thee, notwithstanding its weakness. Without communi-

cating I could never have known Thee; without knowing Thee I could not have loved Thee. Oh, may I ever love Thee more and more. And though my love be not as great as my desire to love Thee, regard only the desire of my heart to testify unto Thee a great love.

O Jesus, if I die ungrateful, it will only be because I am utterly unable to show my gratitude for Thy wondrous love.

II. '*If any man enter in by Me, he shall be saved.*'

Holy Communion is one of the greatest means of our salvation, because it unites us to Jesus. We are predestinate in Jesus Christ alone. For this reason He is called in Holy Scripture not only the Door of salvation, but also the Foundation of our eternal happiness.

We should commit into our Lord's hands all our thoughts, words, and actions at the beginning of every day, that they may all be done for His glory. Let us not offer anything to God except by Jesus Christ. All that passes through His hands is purified, and becomes an offering acceptable in the eyes of our Heavenly Father. Let us ask Jesus to give us grace never to depart from the holy custom of offering all our words and works *through Him* to God. This doing, we may hope to arrive safely in heaven, closely united to Jesus Christ our Saviour. For as He has passed His sacred word to save from eternal death all those who shall come unto God *by Him*, so He bestows upon those who ask Him to present them and all they have and are to God, the gift of an immovable faith, firm confidence, and final perseverance, *because* they have asked the favour at His hands of *passing through Him*, the Door of the flock, to God. I ought also to pray for grace to become the door of Jesus, that He may pass through my heart and receive me into His own; to transfer me at last

from the Holy Table to heaven. I will labour diligently to give Him love for love, because love, by a double movement, attracts Him to us and impels us towards His Heart. If I love Him, He will remain with me, He will aid me, and will never more suffer me to depart from Him.

O Saviour of my soul, I present unto Thee three desires which are inseparable: that I may always communicate worthily to the end of my life; that I may always love Thee with a love unchilled by sin; that I may preserve in the life to come the precious bonds which attach me to Thee here. My fear of losing Thee springs from my love, and from the happiness which Thou hast caused me to enjoy in the Holy Eucharist. Having so long enjoyed the happiness of beholding the Sacred Host, of receiving it, of remaining almost always near the tabernacle, except for a few hours in every day; having known this supernatural happiness, how could I endure the idea of being banished from Thy presence eternally? Suffer not such a terrible misfortune to overtake me. Suffer me not to offend Thee any more. Confide me to the care of Thy holy Angels, especially to Thy holy Mother, so that under her protection I may enter through her heart into Thine, and may abide therein for ever.

III. '*My sheep hear My Voice.*'

Jesus did not suffer the Jews only to enjoy the privilege of hearing His sacred voice: He speaks to us also by the Sovereign Pontiff, by the direction of our conscience, by the ministers and dispensers of His holy Word and Sacraments; but it is not enough for us to hear with the outward ear the commands of the Gospel, or the directions of our confessor: we must comprehend them inwardly, and lay hold upon the meaning of the sacred words. For this reason the prophet said: 'Lord give me the understanding of Thy words'

Now who can give us the true comprehension and enjoyment of the teaching of God, but God Himself? And does he not especially instruct us in and by the Holy Eucharist? We often find that some truth which until now we have been unable to grasp, some advice which has seemed quite beyond our power to practise, has appeared to us suddenly, after holy Communion, in a light so clear and an application so simple that we are astonished at our own blindness in so long recoiling from an imaginary difficulty. This is one of the ways in which Jesus Christ teaches us, and leads us by means of Holy Communion.

Our Lord also speaks to us Himself in the secret of our hearts, without audible words, but with a wonderful light and clearness, with an invincible strength, with a holy unction which touches us profoundly. He stoops to *ask*, to *entreat*, *He* who has the right to command; He reproves us for our faults so sweetly, that we can confess our guilt without feeling overwhelmed with grief. He makes us feel so forcibly the happiness of hearing Him, of replying to Him, of obeying Him, that we bitterly deplore the loss we had in those days, months, years, when, fearing to hear the voice of Jesus, we suffered the sounds of worldly business and pleasure to fill our ears, and make us deaf to our Shepherd's heavenly call. We must *listen* with an attentive heart when Jesus deigns to speak.

Adorable Shepherd, I see that the portrait of the wandering sheep resembles me. I have been light and careless, I have wandered from the fold, and I recall my wanderings only to rejoice in Thy mercy, which has brought me safely back to Thy sheltering care. I can only express my gratitude by my faithfulness, and I must ask that faithfulness from Thee. Make me always hear Thy voice, and always promptly obey it. Keep me within Thy fold, and let me never more, to my sorrow, overleap the barriers of Thy law,

to wander and disport myself in the flower-decked paths which lead to eternal death. Thou hast redeemed me unto life; preserve it to me in time and to eternity.

IV. '*I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.*'

Jesus said more than once: 'He that believeth in Me *hath* eternal life.' How much more reasonably may He who in Communion possesses the God of eternal life, hope that the same God will deposit in him the seed of eternal life? He gives it to us, not only in the commencement, the abstract, but He gives us *life itself.* It is true that it is hidden, and that it is possible for us to lose it; but in that blessed moment of Communion we *possess* it certainly.

In this thought of our Lord's may be included the idea, that life eternal, as bestowed upon our souls in Holy Communion, cannot be weakened or diminished. It is not the will of our Lord that one of the sheep whom He has nourished with His Flesh should perish. Why should we wish to extinguish spiritual life in ourselves—to separate ourselves from Jesus? It depends only upon ourselves to possess eternal life always, to remain united for ever to Jesus, who is its very Source and Centre. It is in your own power to prolong your act of thanksgiving from one Communion to another. For can you not, in the midst of your daily occupations, return continually to the thought of Jesus present in your soul? Every time that you raise your mind and heart to Him, you are filled more and more with eternal life.

Jesus was made Man that He might adapt Himself to my lowliness, that He might approach more closely to His poor creatures. Whatever it may cost me, I will remain united to my Saviour, otherwise I shall fall to the ground like a withered branch which is

good for nothing but to be burned. When wood is dry it burns more easily. I will ask Him to burn my poor dry soul in the fire of His grace, that the bright flame of His love may never be extinguished therein.

V. '*Other sheep I have—them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice.*'

The Heart of Jesus desires the salvation of all men. For that purpose He appointed the Apostles to continue and extend His evangelical ministry throughout the whole world. His ministry cannot be exercised at all times; but at all times we may labour in prayer for the conversion of souls to the Good Shepherd. It is most pleasing to Jesus Christ that prayer should be offered at all times for the salvation of souls, and, therefore, at the beginning of the Canon of the Mass the priest at that solemn moment prays to God, by virtue of the august Sacrifice which he is about to offer, to *help*, *govern*, and extend the Church throughout the world. Let us renew this demand. Nothing can be more agreeable to the Heart of Jesus; for He desires to extend the benefits of His Redemption to all mankind.

Often pray during your act of thanksgiving, or before the Blessed Sacrament, for the conversion of sinners, heretics, and infidels, and for the union of all true Christians. You cannot offer the merits of our Lord for any object more glorifying to the Holy Trinity, nor more according to the will of our Divine Shepherd.

Lord Jesus, there was a time when I had cause to fear that I was no longer numbered among Thy faithful sheep. I was then among those souls who had wandered from Thy fold, and whom Thou didst mercifully seek out and carry back to it. How sweet to feel myself once more under Thy guiding hand! What could possibly be greater happiness than to be

near Thy Heart, and to be fed with the delicious Food of Thy most Sacred Body and Blood? May this happiness be shared by many other souls! Give me a true thirst for the salvation of souls: since all are capable of loving Thee, and have received their happy capacity for doing so from Thee. Extend Thy kingdom upon earth: but *enlighten* the souls of men, that they may know Thee; *seek* them, that they may find Thee; *draw* them, that they may follow Thee; attract them, that they may desire Thee; *love* them, that they may love Thee. Draw me strongly to Thee, O Jesus, but not in such a manner as that I should follow Thee *alone;* draw me so to Thee, that I may in my turn attract many other souls to follow Thee, principally those of my own family and kindred.

My God, mayest Thou be universally known and loved, suffer not one of the souls destined to be the glory and the crown of Thy humanity, to be lost for ever. Bless the labours of all such as have been called by Thy Holy Spirit to the apostolic office. Give to all Thy priests the gift of converting sinners. Regard in Thy love our Sovereign Pontiff N., the bishops, the religious, and all the guardians of Thy Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church and Fold.

Conclusion.

In the character of the Good Shepherd, Jesus displays Himself to us, as filled with the tenderest compassion and mercy; but under the form of the Sacred Host He applies that love and mercy directly to our souls. Let us make a fitting return for His indulgence, His continual solicitude; let us cast no more lingering looks behind, towards the things of this world; let us neither regret nor desire them, but if such a desire should arise in our hearts, let us press more closely than ever to the Heart of Jesus. Let us seek, in Holy Communion, strength to overcome our

weakness, and grace to fortify our good resolutions. Let us make the Heart of Jesus our invulnerable shield against the devil, against the world, and against ourselves.

SEVENTEENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE PRODIGAL SON.

(St. Luke xv.)

Preparation.

It is impossible to read coldly this incomparable Parable, in which Jesus has so well depicted His Heart of love towards us. But how much more touching does it not appear, when, feeling that we too have been prodigal and rebellious children, we experience personally in Holy Communion the paternal and tender indulgence of our Father in heaven.

I. '*My father, give me the portion of thy goods that falleth to me.*'

This demand which addressed to an earthly parent would be audacious, becomes a necessity in the supernatural order of things. We cannot live without grace, without possessing in ourselves the Author of grace. By each Communion we reiterate our express desire to be put in possession of our divine heritage. Jesus, whom we desire, is the Treasure of time and of eternity: in heaven He will be our Beatitude, as in the Holy Eucharist He is the means and prelude to it.

Since Jesus has become our treasure upon earth in the Holy Eucharist, He not only permits but intends

me to claim the *sacramental heritage or portion*, which in His mercy He has prepared for me. Alas, I have not always most eagerly desired that sacred portion; the frivolous possessions of this world have filled my heart. Absorbed in earthly things, I have forgotten the more important spiritual gifts, and while seeming to grant my desires God still watched over me. Even at the instant of my greatest ingratitude. When I see that, by continual favours, our Lord preserves and even augments my *portion* of spiritual blessings, how can I express my gratitude? He does not seem to perceive that I use His gifts carelessly, that I sometimes even abuse them. If at the present time peace and order reign in my soul, it is to His mercy alone that I am indebted for them. Lord Jesus, I am covered with shame when I recall my own shortcomings. I am filled also with admiration for Thine infinite mercies. Thy love keeps Thee ever near me, and my attempts to escape from Thy presence, result only in my quick return to it with remorse mingled with love. The Tabernacle attracts me, but pleasure beckons me elsewhere. The time I pass before Thee sometimes appears tedious. Thy Heart burns with love, but my heart continues cold.

Thou comest to enrich me with Thy merits: but I come to renew Thy sorrows! O Jesus, pardon! I hope in Thy mercy, wash away my sins and heal my soul, that it may draw near more willingly to Thy Holy Table.

II. '*He went into a far country.*'

The Father of the Prodigal Son probably refused at first to grant his bold request, but at last he yielded, over-persuaded by his son's importunity, and moved by parental affection. The unnatural child, enriched by his ill-gotten spoil, left his home without casting one regretful look behind at the scenes of his infancy: his heart seemed to be dead.

In this Prodigal Son, so avaricious, so frivolous, so worldly, and so heartless, I recognise the picture of my own conduct towards our Lord. The smallest sin which we commit with deliberation, transports the soul into a foreign country, a strange land, far from our Father and our home. Continual thought and care bestowed upon earthly interests alone, unmingled with the practice of virtue, and the care of our souls, will take away by degrees all light from our minds, and strength from our will. The grace of God is dissipated, our treasure is wasted.

Oh, how painful was this experience to my soul, when it could not immediately determine to return to Jesus. In that time of spiritual famine, I would not have done the *most trifling thing* for God, and my supernatural life was wasting away, together with my happiness. How many times did our Lord strive to console me, to attract my soul to Him, to become my strength, my buckler, my happiness, and I turned away from Him and refused His love. Careless of my true interests, dead to the secret working of His grace, disdaining the strong attraction which drew me to His Table, neglecting the rich treasure which He offered to my ungrateful soul, I was anxious only for the pleasures of the world, and I lavished my gold and my affections upon those who led me still further from my Father's house, from the Tabernacle where alone I was loved and regretted.

Since the blest hour in which I gave myself to Jesus, how often has my unfaithfulness made His Heart sad! Does not my spirit dwell in a far country, where it suffers itself to become entangled in a thousand vain thoughts and distractions, even in the presence of our Lord? Even if I have not gone so far as to commit deliberate sin on these occasions, must I not confess that my mind has wandered far from my Father's house? How often, during Holy Mass, am I not far away from the Church, and

heavenly things, dissipating and neglecting the abundant graces which are awaiting me upon the altar: happy if my thoughts are *only* frivolous, and not positively dangerous?

O my Jesus, is this the return that I ought to make for Thy amazing love and self devotion? Where is my gratitude? Where is my love? Why does my mind wander so far, so often, and so long, instead of concentrating itself upon the thought of Thy mercies and my ingratitude? Pardon me for wandering far from Thee, when Thy Heart calls me to the Holy Table, when It pursues me with its proofs of tenderness. O Jesus, my heart shall never more be deaf to Thy offers of love. The time is come for Thy grace to conquer my resistance, henceforward I will gladly make all the sacrifices which Thou shalt demand of me, as necessary to my perfection.

III. '*I will arise and go to my Father.*'

When a soul has long yielded itself a willing captive to the dominion of its passions, it ends by sinking into the slumber of exhaustion under their heavy yoke. But when the light of grace enters that degraded soul, it arouses it, and brings it to repentance. In the light of this new day, the soul perceives with deepest sorrow and humiliation, not only its own state of misery and wretchedness, but all the blessings it has lost, and the fearful punishment it justly deserves. It sighs for deliverance from the imperious tyranny of the passions. But it must pray earnestly for grace to enable it to strive courageously, and to bear the yoke to which it once willingly submitted. When we invoke God as our Father, that title awakens the noblest instincts of the heart, and makes known to us the treasures of His mercy.

Let us not be afraid to come to Jesus. We cannot fear one whom we love deeply. We must not fear Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, for He is all love;

neither must we fear our own unworthiness, because Jesus regards our repentance rather than our sins. However well we may have prepared ourselves for Communion; it is still only a conflict of our weakness and misery, with God's sovereign love and mercy.

O good and merciful Jesus, I arise, covered with confusion for my sins, but I come with confidence to Thee, my Father, my Saviour, and my God. I entreat Thee to receive me, a poor hungry wanderer. I have suffered long; I have long been the slave of Thy enemy, the sport of my own illusions. I have escaped from my hateful tyrants; I was a stranger to them, but for my misfortune they received me gladly. I greatly need to return to Thee. I have nothing left in my possession, but my will, and I submit that wholly to Thee. Teach me how to use it aright.

I desire Thee, and from Thee do I ask the grace which alone can aid me in the realization of this desire. Oh, that I could blot out of my life's history the days and years in which I have offended Thee, my good Master! I give Thee thanks, and praise Thy name, for arresting me when I was on the very brink of the abyss, and for preventing me from wasting the remainder of my life in the service of the world and the devil. I am Thine, my God, may Thy holy will be accomplished in me in all things!

IV. '*And when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.*'

Under the figure of this truly paternal embrace, our Lord gives us a touching description of the goodness of our heavenly Father. This fatherly goodness is displayed towards us in a manner surpassing all that the heart of man can possibly conceive. When we endeavour to escape from this love, it calls us back again with earnest entreaties, it strives to entangle us,

as it were, in the cords of love; and happy is the soul that yields itself a willing captive. The goodness of God raises us up when we fall, it works mightily in us, prompting us to good, and restraining us from evil; for when Jesus comes to work in us for good, He comes not only to *give*, but also to *take away*. Whatever retains, or leads us into sin, is *superfluous in us*, and must be taken away. But after our repeated acts of unfaithfulness, how great is the work that must be effected in us by grace, in restoring to our souls the blessings they have lost and forfeited by sin! This *grace*, so precious in its effects, a proof so wonderful and immense of the goodness of God, is in itself essentially a *gift*. Great as it is, it is as nothing compared to the Holy Eucharist, in which our Lord gives Himself substantially to me in such a manner that, notwithstanding my repeated offences, I can say to myself, when I have received the Sacred Host, 'I possess the Heart of Jesus Christ.' I will ask for grace to comprehend, to enjoy, and to desire, that holy union.

Lord and Father of infinite mercy, I adore Thee, I love Thee with all my guilty but purified heart. I cast myself into Thine arms, O my Jesus, and full of joy and gratitude for Thy tender love to me, I implore Thee to keep me always united to Thee. But I desire not to enjoy this heavenly blessing alone: behold O Lord, this other prodigal, whom I bring unto Thee. I place him, before myself in Thy arms, and as I know Thou wilt not reject me, so neither wilt Thou reject this poor sinner. May he feel what it is to be pressed to his Father's Heart; then will he never more desire to withdraw himself from it. My God, after all my transgressions, I know not how to express to Thee my gratitude for admitting me to this celestial banquet. I love Thee! I love Thee! I wish to make every day so many acts of love, as the wicked utter words of hatred against Thee.

V. '*My Father, I have sinned against heaven and in Thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son.*'

There is no being upon earth who is not self-convicted before our Lord Jesus Christ of having neglected the call of His grace and despised His love. I know that I have been ungrateful to Him, but God knows that I have been a thousand times more so than I suppose. I take a few steps towards Jesus; immediately, like the tenderest Father, He opens His arms to me, and never reproaches me with my past sins. In the depths of love which His Heart contains, all my offences are buried, He will not suffer the remembrance of them to trouble the feast of the Holy Eucharist, the banquet of joy and love.

Yes, O my God, I am that prodigal who has caused Thee so many tears, and Thou hast received me with the affection of a tender Father, weeping over his guilty, but repentant child. Thou dost even more, for Thou hast never lost sight of me, even in my remotest wanderings.

O my Jesus, Thy mercies make me feel more deeply my own guiltiness. I confess all my errors, all my sins; Thy very blessings have been to me an occasion of falling; Thy gifts have been a source of error, because I have employed them in a manner displeasing to Thee; my mind has employed itself in frivolous, perhaps even in dangerous thoughts; my heart has divided the love which should have been Thine alone, with creatures. This confession, which I made with humble shame, does not destroy my confidence, but it increases my repentance; for although I am guilty, Thou, O Lord, art a merciful God. I have sinned against Thee, it is true, but my tears have flowed. I have been ungrateful to the best of Fathers, but now I repent, and love Thee: and in the eyes of my Saviour, repentance and love shall cover a multitude of sins.

VI. '*Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand.*'

Our Blessed Saviour is still more eager than this tender father to do us good: He only waits for an opportunity of conferring His benefits. As the greatest of all His favours is the gift of Himself, so He is ever ready to bestow Himself upon all who come humbly to the Holy Table.

But no one must approach His feast without a white garment, and the house of our Father is opened only to those who bear the marks of sincere repentance.

I can imagine that I hear Jesus speaking to my Angel Guardian, advising him to help me, before Communion, to make my soul clean and ready for that heavenly feast: to put on me the garment of holiness, in which alone I can be well pleasing to God, and to put the ring of reconciliation on my finger as a token to ensure me a place at that celestial feast.

O Jesus, I desire to make the mercies which Thou hast bestowed upon me known to all men. It would indeed be too poor a return, were I to publish them abroad to all creatures under heaven. When I retrace in my mind those unhappy days, when I rarely and coldly received Holy Communion; when I offended Thee lightly and carelessly; oh, then my heart is ready to break with sorrow, it overflows with gratitude for Thy mercies. And now Lord, I am entirely Thine! I hope to remain Thine for ever, because I trust that Thy grace will preserve me from falling again into sin. Strengthen the work which Thou hast wrought in me: the change which was at first so repugnant to my will and my senses. Henceforth my repugnance will be easily surmounted, if Thou wilt enable me keep my resolutions.

I will no longer prefer the indulgence of my passions

and my tastes to the performance of Thy will. Break for ever those secret bonds which attach my heart to created objects. Renew my mind and heart by Thy victorious grace, and cause me to love Thee a thousand times more than I have offended Thee.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Blessed Saviour with a feeling more profound than ordinary, of joy and gratitude to Him for His condescension in taking up His abode in your soul. Rejoice, because the reconciliation between God and your soul is now complete.

Ask Him that you may be enabled to satisfy His Sacred Heart by the sincerity of your efforts and the thoroughness of your conversion.

Let us not give our Lord cause to say of us, 'This soul has come before me loving the world, and decked with the ornaments of its vanity.'

I. '*This my son was dead and he is alive again; he was lost, and is found.*'

These words, expressive of the most lively paternal satisfaction, plainly show the joy with which our Lord enters into our hearts, especially when we have grieved Him by our absence. We are all of us, alas! prodigal sons. We have made our Father's heart sad by our more or less distant and lengthened wanderings, and we now return and enjoy His divine embraces, and the delights of His Holy Table, where we are admitted to eat the children's bread, and partake of the food of angels. May they not, like the elder brother of the converted prodigal, be surprised to find us received so favourably? to see Jesus Christ, their God and ours, bestowing Himself upon prodigals? Ah, if I were to hear them, I should venture to reply: You are ever with Jesus, but I have

unfortunately offended Him; suffer my repentant heart to rejoice in that mercy of which you have no need.

O Lord my God, my soul is full of joy in Thy presence; it adores Thee with deep devotion. Give me grace that I may henceforth cause Thee as much joy, as in my past life I have given Thee reason to grieve over my sins, especially at *such and such a time*, when I dissipated Thy graces, resisted Thy holy inspirations, and treated Thy offers of mercy with ingratitude and contempt.

Ah, Lord, how ungrateful am I, and how good, how merciful art Thou! When I consider my sins, and my shortcomings, and when I see myself intimately united to Thee, I can but wonder and be amazed at the greatness of Thy mercy, which surpasses all that man can imagine or conceive.

O Jesus, Thy silence on the subject of my sins affects me far more than any reproaches could do, justly as I deserve them. But since Thou hast now granted me a full and free forgiveness, I can never more forgive myself for having offended Thee. My God, my sins are ever before mine eyes, not to cause me to tremble at Thine anger, but to increase my repentance and my love.

II. '*These many years have I served Thee, and never have I broken Thy commandments.*'

Many of my thoughts are equivalent to a reproach like this, which I should never dare to utter. I remember the years which I have passed without sensible consolation in the service of my God. I count the sacrifices I have made for Him—and is not the sigh with which I conclude this review painful to Jesus? Might He not reply: Have I counted the graces which I have bestowed upon you, the Communions I have granted you, the sins from which I have preserved you? Have I ever withdrawn Myself

from your ardent desires? Are you not possessed of Me at this very moment?

I have now spent many years in Thy service, O my God: during many years hast Thou rewarded me by frequent Communions for the little good that I have been able to do; during many years hast Thou daily returned to me, as kind, as merciful this day as the preceding.

Ah, since I have Him who is goodness and liberality itself, for my Father and my Friend, why cannot I, like the elder brother in the parable, bear witness to myself that 'I have never broken Thy commandments?' Alas, Lord, Thou, far better than myself, knowest how often, with how little reason or pretext, I have failed to keep them! Is it possible that a *man* should be better obeyed and loved than Thee, O my Jesus, and that those whom Thou hast so favoured, should treat Thee with such ingratitude?

O Jesus, cause my heart to love Thee; it is the heart of a poor sinner, unworthy of Thy tenderness: may those other poor sinners whom I recommend to Thy mercy learn to love Thee also. Thou hast caused me to feel that I cannot live without Thee; communicate to them also that attachment to Thee, which is the most powerful means of detachment from the world. Attract me invincibly to Thee, and draw out of their captivity all such souls as have not yet broken off the dominion of their passions. So strongly do I feel the blessedness of being united to Thee, that I desire to see this blessedness shared by a great number of souls, to Thy great glory. This is my desire; it is far more the desire of Thy Heart. Grant, Lord, Thine own desires, in satisfying mine.

III. '*And yet Thou hast never given me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.*'

Temporal and eternal blessings are not often bestowed upon the same person, and if we must

choose between them, how merciful is God in bestowing upon us *spiritual gifts:* and how much more dearly shall we see and feel His goodness in making this choice for us, when the day approaches in which the earth and all things in it shall fade from our sight. The abundance of all things earthly leaves us still a desire for 'the kid to make merry with our friends.' But the heart, which has tasted the Divine food of the Holy Eucharist, ought to concentrate its joys in the Holy Family at the feet of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

I could not fail to recognise in the language of this elder son, who was jealous to see his younger brother tenderly received after his foolish wanderings, the same kind of reproach that my conduct has often seemed to address to our Lord after Holy Communion.

In Communion, Jesus gives me *all*, and can I still, either for myself or my loved ones, cherish a desire for more? In the dream of a position different from that in which God has seen fit to place me: or of a more considerable fortune: or in the wish to enjoy more pleasure, to suffer less grief or pain: in all such thoughts, there lurks an unspoken reproach, which the eye of Jesus can but too well read in the heart. Who knows but these earthly goods, which I desire so eagerly, would have endangered the salvation of my soul? May it not be, that to their absence I owe the happiness of my frequent Communions? If our Lord should oblige me to choose between earthly happiness and heavenly blessings, ah! should I not implore Him to leave me Holy Communion, and to take from me all the rest?

Lord Jesus, although happier than many others, I have not turned away from the Holy Eucharist, and have not wandered far away from Thy side; yet I do not need Thy pardon less, for I have not always felt my happiness, nor rendered thanks unto Thee as I

ought. I have enjoyed Thy benefits carelessly, and I have to reproach myself with many negligences. I will censure no one, and far from boasting of Thy favours, I will remember, that without Thy mercy, there is not a fault so vile that I might not have committed it. Adorable Jesus, who by the gift of Thyself dost preserve me from the evil which I might have committed, keep me also from all desire for worldly things. Make me to love Thee more than all things upon earth; give me a passionate love to Thee, which shall be my life, my joy, and my hope for all eternity.

IV. '*All that I have is thine.*'

It is most especially after receiving Holy Communion that we feel the truth of these words, in which our Blessed Lord depicts so clearly His love and bounty towards us. For does not Jesus, in giving us Himself, bestow upon us also all that He is, all that He has, and all that He can? This was so plainly seen by St. Augustine that he wrote the following sublime words: 'God, in bestowing upon men the gift of the Holy Eucharist, may be said to have exhausted the treasure of His Divinity.' 'By reason of His almighty power,' continues the holy doctor, 'God can do whatever He pleases; He can create a thousand worlds, each more beautiful than ours, but He can never effect a marvel greater than the Holy Eucharist.'

By my present Communion, God has effected in me the greatest work of His almighty power. God the Father, to prove His great love, has bestowed upon me His Divine Son, who is in all things like unto Himself. This unspeakable gift has been equally bestowed in all its completeness upon every communicant throughout the world. So that each one of these, as much as myself, has a right to say: Jesus is all mine! His Body and His Blood are mine! His life,

death, sorrows, and merits are mine! What a happiness to know that the Heart of Jesus is mine! But is my heart as truly *His?* Have I, every day, and during every moment which preceded my Communion, endeavoured with all my strength to manifest to Him my love?

If this assurance of a complete and perfect gift may be sincerely made by a good father, how much more true is it of Thee, O Lord Jesus! Most fully do I enter into its truths in this happy moment when I possess Thee.

What hast Thou in Thyself that Thou couldst refuse to give me? And what can I desire from earth, when all the richest blessings heaven can bestow are freely granted to me? O sweet certainty which fills my soul with joy: would that I could return love for love!

O my God, I attribute nothing to myself of all the gifts Thou hast bestowed upon me; all that I have from Thee I have received it, and to Thee I offer it again, both as regards the use and the effects. All I have and am is thine, by the natural right of the Creator over His creature; but it is thine also by the desire of my heart. Take all, O my Jesus, thoughts, words, conversations, desires, actions, sufferings, affections; I will keep nothing for myself. I desire to enjoy Thy gifts, in Thee and for Thee alone. I can keep back nothing from Thee, who hast refused me nothing. Having possessed Thee here on earth as often as Thou canst give Thyself to me, I indulge the hope that Thou wilt bestow Thyself upon me eternally in heaven. The possibility of such a joy as this thrills my soul with joy even in the anticipation; what, then, will the realization be! Come quickly, Lord Jesus, such is the secret and most ardent desire of my heart.

V. '*All that I have is thine.*'

The Holy Eucharist is Jesus Christ in the past, the present, and the future. Our own condition after re

ceiving Holy Communion is, if we live in a state of more habitual union with our Blessed Saviour, the past repaired, the present sanctified, the future embellished with hopes of immortal happiness. No favour is denied us! No benefit is too great to be granted us by the liberality of God! No grace can be refused us by our Lord! Let us draw without fear upon this immense credit; let us use it freely, but reverentially, gratefully, lovingly. Know that at this moment we have power over the Heart of Jesus!

A change so happy, which by means of constant prayer and earnest endeavour may become my permanent condition, ought surely to bring me to the feet of Jesus in gratitude, to say, *All that I have is Thine.* Jesus loves to have these words addressed to Him in thanksgiving; He loves still more to see them carried out effectively in my conduct. The Holy Eucharist unites the severity of sacrifice to the sweetness of love. It would be impossible for our Lord to give Himself to us more completely, or to lay down His glory more thoroughly than He does in this Sacrament; for, as St. John Chrysostom says, 'Jesus Christ gives Himself to us with all that He possesses; He keeps back *nothing*.' I am a living proof of this. And if I desire to imitate His boundless generosity, must I not also give myself and all that belongs to me, without *any reserve*, to Him? Jesus had previously given me His Blood, His Heart, His Mother, and He had promised to give me heaven. And I, having begun by giving my heart to Jesus, I will add to that gift my life, my possessions, with the health, life, and fortune of all who are dear to me, intrusting to His divine hands *all* the gifts that His bounty has bestowed upon me. I feel, with an inward trembling, that the gift of the persons whom I love costs me far more than the gift of my own life. But Jesus will order all for His glory and their happiness. Ah! if I have not hitherto made this sacrifice, so dear to the

Heart of Jesus because it is the sure sign of ardent love, I will make it *now*, with all possible sincerity and fervour.

Yes, my Lord and my God, all that I have is Thine, from this time forth for evermore. I know not how to express my gratitude to Thee; but how deeply do I feel Thy goodness in the tender gift of Thyself, in the gift of Thy infinite treasures of power and love!

Oh, how ungrateful have I been in times past for those amazing treasures: when I was not contented with them, when I did not always desire them, when to confess the whole truth, I sometimes was afraid to receive them!

Oh, since Thou hast conferred upon me a gift so perfect that even Thou canst give me nothing greater, grant that I may have grace to say to Thee: My God, all that I have, all that I am, is Thine!

VI. *Perseverance in well doing.*

If the mother of the Prodigal Son had been alive, says Rufert, he would perhaps have never quitted his father's house, or he would at all events have returned home more quickly. By which he means to convey that either the child of Mary does not wander away from God by mortal vice, or, that if he is so unhappy as to be enticed away by the allurements of sin, he will quickly be recalled to the paths of virtue by his Immaculate Mother. For what earthly mother can watch over her children so tenderly as Mary loves the children of God, and desires their spiritual benefit?

Nothing can be more tender than a mother's heart. I am certain, then, of finding a sure refuge in the Heart of Mary. I should have recourse to her with confidence in my prayers, my difficulties, my temptations, and my sins, because that loving Mother will never forsake me nor be offended at my ingratitude, my cowardice, or my carelessness in the service of

God, but will always continue my indulgent and tender protectress.

O Mary, my good Mother, who art, after Jesus, my hope and consolation, make me persevere, by your protection, in my firm determination of offending God no more, and of preferring a thousand deaths to the deliberate commission of one mortal sin! Refuse me not this favour, and I will say to my God: I am no longer that ungrateful, guilty soul which I once was; I will no more suffer the world to take possession of my heart; henceforth it is Thine, and Thine alone. But that I may keep this promise, O Mary, defend me from my own weakness! Take my heart, which has so lately possessed Jesus, thy beloved Son; hide it in your own, watch over it as your own possession. Instruct me in my duties, form me to the practice of all virtues, especially of the love of God. Make me remember and love to pray, that I may be saved from a frivolous and useless life.

Give me grace to put all my confidence in thee, to hope in thee, even till my latest sigh. Obtain for me more especially the grace of final perseverance, and grant that I may remember to ask for it, above all in temptation and at the hour of death, O thou who art the refuge of sinners and our perpetual help.

Conclusion.

It is not enough that we return to God by sincere repentance; we must also use energetic, efficacious means to confirm our serious resolutions and to persevere in a truly Christian life; and these means are, first, assiduous prayer; for, all is promised to prayer, and nothing is given without it: and secondly, the pious use of the sacraments of the Church. If Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the happiness of our heart, He must also be our strength and our guide to eternal life.

EIGHTEENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE CONVERSATION OF SALOME AND HER SONS WITH OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

(St. Matt. xx.)

Preparation.

ST. PAUL declares that maternity is a means whereby a woman may be saved, provided that she maintains the dignity worthily, by a lively faith, holiness of life, and generous self-sacrifice, in a word, by the continual practice of all the great Christian virtues. On this condition only, the trials and cares of motherhood will turn to her everlasting joy and consolation.

Let us ask our Lord for grace to imitate an illustrious mother: Mary Salome, niece to St. Joseph and the Blessed Virgin, who gave her two sons to Jesus, having no greater ambition than to see them exalted with Him in eternity.

I. '*Salome came to Jesus with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him.*'

The desires of Salome and her sons concerned Jesus only, conducted them to Jesus, and led them to pray.

My desires ought to do the same for me: I ought not to form a single wish for myself or my family which has not Jesus for its end: for whatever does not lead to Jesus leads to the loss of eternal salvation. I will make my desires known to our Lord, especially in the spirit of prayer, to draw down upon them the blessing of God, and to bring all my projects into conformity to His Divine will. How can we commend our plans beforehand to Jesus, without inquiring whether they will be pleasing to Him? for if

our intentions are contrary to the eternal decrees of God, they must come to nought.

But what faith was shown by this mother in her prayer: she worshipped Jesus, she recognised him as her God: she expressed her firm belief in His future kingdom in heaven. Although I well know that Jesus has entered into full possession of His almighty power, and reigns eternally in heaven, I pray to Him with feeble trust and confidence, as if He were not really one Almighty Lord and Everlasting King. I forget that He descends from heaven and comes to me daily, out of pure love and kindness, so that I have but to ask, and I shall receive. But to insure the power of my prayer, I will make it in conformity with the will of God, and the spiritual benefit of those whom I recommend to Jesus.

My God, grant first that I may pray well; secondly, that by my entire conformity to Thy divine will, my prayer may become acceptable unto Thee. Suffer me to pour forth the sorrows of my heart into the loving Heart of Jesus. The privilege of frequent approach to Thy Holy Table emboldens me to ask still greater favours. Grant also that none of the members of my family or household may ever commit mortal sin: that none of them may lose the faith, or suffer it to be endangered by reading or conversation: that none of them may neglect the care of their salvation in too eager a pursuit of temporal things: that none may sacrifice their eternal to their worldly interests. May we all make such a choice of the things in this world, as may best conduce to our eternal welfare; and may the desire to please Thee and serve Thee be the guiding rule of our conduct on all occasions.

II. '*Jesus said unto her, What wilt thou?*'

Salome had not been alone in her prayer, but our Lord demanded an explanation of it from her only. Jesus had perhaps remarked in her soul a purer intention, a more elevated object: her prayer had probably been most fervent. A mother always prays so earnestly for her children! The eloquence of the heart is more persuasive than any words.

If when I cast myself at the feet of our Lord, he were to say to me, 'What wilt thou?' I think that I should reply with confidence, I desire to love Thee, my God, and that all who belong to me should love Thee also. Love includes all. I can neither ask for more than this, nor desire less. What would Jesus think of a request which should not be directed to His Heart from mine? I prefer asking for the love of God, even to asking for heaven: for I hope to reach heaven through the merits of my Lord and Saviour. I would rather *love* much than *rejoice* much. And if Jesus should ask me to choose between Communions and consolations, I would choose Holy Communion in preference to sensible favours, which would be only one of the gifts of God. If He were to offer me heaven, or His love, though such an offer would be impossible, I would choose love, because in choosing heaven I should seem to prefer my own felicity to the glory which Jesus receives from my love. Love, the love of Jesus! is the cry which ascends to God from every soul that has learned from Holy Communion what love really is.

Lord Jesus, I desire to obtain Thy love, and to spread Thy love abroad in the souls of all who are dear to me in this world! I intreat Thee to make Thyself known to them, to call them in that gentle but powerful voice which suffers no denial nor delay. that voice which overcomes every obstacle, and draws the soul with an irresistible attraction to itself. Thou

hast intrusted these souls to my care, but Thou hast not given them to me: let me ever remember that they are not mine but Thine, that if my heart should be tempted to dispute the possession of them with Thee, my faith and reason may agree to silence my too unrestrained natural feelings. Cause Thyself to be loved by these souls, O Lord Jesus, and may I never wish to be loved more than Thee, nor so much as Thou art loved.

III. '*Say that my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom.*'

'This woman,' said St. John Chrysostom, 'was not a worldly mother, eager to obtain temporal advantages for her children, anxious to provide them with a brilliant worldly career; she was not like those mothers who, so long as their children attain a high position on earth, are indifferent to the miseries which may be reserved for them in eternity. Salome desired heavenly possessions only, and was profoundly indifferent to earthly honours and dignities.' What faith there is in the expression, '*Say* Lord.'

With the eye of faith she beheld in Jesus the Incarnate Word of God, who has but to *speak* and it is *done.* And she asked for her sons the highest places at the court of the Eternal King of earth and heaven. We can see that as she had by their early education and training prepared her children to respond to the call of our Lord, she believed that they were ready to be received with Him into His glory, and to partake of His heavenly kingdom. Let us, like her, ask God to bestow eternal blessings only upon those for whom we pray. I should be most imprudent, were I to demand from Jesus temporal favours: as for instance, long life, health, fortune, fragile possessions which may be taken from us at any moment. I see plainly the vanity of all these

things, and far from desiring them for myself, I will entreat our Lord to open the eyes of all who long for them, of all who look forward to a long *future* in this world, and have such a taste for pleasure and worldly enjoyment, that they are tempted to sacrifice eternity to time. If I love my family with a right kind of love, I shall be prepared to make any sacrifice which can assure their eternal salvation.

Lord, I desire one thing only for me and mine: it is that after our death, we may be admitted to enter into Thy kingdom. I desire nothing in this world but that which it has pleased Thee to ordain for us: I ask for neither *more* nor *less* than Thy holy will: but I ask to be enabled to perform that will entirely, every day, and as perfectly as I can. All else I leave to the care of Thy mercy.

IV. '*You know not what you ask.*'

Salome, in her audacious prayer, had been only the interpreter of her sons' desires: but, she had rectified them, by asking for *eternity* the honour which they in their ignorance had demanded for *time.* Jesus replied directly to these ambitious young men, reproved their ignorance; showed them that every secret of their minds and hearts was open to Him: and addressed His reproofs to them alone, because they only 'knew not what they asked.'

In how clear a light does this dignified answer of our Blessed Saviour place the utter futility and emptiness of all our good works. James and John had left all for Jesus, they had followed Him everywhere, with love and devotedness in no way inferior to their mother's. They were nearly related to the family of Mary, and therefore considered themselves entitled to some exceptional reward and dignity. When we have been working hard for Jesus, when we have done all that we ought, and all that we are able to do, let us still with deep humility acknowledge, that we

are *unprofitable servants*, who can expect nothing from God, but as a pure favour freely bestowed upon us by His infinite grace and mercy.

To the greater number of my prayers, Jesus might well reply, 'You know not what you ask,' for they almost all breathe a certain spirit of impatient desire of earthly happiness, either for myself or my friends: they express a weariness of grief. Although I may not say so plainly, yet our Lord sees that I desire to reach the throne of glory before I have deserved it; to obtain the reward of my sufferings before I have patiently endured them all. And He causes me to feel, in the providential course of events, that my prayers are too audacious; or that I have not yet comprehended rightly what should be my earthly *preparation* for my eternal happiness, a preparation which must be submitted to also by those whose happiness is as dear to me as my own. For can I enjoy anything so long as their eternal interests are doubtful, endangered, or seem to suffer from the circumstances in which they may be placed? What interests of time can I in my prayers put on a level with the interests of eternity? Let us lose all in this world, if needs be, that we may save all in the world to come. In such an alternative, no hesitation can be possible.

Lord Jesus, at the moment of receiving the Bread of Eternal Life, the God of Heaven, there can rest in my mind but one thought, in my heart but one desire alone: one feeling directed to Thee aud worthy of Thee.

I most ardently desire to prove to Thee in this Communion that I love Thee, and that I desire that Thou shouldest be loved, above all things, by all creatures. Never could I desire to drive away the remembrance of Eternity from my thoughts, my occupations, or my designs: my objects henceforth shall be such as will not end with my life in this

world. I beseech Thee to be the rule and guide of all my actions, and to direct me by Thy Holy Spirit in the difficult and anxious task of ruling and guiding my own household. Come, Lord, enlighten me, sanctify me, and thus enable me to instruct and sanctify those whom Thou hast confided to my care.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Shut yourself up in your own heart with Jesus, and make a formal resignation of yourself, and of all who belong to you into His Almighty hands: submitting yourself absolutely to all His designs upon yourself, and upon them.

Pray the Eternal Father to maintain you in this conformity with His holy will, and offer yourself to Him as His child.

Pray the Incarnate Word to make you a partaker of the love with which He accomplished His Father's will, and offer yourself to His service.

Pray the Holy Spirit to grant you humility, and grace to despise the world, and offer yourself to be His obedient disciple.

I. '*Canst thou drink of the cup that I shall drink?*'

Jesus would fain address this question to the soul of every communicant. But some communicants are weak, some are timid; some are sensual, and have a great dread of pain or sorrow; it might be that such a question would cause them to turn away with terror from the Holy Table: therefore He holds His peace.

But when He finds a generous soul, He does not say to him, Can you bear the cross? because every one of us is obliged to bear it: Can you drink of *My cup;* that is to say, of something added to the ordinary cross or suffering of Christians? Let us accept this chalice of affliction from the Hand of Love. If we can suffer much, with the *hope* of

communicating, what may we not be able to suffer *after* receiving Holy Communion? For, if the martyrs have suffered and laid down their lives to gain heaven, wherein Jesus dwells, can we not also suffer and lay down our lives that we may possess Jesus?

Jesus has not put this question to me, not but that I have suffered and suffer still, but perhaps because He sees that I am not yet prepared to taste of His own chalice. Wherefore should He not present it to me, after giving me His own Body? Can I dare to accept the one and refuse the other? I should persuade myself that sorrow must be, as it were, a necessary consequence of Holy Communion. I will ask Jesus to give me courage to follow Him whithersoever He goeth. Many of my afflictions are caused by my condition in life, my social position, my duties, my worldly possessions, and He alone can aid me in converting these sharp though passing trials into the means of my eternal profit.

O my God, who art coming to feed me with Thine own Body and Blood, continue still to support me, that I may never cease to love Thee during my sufferings, any more than in my act of thanksgiving! Thou hast caused me to experience the sweetness of Holy Communion: make me comprehend in like manner the blessedness of being called to suffer in this world. Let me not become disgusted with Thy service, nor find it wearisome when the time of trial comes; but bring to my remembrance that by the patient endurance of every sorrow, united to Thy merits, I may extinguish a debt and obtain a higher degree of purity: and since I desire to offer Thee a pure heart, make me rejoice in the acquisition of that purity, although the means by which I acquire it may be painful and hard.

II. '*We can.*'

These words, which seem rather presumptuous from the lips of such young disciples, are natural to the soul which has just received our Lord in Holy Communion. At that time we are not alone: leaning upon Jesus, we can say when sorrow presents itself; I can endure it. And what can be more desirable than suffering to the soul that is united to Jesus Christ, and loves Him? 'Certainly,' says the *Imitation*, 'the love of Jesus is a great thing; the love of Jesus is an admirable gift, because it alone can make heavy burdens appear light to us, and enable us to endure the various accidents of life with an equable tranquillity. It endures painful things without feeling pain: it renders bitter things sweet and pleasant to the taste.'

The man who is not ready to suffer all things, as having no other will than that of his Beloved, is not worthy to be called the *friend of Jesus*. He that loves Jesus truly should gladly embrace the most painful and bitter things for the sake of Him whom he loves.

I feel a most lively repugnance to sorrow, and I fear nothing so much as trials, possibly because they often come upon me in a sudden and unexpected manner. Nevertheless, I must say to our Blessed Saviour: I can endure them, because experience demonstrates to me that grace has invariably come to my assistance at the precise moment when my strength seemed to be on the point of failing me, as if our Lord was anxious to prove that it is His strength alone that upholds me, and that He will always help me, provided that I am faithful in calling upon Him for aid, and depend upon Him alone for succour. How good a Master is Jesus! He pities my weakness, and bears with my faults; He strives to correct them rather than to punish me for them.

O my Jesus, I implore Thee to take such full and

complete possession of my mind and will, that by Thy help I may lead a life perfectly in accordance with Thy designs for me. If it be Thy will that I should suffer; that my days should be crossed by contradictions and troubles, I am ready to endure them even to the end of my life with the help of Thy grace. Grant that I may rightly fulfil all my duties with liberty of spirit, but with a heart so perfectly detached, that whatever suffering may be sent to me, or in whatever business I may be engaged, my faculties and senses may remain peacefully in Thy holy presence, calmly submissive to Thy Divine will.

III. '*Ye shall drink indeed of My cup.*'

It is at the feet of our Lord, very near to His Sacred Heart, that we must accustom ourselves to the idea of being obliged to suffer, perhaps to suffer much and to suffer long! At this prospect nature trembles. But let us consider that Jesus wounds but to heal, that He chastises only to recall us to a new life of grace and love. We have much to gain by every one of our sufferings, and it is of great importance to us that we should acquire as much merit as God intends us to gain.

I am naturally touched with compassion when I see any person who is dear to me suffer: I sympathize deeply in all that he undergoes. But when I know that his trials are the indispensable means of his sanctification, I ought much rather to ask God to enable him to bear his martyrdom patiently, and encourage him to practise the virtues of patience and resignation, than pray that his troubles may cease. My faith is strong enough to prevent me from imploring our Lord to shorten my own sufferings, but I ought also to consent to witness the tears and sighs of those whom I love best, and whom God loves far more than I do. This exercise of faith is much more difficult than enduring my own trials with patience.

If we do not groan in this world, we must groan in another. I would rather a thousand times behold the sorrow of those I love best on earth, while I am still at hand to wipe away their tears, than know that those tears would flow hereafter, without merit or consolation for them, and when I could never more give them help or comfort. Besides, we do not *wish* to live without sorrow, when the love of Jesus is the life of our souls. Saint Teresa (doubtless after receiving Holy Communion) once exclaimed: 'O most blessed sufferings, already richly repaid by a reward far exceeding anything they deserve.' I have communicated, I have received the heavenly reward of my past sufferings. I shall communicate again, and then I shall receive another reward for my sufferings present and to come. Is not this far more than I have any right to expect or hope?

Lord Jesus, the joy which I experience in Thy presence arrests me at the *present* day, and urges me to offer unto Thee the sacrifices of this day, without thinking of the morrow, which perhaps I may never see, or which if it arrives, will bring with it new grace and strength for sacrifice. Thou hast given us Communion under the form of bread, which is eaten daily; because self-sacrifices bring also the *daily bread* of our life, its bitterness should be lost amid the sweetness of the Eucharistic Bread. Give me grace to consider all the trials of my life as emanations from Thy Sacred Heart. I have lost much merit by impatience under sorrow, by enduring it with a certain hardness. How angry I should be with myself for my cowardice! Truly, my soul has need of suffering, to do penance for my faults and the faults of those dear to me! My God, give me grace to make up for the time already lost, and efface all our ingratitude from Thy sight!

IV. '*To sit on My right hand and on My left hand, is not Mine to give, but it shall be given unto them for whom it is prepared by My Father.*'

Jesus Christ here gives us to understand, says Father Ventura, that the acquisition of places in the celestial kingdom depends not only upon the will of Him who bestows those heavenly seats, but also upon the dispositions of those upon whom they are bestowed. They are not given by favour, but by merit; they are not distributed according to the rank or quality of the candidates, but according to the holiness of their lives, and He only will receive them who shall be found worthy to occupy them.

This is a consoling doctrine, since it is neither our superiority of rank, nor amount of knowledge, nor intellect, nor fortune, that will determine our place in heaven, but simply our degree of merit. It is also consoling to regard it from another point of view, to see how the mother's prayers, so ardently and simply offered up, are granted. The two sons of Salome are evidently amongst the most favoured of our Lord's Apostles, perhaps second only to St. Peter in the Divine favour. St. James was the first Apostle to shed his blood for the faith; and St. John, the beloved disciple, was the support of the Blessed Virgin in this world, and was honoured by the most marvellous revelations. That happy mother has, then, seen the fulfilment of her high prayers, that her children might occupy the best seats in the kingdom of heaven.

I may learn from Salome to employ the time of my thanksgiving in offering requests to God, which are not confined to things of time, nor concern treasures upon earth, which moth and rust may corrupt, or which thieves may break through and steal; to direct all my desires to the possession of heavenly treasures, and to demand them only, *at any price*, for myself and all who are dear to me. I ought

even to say, like St. Teresa, that 'if I were offered the choice of suffering all the pains of this exile, even until the end of the world, on condition of receiving a very small increase of glory in heaven, or of entering at once into heaven without further suffering, but with a less degree of glory, I would purchase with a willing heart, at the price of every imaginable suffering here below, the happiness of contemplating the greatness of my God *a little more closely:* for I see that the better we know, the more we love Him.'* I may also add, with the same Saint, 'I shall rejoice to see in heaven many souls more exalted in their degree of *glory* than myself, but I feel that I could not rejoice to see one soul *loving* God more than I love Him.'

O my Jesus, I ask not for myself, or for my loved ones, an exalted place in heaven; but what I do most earnestly ask for us both is that we may never more offend Thee; that we may ever love Thee purely, for Thyself alone, and that we may attain unto the places that Thou hast prepared for us above. Grant us to labour every day to attain that degree of perfection which will entitle us to possess them. I pray above all that we may esteem the treasures of eternity far before those of this world, and that we may be ready, like St. Teresa, to sacrifice all earthly happiness for a small increase in the degree of our knowledge and love of God. I beseech Thee, permit me not to murmur against the suffering which is the great means of bringing us to perfection in our appointed state here below.

Conclusion.

If we hope to enjoy eternal life, and obtain a place for those who are dear to us, among the saints in heaven, we must pray much and earnestly; but let us not ask anything from our Lord which can possibly be contrary to His eternal designs for us. Let us ask

* *Life of St. Teresa*, c. 27.

for the advancement of His kingdom in the souls that we love. Let us ask that they may contribute to the increase of His glory. Let us show Him that we are able to appreciate the value of a predestined soul, and let us not place in opposition to its eternal interests the miserable aims and views of worldly wisdom. Jesus, in the Blessed Sacrament, will always be ready to hear and grant our prayers, when they are in harmony with His Divine will, and with the respect and love due to Jesus and the Christian soul.

NINETEENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE BLIND MAN OF JERICHO.

(St. Mark x.)

Preparation.

HOLY COMMUNION is a place of meeting between Jesus Christ and our souls. It is especially at the Holy Table that He multiplies the wonders of His grace, and pours out upon us the treasures of His loving-kindness. If at this time we obtain little, it must be because we ask little. Let us draw upon the treasures of His Almighty Power, as well as upon the riches of His grace.

I. '*As Jesus went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude of people, blind Bartimeus, the son of Timeus, sat by the wayside begging.*'

The darkness which covered the eyes of this poor man, had converted his days into so many long and weary nights, full of sadness and uncertainties. Sight is a great gift of God; but at certain times and in certain places it would be a special blessing to be

unable *to see.* The work of our sanctification is retarded when we have too keen an eye for our neighbours' faults. We ought only to regard them in the shaded light of charity, with benevolent indulgence for their words and actions. We cannot certainly be blind to the evil in those around us, but we ought not to be too prompt to believe it, for the charitable interpretation is most frequently the nearest to the truth. How many mistakes have we not fallen into through precipitate judgments, which might have been avoided had we given ourselves the trouble of *seeing* before pronouncing judgment.

Let us ask from our Lord the light of truth, but especially the light of charity. Let not our souls be plunged into that obscurity which surrounds one who takes pleasure in seeing the evil before the good, for it too often happens that such an one rests in the contemplation of evil, and ends by taking pleasure in beholding it.

Lord, I acknowledge that every infirmity and affliction of my life has its special use assigned to it in the decrees of Thy Providence. I beseech Thee to open my eyes to behold more clearly the ineffable effects of Thy love in the most Holy Eucharist, and to close them more completely to all vanity, to the sins and infirmities of my neighbours; but permit me not to be blind to my own faults, nor to the faults of those whom I love. Give me a holy aversion to everything displeasing to Thee in my own soul.

II. '*And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out, and say, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.*'

No sooner had Jesus made His appearance, than the blind man felt instinctively that a Deliverer was at hand, and he implored the Divine mercy. However poor in enjoyment the life of a man may be, the *desire* for happiness can never be utterly extinguished

within him. God makes use of this natural feeling to draw us to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. In the Blessed Sacrament we receive far more than the hope of happiness, for it is the means appointed by God to satisfy in this life that longing desire for bliss which is inherent in our souls.

It was natural that the blind man should wish to see Jesus; but it would be most surprising were I not to feel a most ardent desire for Holy Communion, after beholding Jesus with the eye of faith here, and receiving the hope that hereafter I may be permitted to contemplate Him in the light of eternal glory.

Lord, it is most sad to be deprived of sight, to be unable to contemplate in the Sacred Host the most admirable proof of Thy love, and in creation 'the shadow of things to come;' to be obliged to depend upon the eyes of others to obtain the assurance of Thy presence! It is most natural to desire to behold Thee, when we know that Thou art present. I know that Thou art always in the Tabernacle; but how I long to behold Thy glorious Majesty in the light of unclouded eternal day! I earnestly solicit that favour, but before all, I desire Thee as Thou art here below, hidden, but loving; hidden, but truly present; hidden, but infinitely tender and good. Lord, give Thyself to me, for I desire Thee with all the ardour of my soul. Come, Lord Jesus!

III. '*And many people charged him that he should hold his peace, but he cried still louder, saying, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy upon me.*'

It was upon the high road, in the midst of a noisy crowd, that the blind man uttered his ardent prayer to our Lord, not regarding the presence of men. We can pray everywhere, at all times, because our need of Jesus is unceasing and continual. But I have much cause for self-humiliation when I remember how easily my thoughts are distracted, even at the very moment

of receiving Holy Communion. I will entreat our Lord to give me more fervour and concentration of soul; for if there is a time when I ought to forget all earthly things, it is when I am *alone with God* in Holy Communion.

This blind man cried aloud, and earnestly, although he had only an uncertain hope of receiving his cure. He had but a small share of that courage which supports us under the trials of life. But I ought to have a more sure and certain hope of salvation, since my hope is founded upon the Cross, the pains, the wounds, the Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and upon the intercession of the Blessed Virgin.

Must not my hope be firm and sure, when it rests upon Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who comes from heaven to increase and nourish it with the certainty and the sweetness of His Presence?

How can my hope be shaken, when by Holy Communion I every day receive the Foundation and Object of all my hopes?

How can my hope be otherwise than *joyful*, when Jesus has given Himself to me as the pledge and prelude of eternal happiness?

Must not my hope become greater every day, since each day diminishes the interval that separates me from heaven, and Jesus *Himself* daily assures me of my approaching happiness?

I raise my cry to Thee, O Divine Physician!

Have mercy upon me, O Jesus, my Saviour! O Fountain of Mercy, give ear to my prayers! Light of heaven, shine upon my darkness! My life has been full of deceptions; it has been shadowed by dark clouds. I hope in Thee alone to deliver me from every peril, to save me from temptation and from sin. I hope for every blessing from the Communion I am now expecting to receive. Grant me to receive in Thyself all that Thou dost desire to bestow upon me.

IV. '*Then Jesus stood still, and commanded him to be called.*'

The most signal graces are accorded to us in the presence of our Lord. He remains in the Tabernacle for the express purpose of granting them, and of enabling us to obtain them more easily; and He commands His priests to urge us to come to Him for the same purpose. He sends His sweet inspirations into our souls, to draw us into His presence, and to make proof of our constancy, He often obliges us to persevere long in prayer, in the humble exposition of our wants and necessities.

As the man who hopes to be cured of a lingering disease, ought not to be discouraged if the remedies seem tedious and slow in taking effect, so let us await with patience and humble confidence the acceptable time of God's mercy upon our souls.

I know that accepted time, that day of salvation, it is the blessed hour of Communion, how happy am I to be called to it by Jesus. Yes, Jesus calls me. Sometimes He is even obliged to command me to come. He sees that I am inactive in the spiritual life. He sees that my mind, a prey to continual distractions, sits, as it were by the side of the high road, forgetful of its eternal interests, and *blind* to heavenly things, because they are hidden from it by a crowd of earthly distractions, *not seeing* that by its own fault the things of earth are hiding from it the true glories of heaven.

Thou art indeed admirable, O my Jesus, in Thy readiness to hear and grant our desires. Give me grace to receive Thee with humility, because of my own unworthiness; with confidence, because of Thy Almighty power and love.

I entreat Thee to reform whatever my natural corruption has introduced into me that is contrary to Thy holy will.

V. '*Be of good comfort, rise! He calleth thee.*'

These words can be addressed to us by him only, who is deputed of God to conduct our souls in His name to heaven.

But why should we need so much encouragement in drawing near to Jesus? Is He not our sole happiness here below, although our fears too often hinder us from enjoying Him as we ought? We should *live* by faith and confidence in our Blessed Saviour. We come from Him—we shall return to Him: between these two extreme points of our existence, why do we find it so difficult to proceed with the help of His grace straight onward to our desired end? The main object of the Gospel is, according to St. Paul, to bring us with *confidence* to Jesus Christ. The Holy Eucharist was instituted to the very same end. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament does *all that can be done* to gain our love: to win us to put our whole confidence in Him.

'Confidence,' says Father Faber, 'is the confession of what we owe to Jesus Christ and the witness of the loyalty of our conscience.' It adds sweetness to hope, and makes us feel at our ease with God, as children feel with their father. But as generosity should follow upon confidence, the devil strives to weaken our confidence in God, if he cannot succeed in utterly destroying it.

My confidence in Jesus Christ ought to be the very foundation of all my intercourse with Him, since I have been bidden so often to go to Him *without fear*. If I am uneasy about the state of my soul, what can I do better than confide my anxious fears to the mercy and love of our Lord? If I had to run some risk, or to encounter a danger, I could do no less; God loves that the creatures of His hand should cast themselves unreservedly upon His merciful protection. But confidence does not come of

itself into our hearts, we must ask for it, we must seek for it, we must seek to obtain it by fervent prayer and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: otherwise we shall never have it to such a degree as will be pleasing to Him, who seems to repose such confidence in us. Let me remember that He gives Himself to me with as much love as if I could never again cause His Heart sorrow for my sin. I will, therefore, cast myself upon His mercy, without fear and without reserve.

O Jesus, I come to Thee, *closing my eyes* to all that Thou shalt desire me to see no more. Give me grace to receive Thee in my obscurity as joyously as in the light, and to trust the care of my future life to Thy Sacred Heart, by whom the present is made to me so joyful.

VI. '*He, casting off his mantle, rose, and came to Jesus.*'

This is a figure of the heavenly transport which takes possession of the soul when it hears the voice of our Lord: and also of the entire detachment from earthly things into which it ought immediately to enter.

To throw away everything: to leave all behind: all things that can hinder us in our progress towards heaven: this is what Jesus calls us by the Holy Eucharist to do.

How many things occupy me, or rather embarrass me in the important work of the sanctification of my soul. How many things retain me from Jesus, of which I have not yet found courage to shake off the heavy weight. The first impulse of my heart leads me to the side of those whom I love. I hasten to answer their first call, not that I am expecting to receive anything from them, for, on the contrary, I am generally expected to render them a service; but it delights me to give pleasure to those I love. Shall

I then be deaf to the voice of Jesus Christ alone? Shall His presence alone be without attraction for my heart?

How happy it is for me, O my God, that I can always find the Light under the Eucharistic veils. How happy for my soul that it can never more lie in the shades of darkness. For though the absence of *day* be sometimes felt there, yet it is not the loss of the Light: it is not the absence of the Sacred Host, true light of the soul, the bright sun which illuminates my life with the noonday light of the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Lord, illuminate my soul still more with the rays of Thy grace. In return for all these mercies, I offer unto Thee the Body and Blood of Thy Son: a gift, for which He gives Thee at the Altar a suitable return.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore our Blessed Saviour with a lively faith in His Power; a firm hope that He comes to you, full of mercy and goodness; and pour out before Him the unfeigned love of your heart.

Lay great stress upon these acts, which are necessary for your own soul and well pleasing to the Heart of Jesus.

Ask Him to enlighten your conscience, and to purify your heart with the Divine rays of His love.

I. '*What wilt thou that I should do to thee?*'

Jesus spoke thus to Bartimeus, not because He was not aware of the desire of the blind man, but because He delights in the earnest and humble expression of our hearts. Ever ready to open to us the treasures of His mercy, He has all the gifts of eternity as well as time at His supreme disposal. He offers us these gifts tacitly, we are free to ask what we will, for God hath given us *all* things by Christ Jesus. Our misfortune is that we think too much of ourselves, and

of all that is wanting in us, instead of looking to Jesus, and considering all that He can do for us!

This simple thought after Holy Communion is enough. Here is my God present in me and for me! If He is here, then His infinite goodness and mercy are here also, and to what end? To communicate them to me! I have then only to throw myself upon His mercy, and the best thing that I can wish, is to wish whatever He wills.

Ah, if Jesus were to say to me, 'What wilt thou?' with more ambition and wisdom than the blind man, I should reply with St. Thomas: Thee, Lord, and Thee alone; I desire nothing but Thee, now and for ever.

What but Jesus can the soul desire which has once communicated, and *knows* what it receives in the Sacred Host?

It may seem bold to reply to Jesus, 'Thee only, O my God!' Besides, I am not even obliged to express that desire. Jesus does not leave me to desire His presence. He *is* mine. He has come down to dwell in my heart. Do I sufficiently esteem so amazing a favour? Do I feel grateful enough for this great happiness, which I can receive again and again? The good that we possess is more easy to keep than to acquire.

I should endeavour to answer these important questions which are sometimes forgotten in my happiness with Jesus.

Lord Jesus, may my happiness of this day be enduring: may it be assured to me in eternity.

May I comprehend it better, enjoy it more perfectly, prefer it to everything in the world; because when once I know and understand it, I shall never wish for any other enjoyment.

O my Jesus, I love Thee, and because I love Thee, I desire Thee exclusively. Mercifully hear and grant my humble desires!

II. *'Lord, that I may receive my sight.'*

When questioned by the Lord Almighty, the blind man showed an extraordinary ignorance of his real needs and of the power of Him who sets no limit to our desires or prayers, because with Him nothing is impossible. How unfortunate that this man, who might have requested all the treasures of grace and glory, should restrict his desires to the possession of so fragile a gift as sight! This was a gift which could be of no use to him except in time, and he forgot to ask at the same time for the light of the soul, which is eternal. Ah! I feel that I also am too often blind to eternal things. I have communicated: I neither see nor feel anything unusual, save the assurance of faith that I have the happiness to possess my God; but if suddenly my eyes should be opened, if I were to see within my soul the Thrice Holy God, surrounded by prostrate angels, in what an ecstasy of trembling fear should I not fall prostrate and adore! If I were able, instead of the little Host that I have received, to perceive the immensity of God abasing Himself to me, and His Almighty power ready to act for my good, ah! then it seems to me that I should no longer be cold and unmoved as I feel at this moment.

O my God, accept the adoration of my heart, and accept also the feelings of admiration wherewith the angels regard Thee. Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may myself admire my God descended into my unworthy soul, and grant that although I am not able to remain in that state of continual contemplation that the clear vision of Thy greatness, or even a more lively faith in it would require, yet I may nevertheless continue to give Thee heartfelt thanks for this amazing benefit.

Lord, open my eyes, that I may perceive the signs of Thy holy will. I do not ask to see Thee in this world, but I say to Thee with all the warmth of my

heart: Grant that I may behold Thee in eternity. Grant that I may contemplate Thy beauty face to face. Grant that I may desire no passing thing, but all those things that remain, and Thy love above all things.

III. '*Jesus said to him, Go.*'

Jesus sent this man away, immediately after He had performed in him a miracle, which gave him sight and happiness. This dismissal from the Master's presence did not permit the man whose sight had been restored to hope for any further favours from his Benefactor.

If I were only allowed to hope that Jesus would give healing to my soul *once*, or if I received a warning that this Communion would be the last I should ever be permitted to receive, oh, how pitiable would my condition appear. But it is not the will of our Lord that His visits should leave regrets in our hearts. To me He says, Return. This Divine invitation emboldens me to present myself to receive new Communions, with all the graces that they convey. Now I rejoice in my present good! Under the appearance of a little bread, my Creator and my God has given Himself to me. I bear in my soul the Uncreated Light, Life itself. As regarding the future, I can neither fail in faith nor hope, when my *present* is so rich in the possession of the Sovereign Good. Ah! I can desire nothing more. I will no more fix upon creatures the eye of my heart, which can without ceasing exchange regards with God. I can only give thanks and love. And my heart, unable to express what it feels, is mute, overwhelmed by the knowledge of the treasures which it contains. O Jesus, Thou didst send away from Thee this man whom Thou hadst healed. How good Thou art in condescending to dwell really amongst us! If Thy presence, temporary in me, had been as regards the Tabernacle, merely a remembrance or a hope, what would have become of me, so weak, notwithstanding Holy Communion?

I may at least revive my courage by this act, which I reverentially address to Thee. My God, I firmly believe that Thou art always present to bless and to console me, and that I never fix my eyes upon the Sacred Host without at the same time meeting Thine. Deign to enable me to appreciate this benefit.

IV. '*Thy faith hath healed thee.*'

The miracle which the blind man asked for was instantly granted. If, in answer to a simple prayer, our Lord displayed as much willingness as power to console this poor man, afflicted with so grievous an infirmity, what will He not do in favour of the soul that possesses Him, gives itself to Him, and, trusting confidently in His mercy, expects to receive more than it has asked, more even than it can desire, because its intelligence is only capable of preferring requests of a nature as limited as its own faculties! The soul feels at this moment that it is most for its advantage to leave all to Jesus, to make no formal request, but suffer Him to give according to His love, according to His Heart. In these precious moments of thanksgiving after Communion, we should leave Jesus *to choose* for us. If it is a terrestrial gift which He bestows upon us, let us bless Him for it: if a spiritual, and therefore more durable blessing, let our gratitude be redoubled: if He presents a cross to us with His divine hand, let us kiss the rod and the hand which presents it, giving thanks unto Him for the gift He bestows upon us with a view to our further sanctification and our elevation to eternal glory.

Faith is the first degree of our initiation into glory. As our faith increases, so proportionately do we penetrate further into the invisible mystery of beauty, truth, and love. The more fully we live by faith, the more pleasure does Jesus take in our hearts, where He finds the food which His own Heart delights in upon earth.

O my Jesus, grant that by a lively faith I may admire Thee, acting always mercifully towards Thy people. Grant that gratitude may increase in my heart by love, that my confidence may be nourished by love, and that my life may be, by Thy Heart, all devoted to Thy love.

V. '*Immediately he received his sight.*'

The blind man received neither more nor less than the object of his prayer. He probably enjoyed some years of sight, and then, like all the perishable gifts of time, it was taken from him by death. Is it not much better to ask the Heart of Jesus to bestow upon us those gifts which will last eternally?

To behold Jesus, in His mortal Flesh, was an immense favour; but to possess His Sacred Body is one more precious still. Even this favour is but a prelude to greater ones. 'It is by the Flesh of Jesus Christ that light comes to us,' said St. Irenæus. He intended to speak, no doubt, of the Light eternal. In this world, wherever a ray of the sun penetrates, the smallest objects become more distinct; one can perceive even the atoms of dust floating in the air. How will the grace of the Holy Eucharist make visible to me the smallest imperfections of my life? Purity in the use of sight is another fruit of the Holy Eucharist. How can I fix upon dangerous objects those eyes that in the morning have regarded the Sacred Host? I am happy in venturing, after consecration, to contemplate the Divine Majesty who descends upon the Altar; let me then be careful to look at nothing which would be capable of effacing or weakening this most blessed impression.

Lord Jesus, grant that the practice of my life may be, according to the advice of St. Augustine, to purify the eyes of my heart, that they may be worthy to behold Thee in heaven. Grant me to cast upon the Holy Eucharist a humble but loving glance, and grant

that these same eyes with which I now so thankfully contemplate It, may hereafter behold Thee. O blessed Saviour, this is my hope. O may Thy mercy convert it into a reality.

VI. '*He followed Him in the way.*'

The blind man had received no benefit from Jesus, besides the cure of his blindness. Nevertheless, his gratitude was so great, that although the Divine Master had enjoined him to depart, he could not resolve to leave Him so soon.

Your thanksgiving after Communion should be as active and effectual as the thanksgiving of the blind man, who spread abroad wherever he went the fame of the Lord Jesus. Until now your conduct has been out of harmony with practical faith; this faith has not been the soul of all your thoughts and actions. Since your conscience now warns you that a reformation is necessary in this particular, you should address fervent prayers to our Lord, that He may give you a living active faith, which shall be the rule and guide of all your actions. And now that our Lord is in your soul, now that He is really *yours*, entreat Him to bestow upon you that grace which you feel to be most needed in your soul.

Lord Jesus, give me grace to serve Thee, for Thy love *alone!* It is true that I cannot separate my interests from Thine, and that I do for my own happiness all that I offer to Thy glory. But since Thou dost love a creature so unworthy of love, and so deserving of anger, it is right that I should forget myself, and that I should persevere in my self-forgetfulness.

Conclusion.

If, in order to obtain after Holy Communion the favour of contemplating for one instant the Sacred Humanity of our Blessed Lord, it were necessary to sacrifice our sight, probably not one of us would hesi-

tate to do so. Since if we hope to contemplate in eternity the Sovereign Majesty of God, we must close our eyes to vanity, and to all things capable of leading us to commit sin, let us not hesitate to make a trifling sacrifice in time, the result of which will be our eternal happiness.

TWENTIETH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

JESUS AT THE HOUSE OF ZACCHEUS.

(St. Luke xix.)

Preparation.

THE name of this man, with whom our Lord chose to abide for a time, was Zaccheus, signifying *pure and just.* Does not this point out, in a single word, the dispositions with which we ought to approach the Holy Table? To encourage us, we shall presently see how Jesus rendered a great sinner pure and just by His Divine Presence, and how the sinner profited by such a precious grace.

I. *'A man named Zaccheus, the chief among the publicans, and very rich, desired to see Jesus.'*

The news of the speedy arrival of Jesus, so mighty in word and work, excited Zaccheus' eager desire to behold so great a Prophet. He was not, like many others, impelled by mere curiosity to endeavour to see Jesus. A superior grace, which he perhaps little thought of at the time, inspired him with this desire. There is always a solid advantage in seeking the society of virtuous people; in fact it is one of the means which Jesus makes use of to prepare our souls for a higher life. Example is a living lesson, which

rarely remains unfruitful. St. John Chrysostom has an exquisite remark on this subject. 'Zaccheus,' says he, 'desired to know Him whom his heart had divined, and to behold His features, whom he had long considered in his mind. He wished to nourish with the sight of the eyes the love which had long before sprung up in his heart.' He began early to consider the means of satisfying his desire. He mingled with the crowd which went to meet Jesus, but he soon found that this attempt was useless, on account of his small stature. Such is the effect of grace upon the soul of the sinner: he sees the weakness, the moral littleness, to which he has been reduced by sin, which is far more painful than the consciousness of his diminutive stature.

How different are my dispositions from those of Zaccheus. He ran to a great distance from home, in the hope of seeing Jesus pass by; and I, who am preparing for Holy Communion, I, who know where He waits to receive me with love, delay my departure for church until the very latest moment. Instead of hastening to meet my Lord, I occupy myself in worldly affairs until the very last minute before the commencement of Mass. I bring a dissipated heart, or at all events a divided mind, into the presence of my Saviour. Can I be surprised if at the moment of my arrival our Lord should cast a glance upon me in which reproach is mingled with love?

II. '*Zaccheus climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Jesus, because He was to pass that way.*'

We are apt to forget that man is free to ascend or descend upon the ladder of life, at every period of his existence, in every movement of his being. If he is seeking God, his efforts raise him towards the plenitude of life and glory: if he is seeking for creatures, he tends downwards towards the vanity of life. Near to God he is *greater*, at a distance from God he is *less*.

This truth is not sufficiently well understood in the world. We rarely find the liberty of mind necessary for keeping up the exterior proprieties of social life united to the exterior contempt of those worldly vanities which are so much esteemed by some, who care little for being *less* before God than before men. Let us attack boldly, but cautiously, all those things in which lurks a subtle poison of haughtiness, pride, rivalry, &c. It is to sacrifices such as these, made without respect of men, that our Lord attaches the most precious graces, and He rewards us for them richly at His Holy Table. 'Set your heart above creatures,' says Bossuet, 'and you will be preserved from all deception.' You will see Jesus more quickly when you are raised above all the intervening obstacles.

How shall I raise myself above the crowd of Christians, and thus obtain the favour that Zaccheus so earnestly desired? The sycamore represents the divine tree of the Holy Eucharist; and I believe that my heart may always repose itself there, and rejoice at the same time in the presence of Jesus. The more perfectly my heart is detached from the dust of the world, the more closely shall I resemble 'the dove, that placeth her nest in the highest cavities of the rocks,' because she flies *as high as she possibly can* to escape from the impure atmosphere of these lower regions. But 'who will give me the wings of the dove, that I may fly and repose myself near the Heart of our Lord?' I have two wings at my disposal always, and I can spread them as often as I will; they are, prayer and holy confidence, the two most beautiful and delicate wings of love, on whose powerful pinions I can ascend and behold my Lord.

O blessed Jesus, who hast called me to repose under the shade of that heavenly tree which Thy love has planted in the Church, teach me to desire more and more Thy presence, Thy conversation, and Thy

love; knowing that Thou art *found* by the soul that seeks Thee, and *seen* by the soul that ardent desire and contemplation have prepared to receive so great a favour.

III. '*Zaccheus!*'

What a joy for this man, who supposed himself unknown amid the crowd, to be thus recognised and called by his name, by the celebrated Prophet who was famous throughout all Palestine!

A name has been given to me, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. On the day in which the priest bestowed this name upon me in the church, my angel guardian inscribed it in the Book of Life. It is the name by which he presents me to God, by which Mary recommends me to her Divine Son.

It is the name that Jesus gives to me, when He speaks to my heart. It is the name that I shall bear for ever in heaven. From all eternity Jesus has called me by my name, and by that name He has pointed me out to the angels, as entitled to sit down at the Holy Table a certain number of times. What happiness for me! As Zaccheus, in the midst of an immense crowd, was the only one whom Jesus personally noticed, so, amongst the millions scattered over the face of the earth, I am chosen to be of the small number who are privileged to communicate frequently. Never can I sufficiently rejoice that I am thus chosen out of the crowd of Christians by an eternal glance of love, that I am thus called already on earth to a marvellous union with God, which can be exceeded only in heaven!

IV. '*Make haste, and come down.*'

What an order to be given publicly to a rich and powerful man, whom our Lord perceived for the first time! How wonderfully does Jesus reveal His authority over our hearts, and the impulse of His grace to

make us little in the sight of men! Our Blessed Saviour is so desirous of communicating Himself to the humble heart alone, that before informing Zaccheus of the great favour He intends to confer upon him, He obliges him to come down from his elevation, and mix again among the crowd in which he was hidden because of his small stature. He knows that pride intoxicates the mind, and can never satisfy the conscience. Humility provides for all the supernatural necessities of man; for if it is small enough to regard its own littleness, so is it also too great to stoop so low as to feed upon the dust of vanity and worldly things.

In these two words, 'Make haste,' and 'Come down,' our Lord indicates the manner in which we should prepare ourselves for Holy Communion—by eagerness and humility. Let us obey the desire with which love has inspired us, let us satisfy the eager haste of Jesus to receive us at His Holy Table. How can we fail to go to Jesus Christ with humility? to Jesus, who *descended* from the bosom of His Father into Mary's womb? who *descended* from the Cross to the tomb, from His glory into the Holy Eucharist? so much does His humble Heart aspire to *descend* for our sakes! May our hearts, abased in deep humility, be ready to take the *lowest place of all.* There we shall meet our Lord face to face, because He humbles Himself; not as of old, under the delicate and graceful form of a little child, but under appearances whose sole reality consists in the assurance that they give me of the humility and love of my God.

Jesus invites me to practise a fresh humility, and Himself sets me the example of it. Does He not humble Himself to the lowest degree upon the Altar? From what a distance does He come to enter my poor soul! For what an immense distance exists between our nature and God, between the immortal soul and our bodily food! Can I sink too *low* in humble

adoration before a God who descends from such a *height* to me?

Lord Jesus, how can I descend: I, who am nothing in Thy sight, or in the sight of men? By laying this injunction upon me, it would seem that Thou hast observed some attempt on my part to raise myself from my state of nothingness. It is Thy will that I should return to it, before I approach the Holy Eucharist, because Thou canst unite Thyself to me only by humbling Thyself to such a low estate as to appear to be nothing.

V. '*This day I must abide in thy house.*'

How clearly does this expression, *I must*, indicate the ardent desire of our Blessed Lord to give Himself to us! How plainly it displays the force of that heavenly grace which calls us to the Holy Table! How happy is that soul which, at its awakening, hears with the ear of its heart this Divine expression of an eager, tender love. But what must have been the delight of Zaccheus to see the accomplishment of a cherished wish, to which he had not even dreamed of giving utterance!

These Divine words were heard by him once only during his earthly life, but Jesus addresses them to me every morning with a gentle eagerness which rejoices my very heart. My child, Jesus says to my soul, I, Who am thy God, thy Creator, *I must to-day* come and dwell in thy house. May I rightly comprehend the marvellous extent of the graces contained in these words, of which the one transforms me into the living tabernacle of my God; the other teaches me, by the force of the Divine expression *I must*, that it is by His expressed will, intimated in His name, that Jesus is coming to give Himself to me. *It must be so* on the part of Jesus, by the immutable decree of the most Holy Trinity; but *it must be so* no less on mine, because I receive from day to day the graces

attached to that Divine decree. Ah, if Zaccheus was so happy in receiving the personal visit of God for one time only, how great must be my happiness in receiving Him so frequently!

O my soul, thou hast heard this day the voice of Jesus, who desires to enter in and dwell with thee: delay not in answering Him, and turn not away from His voice, for perhaps His offer may never be renewed! And if you were hereafter anxious to receive Him, perhaps He would not then accede to your prayer.

VI. '*He came down with haste.*'

Zaccheus, with humble deference, without expecting any advantage from our Lord's visit, other than the satisfaction of a heartfelt desire, came down immediately. His obedience was as complete as his humility, and his indifference to the opinion of men. These virtues are the foundations of rapid spiritual advancement, because they form a perfect preparation for Communion. No grace is refused to one who hastens to obey the slightest call of God.

Jesus expects an obedience no less prompt from me, when He says to my soul: Come down, be humble, be little, before the great blessings which I am going to bestow upon you. Descend into the lowest depths of thy spiritual poverty and misery; return to thy nothingness. But 'descend quickly,' because I desire that you should be in haste to humiliate yourself, and to receive humiliations from others. I will think over this important lesson at my leisure.

O Jesus, who, under the sacramental veils, dost descend far lower than in the abasement of Thy Incarnation, Thou wilt descend lower still in uniting Thyself to a sinner. Conduct me by the path of humility to the Holy Table; but grant that I may not wound Thy gentleness by my impatient vivacity; Thy silence by my indiscreet words; Thy recollectedness

by my dissipation. I entreat Thee to spare my weakness the misfortune of offending Thee in the very mystery of Thy love.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Immediately after Holy Communion, humiliate yourself in deepest self-abasement, and glorify the love of our Blessed Saviour by profound sentiments of adoration.

Is it too much to give ourselves to Jesus for the short space of our present life, when He has promised to give Himself to us for ever and ever?

Jesus looks into your soul to see whether you bring to Him the same feelings and determinations as you had on that day when you so courageously made the sacrifice of the world and of yourself to Him.

I. '*Zaccheus received Him with joy.*'

To feel no joy after Holy Communion is to show that either we have no comprehension of the most Holy Eucharist, or else that we treat ourselves with an injustice all the more deplorable, because it is so easy to remedy our faults and fears by a simple and sincere confession, and by a generous obedience which treats the voice of our spiritual guide as if it were in truth the voice of God.

How divine is the joy that we receive in Holy Communion! Is it not the same Jesus that entered into the house of Zaccheus, who comes now to dwell with us? Descend into your heart, compare its feelings and affections with those of the publican; and if they resemble his, why should you not be joyful at this meeting with your Lord? Zaccheus made great haste to meet Jesus. And have not you hastened eagerly to Holy Communion? Zaccheus, from the top of his sycamore tree, looked at Jesus alone. And is it not the very life and joy of your heart to remain near the Tabernacle? With what astonishment and

joy did Zaccheus hear the announcement of Jesus, that He was going to spend the night in his house! Is it not your greatest happiness to come at the call of Jesus? Zaccheus trembled at His presence. And will you not tremble with joy when you possess your Lord? Joy consists in being at ease and happy. Now, where or when can you be happier than when you are united to our Blessed Lord?

O my Jesus, like Zaccheus I am overwhelmed with joy, and I am unable to express my gratitude because I cannot even find thoughts in which to give it form in my own mind.

But read the joyful thankfulness of my heart, which is happy in Thy great mercies, happy in expecting Thee, happy in receiving Thee, happier still in keeping Thee, whilst still awaiting Thy return.

II. '*Zaccheus stood before the Lord.*'

What light was shed into the soul of this sinner by the reception of Jesus! We see him, consulting our Lord's looks, ready to obey His slightest order or sign; already he appears the model of a fervent soul. He seems not to hear the murmurs which are uttered around him. Entirely devoted to Jesus, he gives up all his thoughts, his whole heart to Him.

Jesus is in me! But I cannot say that I always keep His presence before my eyes. What confusion I feel in reviewing the trifling causes that are sufficient to make me lose sight of my God, even at the moment when I ought to keep myself in His presence, with deep humility and thanksgiving. I see myself distracted by a thousand outward things which crowd into my mind at the very moment when I most wish to forget them. My memory is filled with the remembrance of all that has been thought or said against me, and I have not sufficient courage to rise above a *few words*—vain sounds which vanish in the air. Our Lord desires that I should cast all my troubles

into His Heart; that I should *bury* them there, so that they may never more come between Him and me. I must not, then, draw them out of that safe hiding-place to weep over them again. Our Lord will be *everything* to me, when I no longer desire that creatures should be *anything*.

O my Jesus, how kind art Thou to give Thyself unto me! Thy goodness sweetly obliges me to stand before Thee, humble, recollected, attentive, prepared to give up to Thee my *will*, which is my best, my only remaining possession. Receive it, I pray Thee, and direct it according to Thy designs, that I may be always submissively obedient to Thy Holy inspirations.

III. '*Lord, behold the half of my goods I give to the poor.*'

One of the fruits of a good Communion is entire detachment from earthly things. Another fruit is works—works of charity, which follow as soon as love becomes the moving power of the soul. On the day in which our Lord Jesus Christ assumes His seat upon the throne of our heart as its Lord and Master, a great light is kindled within us, which unmasks all the works of vanity, and casts out pride and avarice from their secret lurking-places.

When Jesus Christ condescends to offer me the alms of Himself, can I hesitate to offer Him the gift of myself? I have given myself a thousand times already, but not without taking back my gift again; whereas, if I was more fully governed by the grace of God, and more recollected in my own soul, I should only give the *outside* of my soul to creatures, and should faithfully keep the interior for Jesus. Old faults might then occasionally reappear, and traces remain of vanity, self-love, and other defects in my words and actions; but these *accidents* would always be promptly disavowed by my will.

I can no longer hesitate to spend my time, the

small resources of my faith, of my mind, and of my heart, in the interests of charity. Holy Communion is an universal bond between Christian souls. No suffering fellow-creature is, or can be, a stranger to me, according to the law of God. But how great a claim to my solicitude does not that fellow-Christian possess, who sits down with me at the Holy Table, and eats of the same Bread of Life, and who, under features worn by sorrow, labour, and poverty, displays to me the God of Calvary and the Tabernacle?

Lord Jesus, Thou hast indeed done well to force me to deprive myself of all things. By trials and afflictions of various kinds, Thou hast taken from me more than the half of those things which were precious to my heart. But for Thy grace, but for Holy Communion, I should not have been able to say: My God, I give Thee all that Thou art pleased to take! But, united to Thee, I can say: My God, take more still, if such be Thy good pleasure; I can never more refuse anything to Thee!

IV. '*If I have wronged any man, I restore it to him four-fold.*'

What humility in thus confessing his faults in the midst of a banquet, where many of his friends were assembled! How thoroughly Zaccheus was above caring for '*What people will say.*' Ah, if before Holy Communion, our Lord should summon us to make a public confession of our faults, how few amongst us would have the courage to obey Him.

We can see, by these works of justice and reparation, that a true love for our Lord Jesus Christ inspires the soul with great fervour in penitence. Our Lord does not desire Zaccheus to moderate his fervour: because He is at His ease in an atmosphere of great virtues, and He is not anxious to save His friends from poverty, nor from sorrows, nor from privations. He cannot suffer sin to remain in them, and there-

fore He delights to see them use such efficacious means of escaping from its dominion, as are suggested to them by His grace.

The simplicity with which Zaccheus declared his good resolutions, shows me that I ought not to hide from my spiritual guide any of the good intentions with which I am inspired by grace, also that I should not enter upon any undertaking without asking his advice, and presenting my resolutions to Jesus in fervent prayer. For He who commences a good work in us must also perfect it by His Sovereign Hand.

O Jesus, Thou hast shown that nothing which Thou dost require can be impossible to one who possesses Thee. Give me grace to do all that I ought to do without thinking so anxiously about what I am able to do, but resting in a spirit of prayer upon Thy grace, which is always freely given to the upright will.

V. '*This day salvation has come to this house.*'

It is not to-day that I have first heard this Divine assurance; for Jesus, taking possession of the poor abode of my soul, has made it His own dwelling-place, and filled it with the blessing of God abundantly.

O my soul, Zaccheus was overwhelmed with joy, at receiving our Lord's assurance of his salvation. One word, one visit only from the Divine Master, rendered him happy and grateful for all the rest of his life. And thou who livest, as one may say, in the society of Jesus, who art admitted to close intimacy with Him, who receivest a visit from Him almost every day, dost thou not feel thine own happiness? How is it that thou art not continually overwhelmed with the most intense joy and gratitude? O my soul, thou hast in thee the Author of thy salvation, He holds thy crown ready, He only waits to bestow it upon thee in His appointed time. Take courage,

the happy day is not far off. Thy trials, thy sorrows, will pass away for evermore. Accept the suffering that glorifies thy Saviour, and brightens the jewels in thy crown.

O Jesus, I thank Thee for giving me so many sweet assurances of my salvation. I thank Thee because Thou art Thyself my Joy, and will hereafter be my Crown. I love Thee, my God, for having prepared so beautiful a crown for me. I can never give Thee praise or gratitude enough, in time or in eternity.

VI. '*For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*'

Our Lord has caused these consoling words of His to be handed down to us in the Gospel, that He might cause us to understand that, amongst all other men, *sinners* appear to have an especial right to the benefits of Redemption.

Jesus pronounced these words during a banquet; in order to point out more clearly that all such as at the Holy Table exalt His mercy by their repentance and confidence, give glory to His Sacred Heart. You must understand, that in consequence of our Lord's infinite mercy and kindness towards you, your sins, however numerous they may be, from the moment that you sincerely mourn for them with deep humility and full confidence in Christ, actually become your titles to the especial love and tenderness of our Blessed Lord. You should then use your faults as instruments to revive your faith in the mercy of the Sacred Heart, and to encourage your hope for greater favours at His hands, because you give Him occasion to glorify Himself still more in you, by the treasures of His love and forgiveness.

Oh, how dear is this reply of Jesus to my soul! How sweetly it re-assures me, when I think of all that I have done to effect my own ruin, and when

I receive the immediate proof of the persevering love which determined Jesus to save me.

But how many other favours unite their testimony to this: declaring aloud that Jesus is *there* for my happiness in time and in eternity.

By my devotion to the Holy Eucharist, O my Saviour, Thou hast deigned to associate me with Thy zeal for the salvation of souls. Remind me always that Thy Heart burns with desire for their salvation: that I may pray continually for those who *know not* this desire: for those who have forgotten it: for those who despise it, that their souls may eternally experience the efficacious power of Thy most merciful desire.

Conclusion.

In the beginning of our spiritual life, we feel as it were drawn towards detachment: but by slow degrees our natural inclinations resume their sway over our minds; afterwards we feel attraction to certain things, and from attraction to consent the distance is but small. Exercise great vigilance over your senses, that you may neither conceive nor preserve any intimacy with or affection for any of the objects of sense that surround you. The original depravity of our nature prevents us from rising to God, and causes us to become attached to creatures and to ourselves; so that every person takes pleasure in the objects which offer him an advantage of any kind whatever. The soul that yields to this *inferior* or lower attraction, instead of raising its desires on high, towards our Blessed Lord, will be capable of turning to its own destruction the most useful means of salvation.

TWENTY-FIRST MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE TEN VIRGINS.

(St. Matt. xxv.)

Preparation.

HOLY COMMUNION is the festival of the spiritual nuptials of our Lord Jesus Christ with our souls. We have no other end or destination in this world but to walk to meet our Lord, when He comes to us, either by grace, by the Holy Eucharist, or by death. Let us be prepared to receive Him in Holy Communion, which may be regarded as a solemn invitation to take flight with Him to the eternal Marriage Feast upon the day of our death.

I. '*Ten virgins took their lamps and went to meet the Bridegroom.*'

The lamps which all these virgins carried in their hands signify, according to St. Hilary, the true faith implanted in us at holy Baptism. His opinion rests upon this verse of Holy Scripture, 'Thy word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.'*

To come to Jesus is to approach the Holy Table with a lively faith, firm hope, ardent charity, sincere contrition, and profound humility: with an efficacious detachment from all earthly things, and with a sovereign hatred of sin. These are the dispositions of the faithful soul.

Every virtuous action, thought, and prayer is a step towards meeting Jesus Christ. The hours of our lives which have passed away bring us every day nearer to that supreme hour of meeting with our

* Psalm cxviii.

Lord which will take place at our last hour. At that decisive moment, Jesus, our just Judge, will assign us a place *near* or *far* from Him.

Holy Communion effects, in a passing manner, that blessed meeting with Jesus of which it is the prelude, or rather the foretaste. Let us come with reverence to meet Jesus there, for we know that He is always expecting and desiring us to come.

O my Jesus, who art about to come to my soul, I entreat Thee not to remember the sins by which I have defiled it, but rather to remember that Thou hast washed it and made it clean in Thy most precious Blood. Turn away from my sins, and wipe them out of Thy book of remembrance now that the hour of Communion is drawing near, and also the hour in which I shall appear before Thy face. Thy love towards me is my only ornament, but what adornments could suffice for my soul, the spouse of God? Thou hast chosen it. Complete Thine own work, and restore to it the beauty which was conferred upon it in Baptism.

II. *'Five of them were foolish, and took no oil with them.'*

How many examples we find in the world of souls like these; frivolous, careless about their eternal salvation, taken up entirely with their pleasures, or with a thousand little trifling and perishable interests, but entirely neglecting the important duty of prayer. And yet by prayer alone, and by no other means, can they obtain the necessary oil of grace, to keep alive in them the trembling flame of supernatural life.

But even amongst pious souls, are there not many that perform the most sacred actions negligently, in a light and careless spirit, which they never take proper pains to render more recollected and earnest. Have you never had reason to reproach yourself with having spent much of the time allotted to your preparation for Holy Communion in indulging irrelevant

thoughts, bitter feelings, resentments, or feelings of sorrow and distress, which should have been poured freely forth into the Heart of Jesus, to meet His tender sympathy and consolation?

If, of all the immense advantages which are offered to us in Holy Communion, there remained but one, that of leading us out of ourselves, it would still confer upon us an immense benefit.

Let us take great care not to acquire the habit of communicating as if we were only performing an ordinary action, and thus approaching the Holy Table and the presence of Jesus Christ without the necessary preparation for meeting our Lord and entering into so solemn an union with Him.

O Lord my God! Thou hast made the examination of our consciences before Holy Communion very easy, since thou requirest nothing from us but love and obedience, such love as the angels render Thee in heaven; a love superior to all our other feelings; a love which includes and effaces them all; and an obedience, prompt, blind, and entire. May it then be by Thy Heart that I love Thee, O my Jesus, and by Thee may I address the highest possible expression of love to Thy Father, by rendering to Him the most perfect obedience united to Thine!

III. '*The wise virgins took oil in their vessels with their lamps.*'

These wise virgins who took every necessary precaution for providing themselves with light during their long dark vigil represent souls striving earnestly after perfection, who come to Jesus with a lively faith and bear in their hearts the ever-increasing treasure of their good works. They are prepared for whatever may occur; for storm or calm, for death or for Holy Communion. They desire to communicate or to die; to possess Jesus Christ at first on earth and afterwards in heaven.

The precious oil with which you ought always to be provided represents, by its enlightening, softening, and healing power, those acts of charity and zeal which are the property of the pious soul. 'The oil cannot light the lamp.' It must first be touched by the flame; after that it will maintain the flame. So our good works cannot give light, unless they are inspired and accompanied by the spirit of faith. But when the oil fails, the lamp becomes extinguished.

Thus our good works cannot produce faith, but they maintain it, as the fuel feeds the fire; and when our works are few, the flames burn less clearly.

The vessel which holds the precious oil is our conscience. The oil will lose some of its virtue unless the vessel be kept clean. Thus we must examine our conscience daily, but especially before receiving Holy Communion.

Ask Mary to give you the pure oil which will enlighten your faith more and more, which will animate your hope and maintain the ardour of your desire to receive our Lord. O Mary! deign to dispose me to receive Holy Communion by detaching my heart from vain affections; dispose my life in like manner, by bringing all my actions into conformity with the law of God. I beseech thee to order all my feelings and actions so perfectly, that every one of my actions may be regulated and enlightened by the bright rays of Christian charity.

IV. '*And as the Bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.*'

We may consider the late arrival of the heavenly Bridegroom as signifying the delay of Divine grace, which does not attract every soul at the same age, or with equal strength. But it is necessary that we should always keep a clear conscience, that if Jesus should arrive suddenly, He may find nothing to offend Him in the state of our souls. Then we can

await His coming tranquilly, and with that peaceful confidence which arises from our knowledge of His infinite goodness and mercy. Let us await our Lord's coming as near to the Tabernacle as we can, that we may be always within reach of His voice and Heart.

In this sleep of the virgins we may find a most striking image of the effect produced upon our souls by suffering a long interval to elapse between our Communions. The soul which Jesus rarely enters becomes drowsy in the performance of its duties. The practice of mortification is repugnant to it, and it *gives way* to its feelings of repugnance; devotion *wearies* it; it leaves off watchfulness altogether; it loses patience and constancy; it ceases to make progress in the spiritual life; it yields to its sinful nature: all its energies become relaxed. At length it slumbers, and finally sinks into a profound sleep, in which the remonstrances of conscience can be no longer heard.

Have you not experienced these defects in yourself when you have delayed your Communion, when you have been negligent in making preparation for it, when you have borne the sacred yoke of the laws of God with impatience, and have cast aside your good thoughts as if they were troublesome advisers, from whom you have hastened to escape by dissipating them in the *giddy whirl of pleasure*, sure means of plunging the soul into a fatal slumber, from which it may never more awake.

Before going to receive Holy Communion, examine carefully into your interior dispositions, and never fall into that terrible spiritual *routine*, which is another species of deadly slumber, and in which it acts without consciousness of itself, without desire, without anxiety. It lives, and that is all; but it cannot move. Therefore, do not approach the Holy Table from habit merely, nor out of vanity or human respect, or even from a secret desire for spiritual consolations · for by

so doing you would deprive your soul of part of the fruits of this Sacrament. Let your objects be the same as the intentions of Jesus Christ in coming to you, namely, His glory, the greater progress of your soul in virtue, the good of the Church, &c.

Communicate, above all, for the love of Jesus Christ Himself. Seek His Presence with tender affection; await it with impatience; entreat Him constantly to come to you, and let nothing deter you from that pious care.

V. '*But at midnight a cry was heard: Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him.*'

How sweet is the awakening of the Christian soul when her first thoughts remind her that Jesus is coming down from heaven to unite Himself to her that day! No hesitation or indolence is possible then. We feel inwardly urged to spring up to meet our God, who also hastens from heaven to meet us. At the consecration, Jesus arrives on earth from heaven. Let us not give Him cause to reproach us for delay. He marks those who are late at church by *calculation*, who suffer the Holy Sacrifice to begin before they get ready to attend it.

How many graces await us at the very beginning of Mass? But if the angels find us not in our place at church they will carry them back again to heaven.

There is yet another cause which hinders us from going eagerly to Jesus and deprives the soul of that interior purity which is the spring of spiritual activity. It is that of habitually committing certain venial sins which we regard without detestation. We retain these sins, perhaps we even love them, although we cannot help feeling that the eye of Jesus regards them with aversion.

O my soul! think that thy angel guardian is now saying to thee, 'The Bridegroom cometh; go forth to meet Him. He comes, bringing rich gifts of

mercy; His arms and Heart are open to you.' But that you may be always prepared to respond to these encouraging words, it is necessary that at all times you should desire Jesus Christ alone. Your eyes must seek Him everywhere, and whatever does not contain Him must be odious to you. Your affections must all be concentrated in Jesus; He must inherit them all; otherwise, in the day when, for the last time, it shall be said unto you, Behold your God! you will not be able to rise and follow Him, because you will be held captive by the chains which ought to have been severed by His love.

Lord Jesus, I have no greater happiness on earth than to come to Thee: but vouchsafe to cause me to walk in the path of holiness, so that, with a firm unwavering step, I may advance to the Holy Table and to all the sacrifices which are demanded of me by this meeting with my Lord.

VI. '*Then all these virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.*'

Preparation for Holy Communion is an individual, or it may even be called an egotistical action: in which the fervent soul, all overflowing with love, can impart nothing to one that is lukewarm, for it can neither pray in its stead, nor share its purity of conscience with another. So much as generosity is permissible, and agreeable to Jesus, during the act of thanksgiving, so much is the *preparation* strictly confined to the individual soul. The virgin that has no oil must receive the stern reply, 'Go and buy,' our own provision will only suffice for our own wants.

But let us beware of one defect in active love; it is sometimes too eager for its own peace, it seeks too many things at one time, and wishes to cure every fault at once. These desires are hurtful to the soul, because they are of necessity sterile. At the moment when you receive Jesus, be thoroughly forgetful of

self. Let us ask Him to kindle the lamp, that is to influence our hearts with love to Him.

I am going to meet Jesus; I know that I shall be graciously received. The sacred feast is ready: I am desired and expected: my place is marked out. How shall I grieve my celestial Bridegroom if I refrain to come; if any frivolous cause of voluntary obstacles detain me; if I do not love Him enough to open to Him gladly! When I think in whose presence I shall find myself at the Altar, what efforts on my part are necessary to render me fit to meet my Lord, I humble myself, I pray, I love. And Jesus will graciously hear and accept my prayers.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Consecrate yourself to our Lord.

Address yourself to Him with reverential humility; seek your expressions nowhere but in your heart.

This is the time above all others, when you should intreat our Lord to *take* your heart.

'When He takes the heart, all is done,' said Father Ravignan.

When should He take more full possession of your heart if you pray Him to do so, than at the moment when He is actually dwelling in you?

I. '*Behold the Bridegroom!*'

In Holy Communion, Jesus comes as a Bridegroom, to renew His chaste alliance with our souls. The delights of His presence cannot be described; they are known only to those who actually enjoy them. We can only point out a few of the advantages we derive from it; Jesus dwells in our soul, which is then an image of the bosom of God, as the Word reposes in the bosom of the Father; He comes to raise us up to Himself, by the gifts of His Soul, of His Heart, His Body, His Life; in fact, of Himself without reserve. He becomes the support and strength of the soul, and

He delights in this union which sin alone is able to destroy. Let us learn to appreciate this immense happiness.

Jesus gives Himself to me, as if I were the only communicant in the world. I know that I am loved with all the power of love that my heavenly Bridegroom's Heart contains. Who can have the same certainty with respect to any human love? And if even we could have such an assurance, what a difference between the love of God and the love of any created being! I cannot render back as much as I receive, but I give myself wholly, entirely. I give little, but I possess no more.

Lord Jesus, Thy Heart invites me to enter into an incomprehensible alliance with Thee. How sweet it is to sound, without ever reaching the depths of Thy Infinite Love. How sweet to admire the heights of the love of Christ, while the eye cannot attain, the heart cannot form a conception of its infinite immensity-Thou hast given this love to me: I am unable to com prehend my happiness: cause me to feel it, not that I may rejoice the more, but that I may know myself to be wholly Thine. I fear so much that I do not love Thee enough, O my God, for my heart needs Thee O Jesus. Let me possess Thee, let me be all Thine on earth, or take me to be for ever Thine in heaven.

II. '*They that were ready entered in with Him to the marriage.*'

The five virgins that were *ready*, because they had been prudent, took part in the marriage feast, which is the figure of Holy Communion. In the silence of humble devotion, of adoration, and love, Jesus makes His presence felt. What a rich compensation for the trouble we have taken with our preparation.

I have sometimes enjoyed these unspeakable joys, but to my shame I must say that I have not always done as much as I ought to obtain them. Jesus is so

kind, that even if I come tardily, He never reproaches me for it. His reception of me is less tender, but He is always indulgent. Ah, how ungrateful should I be, were I discontented with what I receive, and were I to desire *any other thing* than Holy Communion! In the unspeakable blessing of Redemption, Jesus made His love *shine forth;* but often He makes us enjoy it secretly, He hides His gifts from us. The sacred species veil the divinity, sanctity, beauty, and glory of our Blessed Lord, but they preserve His Person to me.

The Cross *hides* from me the goodness and wisdom of God, as well as the reward which is prepared for me hereafter; and yet it *obtains* them for me. In my sufferings there is only the thickness of the Cross between God and my soul, just as there is the form of the Eucharistic accidents between my soul and Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

At last the time of our union is arrived. Thou hast given Thyself to me, O Divine Bridegroom of my soul. Thou art invisible, but Thou art loving and faithful, and I am as happy in possessing Thee, as if Thou hadst loaded me with sensible favours.

Grant me to love Thee so much that every breath I draw, every pulsation of my heart may be an act of love. I would wish to be all love, so that, as nature is submissive to Thy will, so all my being might render unto Thee continual praise.

III. '*And the door was shut.*'

These words should teach you with how great devotion and separation from the world you ought to remain near our Lord after receiving Holy Communion, the strongest and sweetest bond that can unite our hearts to Jesus Christ. Near Him, we have nothing to fear from His severity, and everything to hope from His tenderness. But He is a jealous God. Generous as He is, liberal and magnificent in all His gifts, He exacts in return the *absolute gift of the heart.* When

the heavenly Bridegroom enters the heart, we must close the door to all created things. Jesus will suffer no rival near His throne, and we cannot divide our affections without exciting the jealousy of His love. He loves without reserve, and expects a like return of love from us. His Heart is well worth ours!

I will manifest my love to Jesus with a delicate care, so that I may not be left outside His Sacred Heart, nor outside the gate of heaven. I will not only be afraid of displeasing Him, but I will strive hard to please Him, that I may retain and fix His love.

I will endeavour not to commit any voluntary faults, because nothing is trifling to the eye of love. There are no discussions or disagreements between hearts that love one another. I will abandon myself to Jesus without taking thought of the past or for the future, happy in a present which assures me an eternity of happiness.

O Jesus, take my heart, this heart in which Thou canst endure no rival, and canst suffer no stain of sin; this heart in which Thou wilt reign as Sovereign, because Thou hast given Thyself to me without any reserve.

How is it that Thou hast sought me again, after Thou hast suffered so many refusals, so much coldness on the part of one of the most unworthy of Thy creatures? I am happy in having communicated, and yet I do not know how to make my act of thanksgiving! My thoughts are distracted, I grieve over the barrenness of my spirit, but when we love, it is the heart that thinks and feels. Can it then be that I love Thee not at all? How painful is this doubt to one who fears to take the appearance for the reality! Nevertheless, I am bold to say, to Thee, O Lord, who seest the depths of my heart, I prefer Holy Communion to all besides upon earth; I can suffer nothing to weigh against one Communion. But if I

may speak thus, I prefer Thee, O my God, even to the Holy Eucharist, and I would renounce Communion if I knew that I could please Thee better by submitting to so terrible a deprivation. O Jesus, make me love Thee, and may I love Thee only for ever.

IV. '*Lord, Lord, open unto us.*'

This ardent supplication leads us to think of the souls that desire spiritual consolations after Communion, and when they do not find them, imagine that Jesus has closed the door of His heart against them. They think that Jesus Christ is far off from them, because His presence does not make itself sensibly felt, and forgetting more important petitions they weary themselves in mourning over their imaginary separation from their Divine Master. Ah, it requires much of the spirit of faith and disinterested love to turn the short but happy moments of our act of thanksgiving to full account.

At the end of the world, the doors of heaven will be closed in such a manner that they will never more be opened to those who are left without. But the door of the Tabernacle is always ready to open, that we may find Jesus whenever we seek for Him. It is only the door of the *consolations* of His Heart that we cannot open when we will, because He bestows them upon whom He will, and when He will.

O my Jesus, I have often desired Thy consolations, I have desired to *feel* them, and I have mourned deeply when this grace was refused me. Forgive me for having thought in this matter of myself rather than of Thee: of desiring my own enjoyment more than Thy glory. I am not worthy that Thou shouldst open unto me Thy Heart, because I have often refused to open mine to Thee; but in this hour of love, I offer unto Thee my heart, and I open it widely that Thou mayest fill it so completely, that it may never more be occupied

by created things in a manner contrary to Thy will. Abide in my heart, and grant that it may abide in Thy love.

V. '*Verily, I say unto you, I know you not.*'

Let us never place ourselves in such a situation as to be in danger of having these terrible words addressed to us. It is possible that there may be some who say to themselves, 'My will is very weak, my temptations and occasions of sinning are very frequent, how can I hope to escape frequent falls?' It is right to fear our own weakness, but we must also depend upon the almighty grace of God, and never cease to invoke the assistance of our Blessed Saviour. Can He ever fail the heart of which He is the centre, and in which He sits as it were upon His throne? Ah, if you thought of the power of the Holy Eucharist in you, you would fear less, you would love a thousand times more.

Say then to our Lord that you will come to Him so often, and that you desire that He should come so often into your heart, that He may never be able to say, I know you not. Pray much for those unhappy souls which have deserved that dreadful sentence.

Nothing but mortal sin can draw so terrible a judgment down upon us. Ask our Lord that you may die rather than commit one. Ask him to diminish the fearful number of sinners who live tranquilly in the terrible danger of being pronounced eternal strangers to our Lord Jesus Christ.

I confess Lord, that Thou mightest refuse to acknowledge me, because I have disfigured Thine image in my soul: but Thou art almighty, and canst repair the harm that I have done. Preserve me from ever having cause to fear the dreadful disaster which awaits those ungrateful ones whom Thou shalt refuse to acknowledge. If I did not communicate, I should be still more afraid of incurring that terrible sentence, because I have so often despised Thy blessings. But I beseech

Thee to acknowledge in me a true member of Thy Body. Cause me to live in this state of holy union with Thee, that so my death may serve but to confirm it for evermore.

VI. '*Happy are they that are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb*' (Apoc. xix. 9).

At our baptism we are first admitted as Christians to the banquet of sanctifying grace, which is intended to serve as the spiritual nourishment of the soul, until it shall be found worthy of being invited to sit down at the higher banquet of the Holy Eucharist. Our existence is the more beautiful and excellent in proportion to the frequency with which we attend that Holy Table on earth, while we await the day which shall admit us to sit down with Jesus at the beatific feast of eternal glory.

An important and most happy occupation, after Holy Communion, is in expectation or prevision of the celestial banquets, to lend an attentive ear to the voice of Jesus who invites us to it. We may thus live in a state of perpetual expectation of the joys which are prepared for us above. Let us then sit down in spirit at that marvellous banquet which shall be prepared for the people of God. Let us prepare ourselves, by fervent Communions, to take our place thereat, and let us excite our souls to merit one of the best. The best places are those which are nearest to the Heart of our Blessed Saviour, and without caring whether they be higher or lower ones, let us desire those in which we shall experience the most lively influences of His love.

When I receive Holy Communion 'Jesus deposits in my heart,' said Père Dupont, 'some portion of eternal life, which is, as it were, the *root* of life. This *portion* of eternal life which will remain with me in heaven, is the close union which is effected between our Lord Jesus Christ and my soul by His grace,

and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit and by charity.' This union is the prelude to the eternal Marriage Supper of the Lamb; it is like our betrothals to the Heavenly Bridegroom, in preparation for the glorious consummation of the union in heaven. My God grant that this hope, in which I live, with which I communicate, may become at my death an eternal reality!

Conclusion.

Never let us conclude our thanksgiving without considering that Jesus will one day pay us a more solemn and a more decisive visit than by Holy Communion. This same Jesus, whom we receive under the sacramental veils, will appear visibly before the eyes of the soul when it quits the body. *Now* He comes to us full of love and mercy: *then* He will shine in all His Majesty as our Judge. *Now* the words that flow from His lips are sweeter than honey: *then* His questions will be severe and sharp as swords. *Now* He speaks but to lead us to patience, to excite us to the holy joys of obedience and virtue, and of generous love to His Divine Heart: *then* He will pronounce the solemn word which shall decide our fate to all eternity!

Let us think seriously of that awful meeting with our Judge, let us think of it with a certain terror; mingled with great courage to fly from evil and to practise all good works, and tempered by the legitimate hopes of a soul that knows itself to be so much beloved by its Judge, that He desires to contract with it an everlasting union.

TWENTY-SECOND MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE SUPPER AT BETHANY

(St. John xii.)

Preparation.

In all ages, and even among savage nations, it has been the custom to make solemn banquets, which served as a kind of sanction and promulgation of certain great events, which may have occurred either to the sovereign or the people, and this custom is still in use among ourselves. It seems appropriate then that the most important actions in the life of Christians should be accompanied by a magnificent festivity where every one could take his place, without distinction of rank or fortune. This Feast was instituted by our Lord under the title of the Holy Eucharist. He invites us all to the Angelic Banquet, where He is Himself the reward and the remembrance of the memorable days of our life.

I. '*Jesus came to Bethany, where they prepared a great supper for Him.*'

In accepting the frank but respectful hospitality of His friends, Jesus was sad, because He could not yet reward them by the gift of Himself, which He now so liberally bestows upon His humblest followers who earnestly request it. At that time He could only reward His best friends by sitting *beside* them? And now He enters *into* us, within our very hearts!

Jesus invites us to a festal repast which He shares with us. Oh, the sweet repast, prepared, not by the hand of man, but by the magnificence of the King of eternal glory!

He Himself, our God, our Life, becomes our Food, the sweetness which shall satisfy our souls. In Him all our aspirations will be fulfilled. He is our superabundance, our glory, and our only good. For when our Lord honours the soul with a visit, He does not leave His treasures behind Him in heaven. He seems even desirous that we should seek His gifts rather than His Person, since He withdraws Himself, but leaves His graces with us.

What love and kindness Jesus displays in coming from heaven into my heart, and in daily shortening the distance which still separates me from Him! The day will come when Jesus will no more demand from me a hospitable reception for His Eucharistic Body; but He will give it eternally to me, as being one of the members of His Mystical Body.

O Jesus, come! All the doors of my heart are open to Thee, but there is nothing but poverty. Bring with Thee what is needful to give Thee a good reception. Renew in me the spirit of penitence, humility, and sacrifice: renew me above all in love. Never more permit me to sit down at the table of worldly vanity, and grant that the Communion for which I am now preparing may leave deep traces in my soul.

II. '*Martha served.*'

Martha, always eager to give to our Lord an active testimony of her love, shrank from no act of self-abasement.

With her princely hands, she carried in the dishes of the feast to which Jesus was an invited guest. She thought it an honour to show how completely she was His servant. And does not the Divine Master Himself serve us with His own Body at the Feast of Angels? And when He gives It to us, does He not make Himself less than any one of us?

We ought not to imagine that any rank in life

exempts us from labour and active charity. Our condition has its limits, but charity has none. Besides, to perform kind actions from disinterested motives, is a means of creating in ourselves a habit of detachment, which prepares the way for the still higher motive of the love of God. These acts of kindness, like powerful wings, are able to carry us into the regions of sacrifice. We should observe a just moderation in not transgressing the bounds imposed upon us by our worldly position. But within these bounds, let us exercise charity for the love of Jesus Christ, knowing that in giving to the poor who come to us for aid, we are ministering to Him. Let us not fear to exercise that self-devotion, which is unknown to the half-hearted piety of the world, for *these* we may find a good deal of *interested* kindness, but Jesus cares only for *disinterested* kindness and charity.

Our Lord does not only come to visit me: He desires also that I should prepare a banquet for Him, and that I should entertain Him as He entertains me. 'Give Me,' He says, 'that salutary penitence which I delight in: give Me those tears which I love to drink: that piety which rejoices My Heart: and I will give you in return the forgiveness of sins, which you have so often asked of Me. I will give you the peace that you desire: the future to which you aspire: and that joy in the Holy Ghost, which is the hidden manna that no man knoweth save he that receiveth it.'

O my Lord and my God, Thy friends at Bethany refused Thee nothing, they even sought to prevent Thy desire. I who *know* what it is that Thou desirest of me, grant that I may give it to Thee always. Thou hast placed me like Martha in a position in which I am able to serve Thee with some degree of exterior activity. Give me grace, in depriving my actions of all personal motives, to keep my heart faithfully attached to Thy Sacred Presence,

so that no worldly occupations may draw it away from Thee. Enable me to lift up mine eyes unto Thee continually, while I unite to my acts of inward devotion all those acts of outward activity and charity which may tend to the advancement of Thy glory and the salvation of souls.

III. '*Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus: and wiped His feet with her hair.*'

Jesus had entered the house of His friends to take a little repose, after a long and fatiguing journey: He enters now the hearts of Christians to find some recompense for the ingratitude which is shown to Him by men in the Holy Eucharist. Mary Magdalene has shown us how to honour Jesus: by consecrating to His service all our most precious possessions, as, the sweet perfume of our affections, the resources of our intelligence, the activity of our hands. We must lay all down at the feet of our Lord: and to this freewill offering we may add the gift of those cherished ornaments which have served to minister to our vanity: a gift which may be exemplified by the use which Mary made of her hair, when she applied it to wipe the precious ointment from the feet of her beloved Master.

And how may I best imitate Mary Magdalene in my way of drawing near to Jesus? I may take the advice of Bossuet in one of his immortal discourses, which was addressed to a rich and brilliant auditory. After telling them that they ought to restrict their wishes to what was *strictly necessary*, cutting off all superfluous cares and needless anxieties, and thus setting themselves free from countless fears and entanglements, he proceeds thus, 'Sell all, leave yourselves nothing, be very sure that only one thing is needful. Begin at once to separate your *superfluous* from your *necessary* possessions. Despise everything

which you cannot carry with you into another world at the hour of death: love only those good things which you can never lose, "because they are spiritual and eternal."'

When shall I begin, O Lord, to render Thee due honour? Every moment of my life ought to be employed in Thy service; but perhaps I still give a considerable portion of it to the world, to my pleasures? Give me grace to regulate my life more holily. Receive my perfumes, which are my prayers, I lay at Thy feet *my hair*, that is to say, the vanities upon which my heart was formerly set: and I pray Thee that I may be never tempted to return to them. Thou art coming unto me, my God, suffer me to offer Thee my poor gifts, and may they serve to Thy glory when they are accepted by Thy Sacred Heart.

IV. '*She broke the vase, and poured the ointment upon the head of Jesus*' (St. Mark xiv. 3).

It was, doubtless, a most kind and tender glance from our Blessed Lord that encouraged Mary, who had at first fallen prostrate at the feet of Jesus, to rise from the ground, and with holy daring to raise her hand to that Sacred Head, and pour over it that most precious ointment. But the Evangelist also remarks that before venturing to approach *so closely* to our Lord she broke the vase: thereby expressing that a perfect love had now caused her heart to be broken off from all earthly affections.

We learn in these few words how the soul may be made perfect through love and generous self-sacrifice. Far from diminishing with the lapse of years, true love becomes more thoroughly in earnest, it goes to the root of the matter, and *leaves nothing* in itself unconsecrated to the service of Jesus: *retains nothing* which it is not ready to offer up at His call, it pours out *all* the ointment from the vase. Thus in Holy Communion, does love discover means

to unite itself more and more closely to our Blessed Lord. Let us see what we can find to offer Him this very day. The gift that is brought with a liberal hand from a loving, grateful heart will be received by our Blessed Lord with pleasure, however poor it may be, nay, though it be no more than the dust of the earth.

Let us offer all our interior and exterior possessions to our Blessed Saviour: and let us also give Him the *vase*, that is to say, our body; for St. Augustine teaches that life itself ought to be counted among superfluous things, by those who seek the life of the world to come. It is not necessary that we should live, but it is necessary that we should give ourselves wholly to Jesus before we die.

This, then, is what I must do before I go to Holy Communion, I must give *all* to Jesus, my affections, my fortune, my life: thus only can I *draw near* to His Sacred Head and Heart.

O Jesus, why cannot I, like Mary, out of a heart filled with the most lively contrition for my sins, offer unto Thee my prayers and my love. Break all the chains which hold me *here below*. To know Thee, love Thee, and serve Thee—this and this alone shall be the end of my being. Take my life away rather than suffer me to turn it to any end other than Thy service and Thy love. The sight of my unworthiness has shown me with what humility of feeling I ought to approach Thy presence here. Give me a fervent desire to acquire those virtues which are still wanting in my soul. Renew my will to consecrate myself unreservedly to Thy service.

V. '*The house was filled with the odour of the ointment.*'

The subtile vapours of perfumes spread to a great distance, and thus does a heart imbued with the love of Jesus exhale sweetness all around. The acts of pure and fervent love which we bring to the Holy

Table perfume Jesus the saving Victim there, and ascend from His Altar on earth to His throne in heaven. Can there be a thought more calculated to teach us the value and advantages which are attached to fidelity in love. It is this fidelity that builds up the Church, that fills our homes with the sweet odour of Christian virtues, and confers upon them the seal of constancy. How can my heart be filled, as St. Paul says, with Jesus Christ in Holy Communion, if it is already full of self-love, illusions, resentments, irritation, impatience? To render my heart more worthy of my Lord, I will cleanse it by an act of generous sacrifice of all those *little passions* that trouble the soul in time of Holy Communion. There must be no reserve or cowardice in the matter of interior renunciation. I ought then:

To retain nothing contrary to the will of God.

To desire nothing besides the presence of God.

To appropriate nothing to myself of all His gifts.

But that I may perform these important duties more exactly, I will pray very earnestly to our Lord, that He may help me to respond to His call by practising the evangelical counsels.

O my sovereign Master, it would be pleasing to Thee if the Tabernacle were perfumed with our prayers, if they rose up to Thee like sweet incense perpetually, mingled with our holy desires.

I desire Thee, O Jesus! I desire to receive Thee to do honour to the Holy Eucharist, the sweetest, most magnificent, most precious of all Thy gifts; the most in harmony with the aspirations of my soul, the most suitable for my wants, the most necessary for my sanctification. Never can I do Thee enough honour. O Divine Host, Food of my faith, and first fruits of my beatitude! Never can I love Thee enough, Thou who art love itself. But when I shall possess Thee, I shall need only to express my love by uniting my

voice to that of God Himself, who demands my heart in giving His own to me.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Produce acts of faith, gratitude, and love. Breathe forth your heart in holy aspirations.

After employing some time in adoration, and admiration of the love which our Blessed Lord has shown to you, return with still more tender affection to the feelings of confidence and humility, which should have preceded your Communion.

I. '*Jesus said: Trouble not yourselves, for she hath wrought a good work upon Me.*'

Our Lord seems to have permitted Mary Magdalene to endure so sharp and severe a criticism upon the manner in which she had testified her respect and love towards Him, in order to teach us that we should lay upon His Sacred Heart all the pain that we suffer at times from the behaviour of our neighbours and friends.

It is difficult to escape from certain painful remembrances, but let us turn away our minds as much as possible from them, and concentrate all our attention upon Jesus. He will be our defence and our consolation. Above all, let us keep silence. Let us determine in our own minds that after the God of charity has reposed upon our tongue, we will not permit ourselves to indulge in any sharp answer or *repartée*, in any speech of self-justification, except so far as may be absolutely necessary to exculpate ourselves from any unfounded charge which may be brought against us.

I will always endeavour to keep alive my firm faith in Holy Communion, and to continue in well doing, even though I should be censured for it. Whatever may be said of my piety or of my actions does not diminish the respect and homage which I owe

to our Lord, nor the obligation which I am under of expressing my gratitude for all His mercies. I shall act just as if nothing had been said. I shall keep silence in honour of our Blessed Lord's silence before His slanderers. I will ask Him more especially to sanctify my tongue upon which He has reposed, and as He honoured it with His presence even before He entered into my heart, I will resolve never more to utter a single word which I should be ashamed to utter in the hearing of our Lord.

My God, I would that my heart was able to adore Thee, to love Thee, as Thou art at this hour adored and loved by the saints, the angels, and the Blessed Virgin. Thy love would transform my life into a clear day of uninterrupted light and joy, but I am so impressionable, so susceptible, that the slightest criticism, the most trifling annoyance is sufficient to depress my spirits. In this state of exile, all our joy is mingled with suffering, and it is even necessary that we should suffer from our fellow creatures to enhance our enjoyment of the Holy Eucharist. Holy Communion gives me more happiness than my trials give me pain, because my trials *pass away*, but Holy Communion *brings Thee back* to me.

O Jesus, I possess Thee, and with this happiness I can well afford to forget the rest. And if I find forgetfulness impossible, I will lay down the remembrance at Thy feet. The remembrance of my past Communions is sweet enough to efface the recollection of all past sorrows from my memory. May I love Thee, O Jesus, may I love Thee for ever; such is the prayer which shall ascend from my heart to Thine, until I draw my last earthly breath.

II. '*She hath done what she could.*'

Would that in every one of our Communions, our Lord might bear such witness of us before His Father and the holy angels; would that He might behold in

all our thoughts and all our actions a most ardent desire to please Him. Even when through the weakness of our mortal nature we cannot always do right, yet, through all the outward variations of our conduct there should exist in our *will* a true and sincere *desire to do well.* Our Lord knows both the *strength* and *weakness* of our nature. He did not say of Mary Magdalene, she hath done what she *wished*, but what she *could*, by which He intended to teach us that He knows that our desires are better than our actions, because a resolution is sooner taken than executed. 'Let us not be weary in well-doing,' said the Apostle. Unless we lose courage we shall receive the fruit in due season. Therefore, 'while we have time, let us do good unto all men.' In proportion to the constancy with which we persevere in the service of God without sensible consolation, is the purity of our love towards Him. Therefore we may count it as a special favour from Him when He deprives us of sensible joy at the Holy Table, and in the performance of all our good works. Oh, I have great need to consider this well.

If I were to count over every evening the occasions which have presented themselves of performing acts of virtue during the day, and the use that I have made of them, should I not find the number of the good actions that I have actually done very inferior to those that I might have done. In that case our Lord cannot say of me, in addressing Himself to His Father, 'She hath done what she could for Thy glory.' Is it not sad that the Heart of Jesus should feel that I neither do for Him all that I *ought*, nor all that I *could?* And yet He has a right to say to me, 'What could I have done more than I have done for thee?' Does He ever cease to bestow Himself upon me? And do not the graces with which He accompanies my Communions plainly show that He takes delight in loading me with His benefits? He may well ex

pect that my gratitude to Him should overflow in all good works.

O my Divine Master, how deeply do I feel my sinfulness, my cowardice! How infinite appears Thy mercy, and how deeply do I feel the necessity of doing *all that I can do* for Thy glory! Grant me grace to do so, renew my desire to act always according to my conscience, and under the influence of most lively gratitude.

III. '*She has anointed My Body beforehand for My burial.*'

Even at the festal board Jesus never forgets the great Sacrifice which was so soon to be consummated. The remembrance of it is so far from depriving Him of His wonted gentleness and serenity of mind, that it even leads Him to discover a mysterious connection between the anointing with sweet ointment and His own funeral rites which were so soon to follow, and in which He foresaw that they would not be able to embalm His Body, according to the custom usually followed by the Jews after death. Let us follow the example of Jesus in always keeping in mind the inevitable day of our death, not for the purpose of alarming ourselves, but rather to blunt the keen edge of pleasures. This body which we tend so carefully, will be ere long wrapped in a winding sheet, and laid in the grave. Let us only give it what is absolutely necessary, that so there may be *less of it to die.*

The Holy Eucharist is the memorial of the death of Jesus. Let us never go to Communion without pouring the perfume of our mortifications and sacrifices upon His Sacred Body. Let us labour to become pure; and may a scrupulous and exquisite delicacy, that fragrant flower of faith and love, perfume our hearts with its sweetest blooms.

Our Lord urgently demands this of us, not only to destroy our sinful natures, but also to embellish our supernatural being.

Therefore I ought to be careful, especially upon the days when I have communicated, to let no occasion pass of conquering my own inclinations. And to encourage myself in so doing, I will say, I perform *such* an action for the glorification of Jesus in me, for my glorification in Him, for our mutual glorification in heaven.

O Lord my God, life is but a day, which passes rapidly away. To-day I have enjoyed the delights of Holy Communion. To-morrow I may be taken from earth to behold Thy glory in eternity. Happy at this moment in Thy house on earth, I am expecting happiness still greater in heaven, even the brightness of a day which shall never decline, a sun which shall never set. Holy Communion excites me to long yet more earnestly for the delights of the banquet in my Father's house above, my Saviour's Table in His kingdom. I return continually to the Holy Table because my soul is eager to communicate, and I communicate because I need to live by Thee, to live in Thee, to live for Thee. I must therefore communicate or die, because death is but a more direct invitation to a perpetual Communion. Prepare me for death by Holy Communion, and may death conduct me to the place which Thou hast assigned to me at the feast of Thine elect.

IV. '*You have the poor always with you, but Me you have not always.*'

Jesus is always in the Holy Eucharist, where I can adore Him, love Him, pray to Him. But He is not always in my heart; I soon lose His sacramental Presence. This thought should excite me to profit by the solemn moment of my thanksgiving. If, so soon after I have communicated, instead of testifying my respect and love to Jesus, I think of the world, and worldly vanities, I cannot expect Him to constrain me to turn my attention to Him. At this

moment I possess Jesus in the real plenitude of His Humanity and His Divinity, but in an hour I shall have only the traces of His past Presence. Until He leaves me, my duty consists in being wholly occupied with Jesus, and in keeping the thought of Holy Communion faithfully. I will not suffer any day to pass without seeking Him, in the first place at the Tabernacle; nor without honouring Him in my labour, and my compassion for the suffering members of His Body. For His tender Heart has placed the poor everywhere, and everywhere they represent Jesus.

In Holy Communion, we possess Thee all too little, O my Jesus! No sooner have I received Thee than I lose Thee! I would that my soul, becoming spiritualized like the angels, might every instant, without reception of the sacred species, communicate with Thy Divine Flesh. But in glory, Thou art the Bread of Heaven and not of earth, and Communion by desire does not satisfy my hunger to possess Thee really. O Jesus, give Thyself to me without intermediate means, to preserve me from loving any earthly thing, and may I live by Thee here below, and hereafter in heaven.

V. '*Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, there this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.*'

Jesus makes to us, in one sense, the same promise that He made to Mary Magdalene, to spread throughout all generations the story of her deed of love. Has He not announced that at the last day our works shall be made known to angels and to men?

Yes, everything that I do conjointly with Jesus will one day be revealed for my glory by Jesus Himself in the great assembly of souls. My acts of thanksgiving, of self-devotedness; my acts of love and gratitude; my declarations of fidelity; all shall be unveiled before the whole human race. But that

which will give most pleasure to our Blessed Lord, and will draw down upon me His especial love and benediction, will be my continual efforts to lead a life worthy of my frequent Communions. Especially the virtues which I shall have practised in union with Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament will be the occasion of a still more merciful and glorious manifestation.

But what a painful reverse to this picture! Our Blessed Lord will make known all the favours that He has bestowed upon me. He will discover one by one my acts of ingratitude, cowardice, and unfaithfulness, and will oppose them to the blessings with which He has loaded me!

O God of my heart, who dost eternally remember the smallest things that I have done for Thee, why have I not served Thee so faithfully as to fear nothing from the shame of such an exposure? Why can I not, with my services in my hand, await with confidence the day of eternal remuneration? I have done nothing, Lord, deserving of any recompense, but I venture to present unto Thee the Sacred Bread that I have received, and I entreat Thee by the merits of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to put an end at once to all my transgressions, and to all the indignities and profanities which are committed against the Holy Eucharist. Hear my prayer, for the sake of Thy dear Son. Ah, let Him not, to avoid so many insults, depart from our Tabernacles! What would become of us without Him? But grant that all Christians, devoted to His honour, may repeat their homage and acts of reparation until time shall be no more.

Conclusion.

During this supper our Lord was doubtless thinking of the Upper Chamber in which He was about to offer us a new aliment, and to become our nourishment Himself. He beheld in this repast, taken with

His friends, a sweet image of our connection with Him in the Holy Eucharist where He receives us with tenderness even when we know it not. Let us never communicate without thinking that the Eucharistic Feast celebrated upon earth is but the vigil, the foretaste of that great feast which we shall celebrate hereafter in heaven. May our fervour here be a fitting prelude to the great Hosanna which we shall sing in eternity—of which our act of thanksgiving after Communion may be called the *Introit.*

TWENTY-THIRD MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY OF JESUS INTO JERUSALEM.

(St. Matt. xxi.)

Preparation.

St. Teresa celebrated with great devotion the memory of our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, because the Jews, after receiving Him with magnificence and joy, forgot the laws of hospitality, and obliged Him at the close of day, to go and seek His evening meal in the village of Bethany.

The Saint, desiring to compensate to our Lord for the culpable indifference which is so often manifested to Him in our own times also, opened her heart to her beloved Master, and invited Him to take up His abode therein. Let us imitate that great Saint, and like her let us take great care in purifying the heart which we offer to Jesus to be His abode.

I. '*Say to the daughter of Sion: Behold your King.*'

Our Blessed Lord approached Jerusalem not as a stern Master, but as a King, full of mercy and good-

ness, who only reigns that He may bless! He comes with the very same love to my soul this day; regarding it as a beloved child, which He is willing to save at the price of His Blood.

My Saviour, I beseech Thee to come to me with that sweetness which is irresistible, with that tender love and mercy which attract all hearts, and calm the inquietudes of every soul. Alas, I find it very difficult to bring my mind into a state of calmness and devotion; crowds of painful remembrances destroy its elasticity, distract my thoughts. My imagination, intended to act as handmaid to my reason, is filled with irrelevant ideas, which become dangerous when they blindly seek, as in days past, or in those which are yet to come, fresh cause for sorrow or for fear. At other times, my imagination conjures up chimeras which absorb my mind, and cause it to forget the holy realities of Thy adorable designs. And my will, which ought to be entirely conformed to Thine, is not *always* able to say; 'I *do* and I *desire* always Thy holy will.' This serious self-examination fills me with shame, and causes me to utter a most heartfelt, profound, and loving act of contrition before Thee, my Saviour and my King.

II. '*As Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, all the people came out to meet Him.*'

Our Lord was pleased to enter Jerusalem gloriously, when He came there to suffer for our redemption, because He intended to instruct us by the generous manner in which He advanced to meet His death, and to lead us by His example to meet courageously the trials and sufferings of life, not endeavouring to fly from them, but enduring everything with a calm and dignified patience.

When Jesus draws near to me in Holy Communion, does He not advance to meet many sorrows and humiliations that I inflict upon Him? Whilst, when

I approach the Holy Table, I approach only His infinite mercy, pity, and tenderness! The crowd that followed Jesus into Jerusalem were inspired only by the idea of procuring Him a triumphal entry there. And is that my thought when I receive Him? for our thoughts should be consecrated to Jesus first of all. Do I not discover in my mind a host of petty, frivolous thoughts, of some thoughts even more unworthy of this great occasion? And I may consider myself happy if they only assail me *against* my will, and do not take possession of me altogether. I desire to have one thought only, that of the presence of my God; one desire only, to glorify my God. I desire to make only one prayer, and to enter fully into the spirit of it; the prayer that Jesus Himself made in the Garden of Olives. I desire to have but one ambition, to efface myself, that Jesus may take the place of myself, that Jesus may be all in all in me.

I will fervently desire Jesus and His Blessed Mother to bestow these necessary dispositions upon me.

Divine Saviour, bless my firm resolve that I will henceforth apply my mind only to the advancement of Thy kingdom, in me, and around me. I lay down my will at Thy feet. My efforts shall tend to support Thy interests in the souls of my fellow-creatures. How much Thy Heart must have grieved to see me forget my formal promise to follow Thee rather than the world. Help me to fulfil my promise better, by prayer, by a line of conduct so gentle that all who approach me may be edified by it. Henceforward, rule alone in me, and let all things foreign to Thee pass over the surface of my soul, and make no impression there.

O my King, my will shall bend to Thine: too long has it displeased Thee by its tergiversations, and offended Thee by its resistance; too long has it halted between two contending powers. It is Thy desire to bring it to that absolute *Fiat* which alone can give

peace, and of which my self-love exaggerates the difficulty. Accept my regrets for having so long delayed to utter that *Fiat*. Fortify my resolutions; give me that energy which will enable me, after each Communion, to increase and redouble my firm determination to *will* nothing but what is in accordance with Thy holy will and to desire Thee alone.

III. '*And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way: others cut down branches from the trees, and strewed them in the way.*'

If Jesus thought proper to offer the people, amongst whom He had been openly ministering and doing good for only about the space of three years, an opportunity of publicly manifesting their gratitude and love to Him for all His benefits, can you possibly imagine that after He has conferred infinite graces and favours upon you during the whole course of your life, our Lord does not expect some special thank-offering from you after each Communion?

Amongst the marks of respect and gratitude which were paid to Him at His entrance into Jerusalem, the Gospel makes particular mention of the garments spread in the way, because the person who deprives himself of his clothes, appears ready to refuse nothing, to reserve nothing for himself! Let your offering to our Blessed Lord be made in this spirit. Reserve nothing. Refuse nothing. Search carefully in all the hidden corners of your heart, and lay *all* that you find at the feet of Jesus. We offer Him *a little*, and He repays us by Infinity.

The Jews, not without a hidden meaning, went before our Saviour with palms in their hands. The palm is the sign of victory: I ought not to present myself before our Lord without that pledge of my fidelity. I ought to be able to show Him the victories which I have gained over my faults since my last Communion. How many times have I overcome my

rebellious spirit, my idleness, my pride, my sensuality, my impatience, my curiosity, my self-love, my vanity, my desire to appear good, to be praised, observed? &c. So many times as I have courageously corrected one of these faults in myself, so many palms shall I have to lay at the feet of Jesus, to adorn His entrance into my soul. He expects me to honour Him by my virtues, for I am indebted to His grace for the strength by which I overcome. But if I rarely succeed in conquering a fault, must I not acknowledge that the reason is to be found in my unwillingness to obey the dictates of my conscience, the leading of Divine grace, and the advice of my spiritual director? Ah, if I rejoice sometimes, I have far more frequently cause for self-humiliation and tears! I will offer to our Lord my hearty repentance, and firm resolutions of amendment. He will not disdain the *little flowers* of humility.

My God, I beseech Thee, disdain not the few palms which I have gained in my spiritual combats. At each Communion I hope to lay some new ones at Thy feet, as a tribute of my love. I entreat Thy grace to multiply them so that Thou canst say to my soul: 'My beloved is unto me like a garden of delights.'

IV. '*Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord.*'

I am too often indifferent to the voice of creation, which praises continually the Lord of all power and might, in His works upon earth. I am even inattentive to the voice of the Blood of Jesus Christ, incessantly offered throughout the world; that merciful voice to which the angels lend a listening, loving ear, that powerful voice which keeps silence in heaven for me. I do not always perceive the moment at the time of Holy Mass, in which the priest announces to me the coming of Jesus, by saying, 'Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord;' 'He that cometh to me!'

Yes, blessed for ever be the hour when Jesus comes

to us! But we cannot forget that Jesus comes as King. He appears as a Conqueror; He requires that His dominion should be boundless; His power respected; His glory maintained; His interests protected; His intentions carried out; His will implicitly obeyed. Is it thus with us?

Let us meditate deeply upon every one of these words. We shall find them an inexhaustible mine of thought. Think above all of the love of which Holy Communion is the sweetest witness and pledge.

O my soul, was there ever so pacific a triumph, or more spontaneous and welcome demonstrations of love? Fear no more, therefore; dare to love your King; go to Him eagerly, receive Him with confidence, and submit yourself to the God of peace, of gentleness, and love.

O Jesus, if I had been present at Thine arrival in Jerusalem, I should not have been an indifferent spectator of the acclamations of Thy grateful people. Suffer me to mingle my own soul with those who desire to offer Thee a homage, more secret perhaps, but no less sincere than theirs.

Deign to come and receive that homage in my heart. If its love is not ardent yet, inflame it with that fire of love which Thou didst impart to those who approached Thee upon earth.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore Jesus present in you, and beseech Him to take His place upon the throne which you have prepared for Him in your heart. Prostrate yourself at His feet, implore Him to speak, to command: and hold yourself in readiness to obey. Pray ardently to Jesus that He may extend His kingdom in the hearts of all men, and especially among the members of your own family.

I. *The joy of the heart which possesses our Lord.*

Jesus Christ cannot but be received with joy and gratitude into the heart that loves Him. The soul expands in presence of its King, its Divine Head. It enjoys a truce from all its uneasiness and agitation. It comes out from the centre of its own personality to contemplate Jesus only, to love Jesus only, to adore Jesus only, to forget the world at His feet, to escape from all earthly voices, and to hear His voice alone. Rejoice in your happiness. Remain at the feet of your Sovereign Lord. Keep nothing from Him. Happy art thou who hast the King for a friend.

O my adorable Saviour, suffer me to say to Thee with joy, Blessed be Thy coming into my heart. Reign absolutely there, overthrow without mercy every little idol that is set up therein. Henceforward may I be governed simply by the *one* thought of pleasing Thee, loving Thee, gaining souls to Thee.

O my Sovereign King, enter into the profoundest depths of my being; here all is Thine, my heart, my mind, my soul, and my life. I offer Thee all that I have, and all that I am, happy in submitting myself to Thy gentle yoke. Never let me forget that blessed day in which for the first time Thou saidst to me, 'Behold your King cometh unto you, full of sweetness.' I thank Thee, with as much humility as joy, for this favour so frequently renewed; for who am I that I should dare to offer a throne to the King of earth and heaven? Oh, when I think of all Thy goodness, I can fear no longer, and I summon courage to entreat Thee to destroy sin in me, to diminish my imperfections, to strengthen my weakness, and to make my salvation sure. Lord, let me rather die, than once receive the Sacred Host into a loveless heart! The beatitude of angels consists in the contemplation and love of God. To love Thee, O my Jesus, to possess

Thee without beholding Thee; such is my present privilege, which I implore Thee never to take away from me.

II. *Jesus Christ desires to reign in our souls.*

Jesus entered Jerusalem amid universal acclamations. They believed that He was about to reign over them. Alas, they would first cry: Away with Him, crucify Him.

In how many souls is a Communion, in which Jesus is received with the warmest expressions of love, closely followed by some act of mortal sin, by which Jesus is crucified afresh?

In how many ways does our ingratitude condemn Him to the Cross? Strive that your sins may never lead you to the knowledge of the outrages which are inflicted upon His Sacred Heart. Be not of the number of those who suffer themselves to be led away by pleasure, or temptation. Your heart is the city where after His Sacrifice Jesus Christ comes to look for the reward of His victories. You know whether or not He has purchased them dearly, even at the cost of His own Blood. He is like a king who does not think of distributing rewards to his followers so long as he is occupied with the war, but only when he returns victorious to his throne. On the part of Jesus, Holy Communion is a first reward, or an encouragement: on our side, it is an engagement to take service under the Captain of our salvation. The combat we then begin may be dangerous, because the world and our sinful nature are very dangerous enemies, but His grace will never fail us. Our Lord, in the centre of your soul, will keep all its avenues in safety, and will defend you from all the assaults of your enemies, if you ask His help by fervent prayer.

In each of your Communions, preface some triumph for our Lord, by making a signal effort against the

chief enemy of your soul. Overcome your besetting sin, and you will be filled with joy when Jesus shall bless the palms which you present to Him at His entrance into your heart.

O my Sovereign Lord, blessed be Thy love, that deigns to count it a glorious victory to triumph over my coldness and disdain. Thy love never shines more brightly than when it obliges us to declare ourselves vanquished and led captive by the attractions of the most Holy Eucharist. Lord, I have felt that wondrous charm. May my captivity to this, the most adorable of Thy mysteries, be prolonged in me even until death! Receive this desire; accept my ardent prayer; wean my heart from all earthly love, and unite it to Thyself in closest bonds.

O my King, I adore Thee. Trusting entirely to Thy grace, I offer myself unreservedly unto Thee. I declare that I will follow Thee as closely as possible whithersoever Thou goest; imitating Thy patience under suffering, and Thy courage in enduring adversity. I will lead a life of poverty and mortification, if my embracing such a state would be pleasing to Thee, and fitted to promote Thy glory.

III. *Laying down our superfluities at the feet of our Lord.*

The gift of outward things is a far easier one to make to God than the gift of ourselves. If it is sweet to devote ourselves to those we love, it is no less so to deprive ourselves for their sakes of everything that we have. Generosity in the practice of charity, contempt of the pomps and vanities of the world, and detachment from all personal vanity, are a kind of practical profession of our baptismal vows. We cannot forget with what solemnity, our hands resting upon the Gospel, we renounced them all upon the day of our First Communion. When should we make

proof, by our actions, of fidelity to our vows, if it be not during our thanksgiving after Communion.

"You ought no longer," says Bossuet, "to come into the sacred temple better dressed than the temple itself, where Jesus hides Himself under the most humble appearance; nor should you make your way noisily through the throng, in order to draw to yourself the consideration and attention which should be paid to Jesus Christ Himself here present while we celebrate the awful commemoration of the Sacrifice upon Mount Calvary." With what feelings would our Lord regard your presence at His Holy Table if He perceived in you a desire to be noticed and observed? Ah, let Him see in you nought but reverence and eager love! Promise our Lord that never in His presence will you give way to any voluntary distraction, nor to the thought of causing any in others.

Keep back nothing; not even a single imperfection, a trifling wish; not the slightest affection that cannot be purified, sanctified, rendered divine by contact with the Sacred Heart, whose pulsations are all actuated by the love of God and our souls alone. These are the two poles upon which your thanksgiving ought to rest. When you are entirely stripped of self, entreat our Lord to clothe you again in His thoughts, His judgments, His intentions, His desires. Thus, by the aid of prayer will be effected that most desirable transformation of yourself into Him.

What can I offer unto Thee, O my Jesus, but the very Treasure with which Thou hast just now presented me? Thou alone art worthy of Thyself. Nevertheless, I desire to do more than merely lay upon Thy path the garments that will afterwards be resumed by their proprietors. I promise henceforth to consult simplicity more than vanity in my clothing, and after I have in spirit deposited at Thy feet the worldly adornments, in which I should not dare to

communicate, suffer me not to resume them again after my thanksgiving without a blush at my broken resolutions. It is I who ought to tread under my foot everything that Thine infinite purity could not tolerate. My heart is sincere, I know, but I have reason to fear its weakness and unsteadiness. I entreat Thee to reconcile my frailty and my love, and to remind me to repeat this prayer very frequently.

IV. *Assuring to Jesus a permanent triumph in our souls.*

Those Jews who were so favoured, on the day of our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem, as to salute Him with their acclamations, to contribute to His triumph, saw Him only as He was *passing by*. But He *dwells* in you. And He desires to remain in you. He prepares for us the means of preserving His kingdom in our hearts. He offers you a triple peace. First, *peace with God*, by the restoration of order in your soul. This order can be maintained only by a contest with nature, united with perfect submission to the divine will. Secondly, *peace with your neighbour*, by repression of all feelings of bitterness, antipathy, and small resentments. No more malicious observations; no more suspicions, unjust mistrust of your neighbour; permit nothing in yourself that can trouble the harmony which charity establishes in our souls. Thirdly, *peace with yourself*, by the calmness of heart and spirit maintained under the eye of our Lord.

The whole power of the heart is expressed in the eye. The feeling that the eye of Jesus is upon me will give me strength to sway my stubborn passions, to govern them, to direct them aright, and to employ their activity to the end for which they were given me by God, namely, to the performance of many acts of virtue. I desire nothing so much as to contribute in some degree to the spread of Christ's kingdom in the

souls of all men, and more especially in my own. I no longer desire to repose, I see at last that as Jesus is my life, it is He that ought to reign, to triumph in me! What shall I render unto thee, O Lord, for having given Thyself so liberally unto me, for visiting me with such tender mercy? Here is my heart, reign there alone. Let it be to Thee a sweet retreat, and place of peaceful repose, where Thy love may be free to expand, to *destroy*, and to *create*. Assure Thine own triumph in my soul, for if it be dependant upon creatures, Thou wouldst, as at Jerusalem, meet with short-lived acclamations, followed by reiterated outrages and contempt. I would wish to incline many hearts to glorify Thine, and to exalt the most wonderful sacrament of the Altar. I would risk to join in everything that is done on earth or in heaven in its honour, and to multiply infinitely my acts of worship. Be Thou for ever blessed, O my God, because Thou hast only hidden Thy glory to embolden my gratitude. Remember that Thou hast died for me, and henceforth make me live for Thee alone.

O Almighty King, who dost reward so magnificently the services of Thy faithful subjects; under Thy protection I will not fear to partake of Thy warfare, and to brave all the dangers of battle. Thy sacred Body shall be my Viaticum, to support my strength until the time of my pilgrimage shall be ended.

Deign to accept the prayer which I now offer unto Thee, that I may see Thee praised and glorified by all Christians for the victories gained over our hearts by Thy adorable Eucharist.

Conclusion.

As the acclamations which saluted the passage of Jesus into Jerusalem did not cease until He had actually entered the city, so your acts of thanksgiving

should not be limited to the few moments that you pass at the foot of the Altar after Communion. The voice of love should ascend *continually* from your heart to our Lord. You ought not to leave off thanking Him for His great goodness in coming to you at this moment until you begin to prepare for receiving Him to-morrow again.

TWENTY-FOURTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE WIDOW'S MITE.

(St. Mark xii. 41.)

Preparation.

EVERY virtuously inclined soul is naturally disposed to the exercise of charity. Our Lord Jesus Christ put on an appearance of poverty in the Holy Eucharist, in order that our hearts, being attracted by His gentle tenderness, and touched by His low estate, may be more strongly attracted to love Him, and to bestow all they are and have upon Him. The exercise of charity towards our Blessed Lord may be placed in the highest rank of virtues.

I. '*Jesus sat over against the treasury.*'

The Holy Eucharist is the treasure of earth, and of every Christian soul. Jesus may be said to sit in this august Sacrament, that we may come to Him, to place our Communions in His Heart, and to draw from It at the same time the graces which It has to bestow upon us. If Holy Communion does not retain us near Jesus, He is not our Treasure, for He

has said, 'Where your treasure is, there shall your heart be also.' Let us show by our assiduous attention to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament that He is our true and only Treasure. Let us fear only one thing—to lose Him by our own sin. You may lose your fortune, but you can never lose Jesus except by your own fault. If all your friends were to desert you, the Heart of Jesus would still be yours. God sometimes breaks our earthly ties, that we may think of Him more entirely, and may love Him alone.

The treasure of my earthly objects of affection has diminished one by one, and I cannot recover that of which I am deprived by death. But Jesus is a Treasure that can never be diminished, that death can never touch. He is the only Treasure of earth and heaven which is worthy to possess my heart. I have shed many tears over the treasures I have lost; but I have not sufficiently desired and sought for the treasure I cannot lose. Had I done so, I should have suffered less, and acquired more merits.

O my God, my All! Thou wilt not accept a divided heart. Thou hast taken from me that which I esteemed my chief earthly good, desiring that I should have but one treasure, even Thyself. Give me courage to acknowledge that I had placed my treasure where it did not exist, and that Thou hast done well in restoring the order which that division had disturbed. Come, O Jesus, here all is Thine; enter, take Thy rest; my heart has now no treasure but Thee!

II. '*Jesus saw the people throwing money into the Treasury.*'

Jesus, who knows our misery and our littleness, does not consider our works precisely as they are in themselves; for what can we do which can be really deserving of the approval of Him Who is the Creator of heaven and earth? He regards the *manner* of our

actions, and especially their *intention*. Ah, it is most desirable that our intention should always be most pure, since it has power to attract and to fix the notice of Jesus.

Jesus teaches me to make a distinction between the *gift* and the *fruit* of the alms I bestow. The *gift* is the object itself—money, food, clothing, any assistance whatever given to the poor; the *fruit* is the merit of the upright intention with which I give these things for the love of God.

All my alms are lost if I have given them in a spirit of ostentation, or simply from a natural emotion of pity. How great is the treasure which I may have acquired in the sight of God if I have always acted simply from the desire of pleasing Him alone. It is chiefly by Holy Communion that I shall find the means of rectifying my intentions; for I cannot dare to act under the very eyes of Jesus from any other motive than His love. I will ask my angel guardian to remind me at the commencement of all my actions to say: My God, I offer Thee this; or, I do this for Thy glory.

My divine Master, Thou art perhaps even now looking at me, to see *in what manner* I am preparing for Holy Communion. Thou wilt find much imperfection in my feelings; but I entreat Thee to take away all imperfection in the offering of myself. I will give up all negligence, all cowardice in Thy presence. Sanctify my faculties, purify the use of my senses, increase my confidence in Thee, because, although nothing in me deserves Thy attention, yet Thou canst not repulse the soul that puts its whole trust in Thy mercy.

III. '*Many that were rich cast in much.*'

Jesus did not appear to take any notice of the pompous and noisy almsgiving of the rich men at

Jerusalem. Their ostentatious offering had not power to arrest His attention. Thus it is, not only with our almsdeeds, but with every good action performed ostentatiously, or with a secret desire of being admired, remarked, or applauded. Some good works are very dangerous to our humility; such as those which put us forward, *attract observation*, and in which, while we appear to be labouring for the good of others, we may, without great watchfulness, inflict the most serious spiritual injury upon ourselves. Another work of great delicacy is the employment of our *fortune*, in which it is so difficult to refrain from sometimes acting as *proprietors;* whereas *our* possessions are the property of God, who intrusts them to us to-day, and to-morrow may see fit to take them away from us, to place them in the hands of some other steward.

All this should teach me to consult our Lord before I undertake any good work, and to avoid such undertakings as are liable to be spoiled by self-love and self-seeking, which are so hateful in the eyes of Jesus, and would deprive my work of all merit in His eyes. I come to the Holy Table with the offering of my daily actions, which are the beginning of my preparation for Communion. If my actions are not acceptable to Jesus, then my hands are empty and my preparation nought. I have many reasons for thinking that I do not bring a rich offering to our Lord this morning; but I hope that He will accept the humble confession of my poverty, and that He will favourably receive the consideration, not of what I have done for Him, but of my ardent desire to receive Him.

In contemplating the Blessed Sacrament, I will endeavour to produce acts of faith, hope, and love, and I will say to our Lord, that all unworthy as I am to receive Him, I come trusting in His mercy, and that I entreat His mercy to draw down upon me His love.

Lord, if I had profited by all the occasions of doing good that I have received from Thee, I might now be rich in Thy sight. I am seized with fear when I think how often I have abused Thy gifts. Grateful though I feel for being permitted to approach Thee so freely, I tremble lest I should still be found an ungrateful and prodigal child. I pray Thee, Lord, make Thyself Master of my life, and dispose all its events so well, that they may aid me in acquitting my debt to Thy justice. I borrow above all the love of Thy Heart: it is the most beautiful offering that can be made to Thee, and will procure me the sweetest welcome at Thy hands.

IV. '*There came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.*'

We are all indigent even when we are rich in temporal possessions, because we are all more or less wanting in that wisdom which is the true riches of the soul. We cannot make to God any other offering of that which is really ours, except the offering of our souls and bodies: those two *mites*, so different by nature, so marvellously united by the power of God, but which may so easily be *disunited* again by sickness and death.

Who more than myself ought to be careful to bring to the Eucharistic treasury my soul and my body, those two *mites* with which I may purchase heaven? At present this offering is a self-interested one upon my part, because in return for it I hope to receive the Heart of Jesus. Ah, how deeply I feel my intense poverty, in the presence of our Lord, who willingly gives me Himself. Having no other offering to give Him in return, I lay at His feet my heart and my mind. My thoughts and affections comprise all my store. I have given my *necessary* things together with my superfluous ones.

O Jesus, Thy bounty never seems more great than when it is bestowed upon the poorest, the least, the most unworthy soul. It is such a soul as this that now comes before Thee, O my God. It approaches Thine infinite holiness, trusting in Thine infinite mercy. This is my act of faith, which implies an act of entire confidence. These two acts lead me to Thee. The sight of my own unworthiness will not cause me to turn away from Thee; for if Thou art the thrice Holy God, Thou art also the God of love, whose love is stronger than death, that is to say, it is infinite love. I believe it, O my God, I firmly believe it; and this faith shall remain for ever unshaken in my soul.

V. *Jesus considers the gift that I bring to Him.*

'The soul cannot,' says St. Augustine, 'exempt itself from paying what it owes to God; for it must pay, either by the good use of what has been bestowed upon it, or by the loss of that which it has not employed to the best advantage. If it does not acquit itself of the debt by works of justice, it must acquit itself by suffering.' By love we give ourselves completely to Jesus. He teaches us to do so in the Holy Eucharist. He could not give Himself to us more perfectly than He does in Holy Communion. When we receive it, let us give ourselves without reserve.

Is your heart given so completely to Jesus, that not a fibre of it thrills at any name but His, at any touch other than that of the Sacred Host? Not one of our most secret feelings can escape the all-seeing eye of our Divine Master; the slightest imperfection in our intentions or actions is open to His sight. Ah, if our own eyes could behold our actions so clearly, we should see that the greater part of them are worth no more, in current coin, than the little piece of copper money offered by the poor widow. Let us frankly

confess our deep poverty of soul. 'Humility,' said Gerson, 'is the principal mark by which we may know whether our spiritual coin be good and true metal.'

How, then, do you stand with regard to our Lord? What have you lost, given up, or given for love of Him?

I have great cause for humiliation in being compelled to acknowledge that Jesus is not the beginning and the end of many of my works, and that I only think of offering Him a very small part of them. But henceforth, I will endeavour to bring to the Altar my share of sacrifices. I will beseech our Lord to grant me still more frequently the Divine gift of the most Holy Eucharist; for if I consider it as an inestimable pearl which I may appropriate to myself by merely stooping to gather it up, it is certain that I shall soon be ready to cast away everything that can hinder me from obtaining that precious jewel.

O Jesus, condescend to come to my soul, which deplores its poverty in not having a single farthing to offer to Thy Divine Majesty. Thou hast chosen my heart for Thine abode: prepare it, adorn it, redeem it from its frightful poverty. But if it should be Thy will to leave me still in my poverty, at least refuse not to open Thy Sacred Heart to me, as Thou dost open it to all the poor, the mean, the afflicted.

By all these titles I have a right to demand an entrance there. Come, O Jesus, not that I may ask Thee for fresh favours, but that I may render by Thee my most lively thanksgivings to God.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Recollect yourself profoundly. Offer your reverential adoration to the supreme majesty of Him who now comes to dwell in your soul, with an humble act of thanksgiving to that Sovereign Greatness who has found the means of raising our nothingness to Itself,

and a love of preference above all things to His adorable goodness.

The more deeply you humble yourself before Jesus Christ, the more fully will His love descend upon your heart.

I. '*Jesus called His disciples.*'

There were doubtless many people in the Temple, and around Jesus, when He called His disciples only. Many persons surround Him at the Holy Table, but only a very few of them does He bring near to His Heart. He does not wish to see His friends absorbed in the things of this world, or wandering in the ways of the world.

There may also be souls full of distractions, whom, after Communion, Jesus is obliged to recall gently to His presence, that they may not lose the time of their thanksgiving in vague and useless thoughts. Keep yourself at His feet; lay open your soul, your heart, your mind to Him; ask Him to penetrate all your physical and moral faculties with His Divine grace, to prevent dissipation from entering them through the senses, which are the gates of the soul.

O Jesus, I adore Thee profoundly. Receive from Thyself a homage worthy of Thy greatness, and thanksgivings proportioned to Thy benefits. Suffer me to profit by these sweet moments of union with Thee, to repent again and again. My God, I love Thee, and I love Thee alone. I love Thee above all things, more than my life, and more than heaven. But I cannot be happy in loving Thee by myself alone; I find my greatest happiness in beholding the extension of Thy love among many souls. It is for this reason that I entreat Thee to cause Thyself to be loved upon earth; to call my family and friends around the Tabernacle. When shall I see them attracted by Thy Sacred Heart, and burning with zeal and love

for Thee? Grant us the spirit of prayer; the gift of praying with confidence, with earnestness.

O my prayers, ascend to heaven, and bring back to me from the hands of Jesus and the heart of Mary, a burning coal which shall consume our hearts with the fire of Divine love.

II. '*This poor widow has put in more than all the rest. She has given of her poverty all that she had.*'

Our Lord here desired not only to make His disciples observe the immense difference which exists between the alms of the rich man who gives of his superfluity, and that of the poor man who gives of his necessity, and the great superiority of the one over the other; but also to give us a sublime lesson of universal detachment and mortification.

The poor man is generous to God and to his neighbours, because he is accustomed to suffer. The belief that his sufferings are so great as to admit of no increase, induces him also to employ every possible means to avoid the probability of suffering also in another world. But you that live in abundance, you are afraid of coming to *want.*

If you impose some slight privation upon yourselves, it appears like a severe punishment; something quite beyond your power to bear. And what can Jesus think, who lives a life of sacrifice in order to enter your heart, when He sees that you have so few to offer Him at Holy Communion, and that you are even afraid of having any opportunity of making them? Now that I have communicated, can our Blessed Lord say, 'She has given me all that she has?' And if He cannot say so, how can I dare to reserve anything for myself, at the time when our Lord gives me all that He has and all that He is?

I should learn from this widow, who knew so well how to give alms acceptably, to reserve nothing from

the service of God; to consider that all I am and all I have belong to Him; that He is in me for the purpose of consecrating His sovereign dominion over my whole being. It is my part, when I enter His presence, to be ready and willing to render unto Him all that I have received, even to life itself.

O Jesus, what joy to possess Thee! And yet the excess of Thy bounty seems almost to overwhelm me. Thy mercy alone could lead Thee to descend into my unworthy soul. What would I not desire to have, that I might offer it unto Thee! But I can present Thee with useless services only. Lord, render my feelings more faithful, more devoted. I thank Thee that Thou hast not waited until I was more worthy to feel Thy love, before Thou didst permit me to love Thee. I give Thee thanks for causing me to love Thy service, and I pray Thee that for Thy glory I may love equally to find an occasion of performing acts of generosity which may truly deprive me of what *I have*, that is to say, of those things which *I believe* are mine; because I value them too much. I desire to value and depend upon Thee alone, that I may be maintained by Thee in the difficult path of mortification of my tastes, of my inclinations.

When I have accomplished that task, Thou wilt be able to say to the angels that I have given Thee all.

III. *For what can Jesus praise me?*

When a nature is perfect, it is in its kind worthy of praise. And if the Christian life deserves praise from the simple fact that it commands us to do good, how can we avoid knowing what in us is worthy of praise or blame? Conscience renders an incessant testimony of the good that we do and the evil that we commit: it is like the voice of God, in that it gives us praise or blame according to our works.

We see in various passages of the Gospel that Jesus

gives special commendation to faith, humility, and charity. But how great is our imperfection in the practice of this last-named virtue! We give, because we love to give, and we too frequently proportion our gifts to that love.

Our gifts have no value unless they come from the heart. Jesus Christ does not so much consider what we give, as the intention that directs our gifts. He counts it a worthless offering which is made without generosity, without love. If I do not give *all* to Jesus Christ, He cannot praise my generosity, since He bestows upon me without reserve the gift of Himself. If I reserve anything, my God cannot praise my love. If I am afraid, in consequence of my offerings, of being obliged to undergo some privations in my dress, my pleasures, my table, or my furniture, then He cannot praise my spirit of renunciation and mortification. And yet our Lord would wish to praise me for *something* before the Father and His angels: may He at least be able to praise my regrets for the past, my good will for the future. I will divide the time which is not consecrated to my duties between prayer and works of charity, knowing that the life of true virtue consists in *precaution*, *sacrifice*, and *crucifixion of self*. This life is terrible to nature, but what joy shall we feel in returning to Jesus, with our hands filled with good works and our hearts *emptied* of all that they have sacrificed for Him.

O Jesus, this examination has deprived me of all possibility of looking upon myself with pleasure, and all desire of hearing my conduct approved by the world. I feel too well that it is not possible for Thee to praise my conduct towards Thee. Give me grace, since nothing in me is pleasing to Thee: to feel less pain when I suffer blame or contradiction. Close mine ears to the voice of creatures, and open them to Thine. Make me contemptible in the eyes of the

world, if my humiliation be agreeable to Thee; but in that emptiness of self, plant deep roots of profound humility and ardent love to Thee.

IV. *What resolutions will insure me praise from Jesus Christ?*

St. Magdalene of Pazzi received from our Blessed Lord two rules of conduct, one of which commanded her to follow after works of charity with as much ardour as the hart panteth after the water-brooks.

In order to practise charity perfectly, it is necessary that every one should be the *object* of it; not the objects, because true charity mingles souls in one love, the love of Jesus Christ. No sacrifice is too great in the eyes of those who love Jesus; the most difficult ones appear the most desirable to them.

After this Communion, what shall I do for Jesus? I have not, alas, on this occasion offered Him many acts of virtue. And yet how easily might I have multiplied them! In truth, I neither know how, nor am I in a position to do great things for the love of Jesus, but there is nothing to hinder me from repressing a glance of curiosity, silencing a murmur or complaint, restraining myself from uttering a reproach or severe expression, from doing certain things for myself instead of calling for the help of others, from saying a kind word or performing a benevolent action to some person who would not be inclined to do as much for me; or from depriving myself of some little dainty; from being exact in certain little habits of order and neatness which are difficult to me; from being more regular in my devotions, more diligent in my duties, more simple in my dress, more prompt to put others before myself, more patient in listening to them, more retiring in my behaviour, more serious in my conduct, more polite in my attention to others. One of my resolutions shall be to show more deference to aged

persons, and to be more reserved in my conversation, knowing that it is as easy to wound the feelings of my neighbour by my tongue, as for a glass to break when it is thrown upon the ground. I will guard against temerity in my judgments, against forming them too precipitately, against tenacity in my ideas, and attachment to my own tastes and feelings. I shall learn, when necessary, to make them give way to the requirements of my neighbour. But, above all, I will accustom myself to cause the file of sacrifice to pass over all my desires. To restrain my desires is to augment the possible amount of my mortifications.

O Jesus, deign to form in my heart the resolution that will be most pleasing to Thee, and give me grace to be faithful to it. I also ask that I may think of Thee, and grant me then a persevering fidelity in the practice of charity. But above all, cause me to love Thee, then nothing will be too hard for me to do or to endure. Grant the grace of final perseverance to me, and to all those whom I recommend to Thy Divine Heart.

V. *Requests for those things that are necessary for me to obtain the approbation of Jesus Christ.*

O Jesus, my God, who dost love me with so generous a love, I implore Thee, hear me.

May Thy will be my love, my passion. Give me grace to seek it, to find it, to accomplish it. Show me the path wherein I must walk, make me know and follow Thy designs upon me, even to my entire sanctification. Indifferent to passing things and loving Thee alone, may I love all that is Thine, but Thee above all, O my God. Deprive me of all joy but that which comes from Thee; make impossible to me every desire other than Thee; easy to me all the labour that I perform for Thee; wearisome all repose out of Thee. May my soul aspire to Thee at every moment, O most

sweet Jesus, may my life be one act of love, and my piety less a habit than a continual impulse and aspiration of the heart. Make me see the sterility of every action that does not glorify Thee.

O Jesus, give me to be sincere in my humility, without dissipation in my amusements, without depression in sadness, without hardness or severity in mortification. Cause me to speak without subterfuge, to fear without despair, to hope without presumption, to reply without impatience, to love without egotism, to obey without replying, to suffer without murmuring.

Supreme goodness of my Jesus, I ask from Thee a pure heart devoted to Thee alone, which no sight nor sound shall be able to distract from Thee. A faithful and firm heart which shall never falter or be afraid, an indomitable heart ever ready to do battle, a free heart which shall never be enslaved, inaccessible to error, and far removed from crooked and deceitful ways.

Lord, grant that my mind, powerless to deny or orget Thee, ardent to seek Thee, may be able to find Thee, O Supreme Wisdom, that its exercises may not be displeasing to Thee, that it may calmly and confidently await Thy inspirations, and may rest confidently upon Thy word.

O Jesus, grant that in retirement from the world, I may habitually practise penitence, that Thy grace may shed its gifts upon the path of my exile, and through Thy mercy may my death be precious in Thine eyes.*

Conclusion.

Let us do good while we have time. Let us do good *by* Jesus Christ; all that we do without Him is of no avail for our eternal welfare. Let us communicate, that we may unite ourselves to Jesus Christ, and may perform all our actions in Him. Let us say: It is not for men that I am labouring, it is for God;

* St. Thomas of Aquin.

He has mercifully promised that nothing of what we do for Him shall be lost, but that at the last day He will render it all back to us with an immortal usury. Let us depend firmly upon the truth of His immutable word.

TWENTY-FIFTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE UPPER CHAMBER

Preparation.

To revive our faith, let us retrace and represent to ourselves in a lively manner the time and place of the institution of the most Holy Eucharist, as if we were called and admitted into that upper chamber where Jesus Christ gave His Body and Blood to His Apostles. Let us contemplate with reverence the first consecration made by Jesus Christ Himself. Let us desire and ask from Jesus the dispositions with which He filled the souls of the first communicants.

I. '*Jesus having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end*' (St. John xiii. 1).

These words are a revelation of the Holy Eucharist. St. John, who received them from the Heart of Jesus, declares to us that God though He be, Jesus cannot love men more than He does, because He loved them unto the end, unto the very extremity of love. Love, then, was the beginning, the continuation or moving power, and the end of all the acts of the life of Jesus Christ, and especially of the institution of the Holy Eucharist.

The Gospel declaration assures me that all the days of my life, in their most fleeting moments, in their most trifling circumstances, are stamped with the

activity of that almighty love which surrounded me from the instant of my creation, and will accompany me into eternity.

Therefore, I was beloved at the very hour when Jesus knew that I was thinking of offending Him, at the moment when I betrayed His love. At the time when I had not yet repented of my sins He was preparing the grace of repentance for me. It is the will of Jesus that my heart, crushed as it were by the immensity of His love, should be unable to weaken any testimony of it, under what form soever it may manifest itself. He desires that with a confiding and respectful freedom, I should receive His sacred Body as the perpetual demonstration of His ineffable love. Jesus, looking forward through the lapse of ages, beheld all my Communions, past, present, and to come. What did He think of them? Did they rejoice His Heart, or did they make it sad? Heart of Jesus, what must Thou not have suffered, in foreseeing so many voluntary sins borne to Thy Holy Table by those who call themselves Thy disciples and Thy friends? And Thou dost not withdraw the Holy Eucharist from them. Those who having entered into Thy service, yet fail to conquer their passions, may find in Holy Communion a support for their weakness. Give me grace, O my God, to communicate with a sincere and universal compunction for all my sins. I detest them, because they have wounded Thee. I make a firm resolution to avoid every occasion of displeasing Thee, especially the faults into which a secret inclination causes me to fall repeatedly. Sustain my resolutions by Thy efficacious grace.

II. '*I will keep the Passover at thy house*' (St. Matt. xxvi. 18).

It is not proper that a subject should address an invitation to his sovereign: however desirous he may

be to receive him, he must await the offer of such a favour. Jesus is ready to make this offer to us, but He expects us to make preparations. At His demand the walls of the upper chamber were covered with tapestry. When He entered it, lights shone brightly in the sacred place. But in us who receive the orders of our God, what unintelligence appears of the treasures which are to be bestowed upon us? What icy indifference in preparing *what is needful?*

The Holy Table is prepared for you; your heart should be an upper room always illuminated by grace, and splendidly adorned for the celestial feast which Jesus is coming to celebrate with you. He will penetrate into the very depths of your being with His Divine power, His tender love, His inexhaustible liberality; and with such thoughts of mercy and goodness as God alone could conceive. Instead of a deep intelligence and appreciation of this most touching mystery, He will meet perhaps in your mind distractions and a coldness which might well distress His loving Heart, if it were capable of being discouraged by our faults and imperfections. But no, nothing can weary or disgust true love. Whatever you may do, Jesus says to you always, 'Come, I desire to feed thee with My Body.' Go to Him, then, accept the invitation of love.

That I may respond more fitly to the Divine invitation, I will beseech our Lord to adorn my soul, and to take away every possible obstacle which might impede His Divine operation. I will not only detest my faults, but I will deplore my very least inclination to what is evil. I will come to the Holy Table with even greater humility than usual. By that means I shall avoid the species of agitation which the fear of being self-deceived joins to my desire of doing right.

I shall wait calmly in the sight of my God, until it shall please Him to work in me by His grace. I will

ask our Lord tenderly to fill my heart with feelings of piety, and to prepare it to be an agreeable abode for Him.

Lord Jesus, when I propose to communicate, it is as if I asked myself whether or not I love Thee. Oh, yes, I love Thee! But by what couldst Thou have recognized my love, since I had no energy in conquering myself, no devotedness in Thy service? I know that Thou wilt never refuse grace to those who ask Thee for it, therefore I beseech Thee to give me grace to reform my mind and my will. Thou hast raised me up from my sins; prevent me from falling into sin again, by means of that filial fear which can imagine no misery so great as that of displeasing Thee.

III. '*When evening was now come, Jesus came with the twelve*' (St. Mark xiv. 17).

Every circumstance in the life of our Lord is mysterious, and deserves to be carefully studied. 'He chose, for the time of instituting the Holy Eucharist, the *evening*, which is in families the hour of repose, of intimacy, when affairs of business are put aside and forgotten, and minds unbend for amusement and recreation; but, with people of the world, it is time for pleasures, as factitious as the lights which shine upon those gay scenes, and as certain to vanish with the returning light of day.'

In choosing this nocturnal hour our Lord intended, by a figure, to lead us to regard the time of Holy Communion as one of repose to the soul in the midst of the preoccupations of life—and to teach us to let the curtain of forgetfulness fall over earthly things at this time. Should it be necessary for us to make a great *effort* to drive away from our minds the remembrance of the world? Should not the presence of Jesus Christ be sufficient to absorb them entirely?

But Jesus, who knows the liveliness of our imagination, requires us always to take necessary precautions against such intrusive thoughts as might otherwise render Holy Communion less profitable to us.

If the evening brings with it a cessation of the light of day, it does not cause the absence of the Sacred Host, that true Light of the soul, that burning love which floods my soul with the noonday light of the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

The evening is always to be the end of a happy day, because that day has been brightened by the intimate presence of our Lord, and has therefore been full of graces and blessings, and also precedes the return of the same happiness on the morrow.

The evening is the resting-place between my happiness of to-day and my happiness of to-morrow. And in this manner, through all the trials of my life, the love of our Blessed Lord has invested the passing hours with charms divine, though all unknown to those who, without knowing them, despise them, or refuse to learn their value.

O my Jesus, love shines brightly in all Thy mysteries, and when I meditate upon all that it has done for me, I feel more than ever drawn to place my full confidence and my hope in Thee. Though cast upon the stormy see of tribulation, my days have none the less a morning full of joy, and an evening brightened by hope. Grant that I may pass the rest of my life in the same manner, until Thou shalt call me to awake at the rising of the Eternal Day.

IV. '*Jesus sat down to table with them.*'

After the legal repast, which was taken standing, our Lord condescended to sit down to table with His Apostles. To admit a person to our table is to give him a mark of distinction, to admit him to a kind

of intimacy and equality. This is why Jesus Christ invites us to His own Table, where He is the centre and the bond of souls. The banquets of the world, appreciated with regard to the variety and delicacy of the dishes which are prepared for the enjoyment of the guests, often leave behind them a weariness which renders the soul incapable of any application to intellectual labour or to prayer. From this cause, not to go further into our reckoning with conscience, there results at the very least a great loss of time. But at the banquet of the angels is served one kind of Food only, which contains in itself above all others all that our souls can possibly need or desire. We feed upon that Sacred Bread without weariness, without satiety. The more frequently we eat of It, the more earnestly do we desire to eat of It again. The soul does not discover in It one grace alone, but the plenitude of all graces. Thus we bring away with us from that Holy Table none but the sweetest possible recollections, and an ardent desire to return to it as soon as possible.

I regard the Holy Table with a sweet feeling of hope and expectation. That is the place where I shall kneel!

The Sacred Host which will be given to me is in the Ciborium!

It is there that I shall express my reverence, my shame for my unworthiness, my desires, my hopes, and my joy!

I desire most ardently to receive Thee, O my Jesus, and I fear that my desire may spring from a diminution of the spirit of faith. I fear that I may fail in respect and love towards Thee: but, notwithstanding my fear, I cannot prevent myself from desiring Thee ardently. I adore Thee, Divine Victim, Bread of my soul, which hungers for God Himself!

O Holy Eucharist, sacred object of my faith and hope, without you I cannot live!

V. '*I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you*' (St. Luke xxii. 15).

On beholding the table in the upper chamber, the first Altar of the universe, the Heart of our Lord expanded with an unspeakable emotion of love to the human race whom He had come to redeem, and the language of ordinary life being too weak to give expression to His feelings, He, usually so calm and measured in His expressions, cried aloud with an unutterable accent, *Desiderio desideravi.* This untranslatable cry uttered for us, and for all, explains well that in giving us the Holy Eucharist our Lord was obeying the impulse of His own Heart, and not merely conforming to His Father's commands. This ought to make Holy Communion very dear to us. But alas! this thought of love was and will ever be comprehended by a small number only of the faithful.

I will listen with deep and devoted attention to these last outpourings of the Heart of Jesus, which have found hardly an echo upon earth. The feelings of God being permanent, I must believe that our Lord *always* desires the moment of Holy Communion with like ardour. But have I this consuming love and desire to approach my God?

I ought to be filled with a lively desire to communicate, even in the midst of all my daily occupations, and I should place it in the heart of all my troubles: so that when I approach the Holy Table I may offer it to my Divine Master without any effort, as the constant expression and feeling of my heart.

It is Mary who inspires us with a lively desire for Communion. She sees among the Sacred Hosts that Jesus has prepared for me, from the time of His institution of the Holy Eucharist, the one that I am

going to receive: and by reminding me of that sweet manifestation of Divine love to me, she excites me to love Jesus unto death.

O my Jesus, it is impossible to feel indifference to the desires of Thy Heart! How can I but desire most ardently the gift which Thou hast so ardently desired to bestow upon me? Thou knowest that at the bottom of my heart I love thee night and day, and that my only happy moments are those that conduct me to Thy Holy Table, where Thy Heart exceeds the promise in the gift.

O Jesus, grant me that happiness which I desire, and grant that I may always desire that celestial happiness. May I always desire to receive Thee before I begin my daily labour; for one who has enjoyed the delights of the Eucharistic Feast can carry the heaviest burden. May I always hunger for that celestial Bread!

VI. '*I have most earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer*' (St. Luke xxii. 15).

How was it that Jesus, in expressing to His Apostles His unspeakable desire to give Himself to them, was not afraid of overshadowing the first Eucharistic Banquet with the mournful idea of that peril which at the same instant hung over His own life? It was because His Heart, animated by a desire for suffering, no less eager than His desire for our salvation, was irresistibly compelled to manifest His wonderful love towards us in every possible way. The same thought led Him to the Last Supper and to Calvary.

Upon the Altar, as upon the Cross, He is still a Victim: only the *form* of the sacrifice is different.

Is it not also a sort of invitation to Communion addressed to those who suffer, as if the Holy Eucharist, the most powerful Protector in time of sorrow, belonged first of all to the poor, the suffering,

the afflicted, and supplied them with a sweet energy of resignation which lightens the weight of trial? Jesus assures us by these words that He delights to dwell in the afflicted, suffering soul, which appears to Him as the lively image of Himself at His Passion Hour. The suffering heart is, in His eyes, at once an upper chamber and a Calvary. For as it participates every morning in the mystical Sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and all the day long drinks the bitter cup of sorrow, it is able to realize in its turn, under different conditions, the ardent desire of our Lord to communicate before He suffered.

By instituting the Holy Eucharist at a time approaching so nearly that of His death, Jesus made the Crucifix and the Sacred Host, the two chief treasures of my heart. For one reminds me that Jesus suffered even unto death for me; and the other witnesses to me of a love, which tells me how much I ought to love, since I am so tenderly beloved. Ah, I will never more complain of suffering, when I think that the Sacred Body I am going to receive still bears the marks of the wounds with which it was pierced for me. And I will say to our Blessed Lord: My body which Thou art about to enter, O my God, gives itself up to Thy will as freely as my heart, if it be Thy good pleasure to make them suffer. I abandon myself without reserve to Thy love. I desire to come to Thee, O my Jesus. I desire to possess Thee in my loving, suffering heart. Sorrow appears to weaken my love, at least it prevents me from rejoicing in it: but knowing that Thou didst not seek Thine own joy in the happiness which Thou hast brought into the world by the Holy Eucharist, nor even our gratitude, I will seek only to respond fitly to Thy most tender call.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Oh, the solemn moment in which the soul receives its God! Adore Him profoundly.

Consecrate your heart and all its faculties to Jesus.

Make acts of faith in His presence in you: make acts of gratitude and love.

I. '*Taking Bread, He gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it to them saying: This is My Body*' (St. Luke xxii. 19).

It is God, the Truth itself that speaks: He can neither deceive nor be deceived.

God speaks in order to produce an incomprehensible mystery, and to confer the benefits of it upon me.

God speaks with the intention of being believed. And my heart tells me, as plainly as my faith, that the word of Jesus is true.

It is an Almighty God who works according to His Word with an invincible power. No sooner has He said, 'This is My Body,' than the most astonishing prodigy takes place, the substance of bread no longer exists!

Jesus, God and Man, has taken its place. Hidden under these appearances, He receives the homage of the Court of heaven, which beholds Him in a state of humiliation, lower even than at the Incarnation.

In the consecrated Bread that Jesus offered to His Apostles, He enclosed all the Hosts that should be consecrated unto the end of the world, and He beheld all those persons who should hereafter receive them, congregated around His Sacred Table. He consented, by the Communions which He grants to me, to suffer me to possess Him almost as often as I *can* possess Him in this world!

This was the only time that the Apostles communicated in the virginal and mortal Flesh of Jesus.

Since that time they, like us, communicated in His glorious Body, which bore the imperishable traces of the conflict He endured. Was it not because, as in the world we desire to make known the *value* of our gifts, so Jesus desires to make us feel the infinite value of the gift which He confers upon us in the Holy Eucharist?

Was it not a most touching manner of telling me that if I receive into my heart His Sacred Body, impressed with the marks of many sorrows, it is fitting that the life should be sorrowful which He so often honours with His presence?

Does it not also seem to tell me that He will never despise or undervalue those sacrifices which He permits me to offer Him from day to day. He examines them in their minutest details, and He will be content, provided that henceforth every instant of my life shall bear the double consecration of love and self-devotion. In placing all the sacrifices that I have ever made on a level with one Communion, can I think that Jesus asks too much?

O my Lord and my God, I adore and love Thee! I can only in these words express the feelings which fill my heart! Since Thou hast instituted the Holy Eucharist in order to be more beloved on earth, give me grace to love Thee perfectly. Having in Thine own Person given me all Thou canst bestow, what canst Thou think of me when I grant Thy demands unwillingly, or with bad grace? So many thousands of Thy saints have been devoted to Thee in their lives, and even unto death: so many thousands of Thy martyrs have died to show their fidelity unto Thee, and I find it difficult to offer Thee some slight sacrifice. That my love may be rendered a true sign of gratitude, give me grace never to forget that I am the object of a love so great that it has well deserved that we should refuse it nothing.

II. '*Do this in remembrance of Me*' (St. Luke xxii. 19).

The institution of the Holy Eucharist was the last and most solemn expression of the love of Jesus for us. An earthly father, by his last will, can transmit his *possessions* only to his children: but by the Holy Eucharist Jesus perpetuates His presence here below. A testament has no value until after the death of the testator. Jesus died to save us, and lives again to nourish our souls with Himself: to perpetuate His life in us. The Holy Eucharist is the most precious legacy that the Heart of Jesus could possibly leave us. Every person who communicates receives in a manner an extension of the Incarnation: the presence of Jesus Christ subsists in him so long as the sacred species remain. Let us receive Holy Communion, in which the personal application of the benefits of Redemption is made to our souls, with such reverence and love as well-nurtured children would accept the testimony of their father.

I *know* now at what a price my Communion was purchased: at the price of the life of Jesus! I *see* that the Holy Eucharist is indeed a testament of love executed at the hour which was to be that of an awakening unto life for us. How rich a legacy has Jesus left to me, since He especially destined for me a great number of Communions. This magnificent legacy, the double memorial of His love and death, so simply offered, must it not impress strongly upon my mind, that I cannot always *receive*, without *giving* also?

Should I not rejoice to offer some little thing to our Lord, and shall it not be the very thing which costs me most?

Lord Jesus, give me grace to be generous: I deliver unto Thee my soul with all its faculties, I dedicate my whole being to Thy service. This deed

is that of my divorce from this world. I constitute myself Thy property, as Thou dost become mine. Transform me into Thyself. Suffer nothing unworthy of this consecration to remain in me. I desire ardently that my prayer may be heard, and that Thou shouldst grant me to do all my actions for Thy glory.

III. '*Now is the Son of Man glorified!*'

This word 'now' which was pronounced with satisfaction by our Lord, as he looked upon His Apostles who had just communicated, ought to make me reflect deeply: for it refers to the glory that Jesus received by the Holy Eucharist, in which for the first time He was received and adored.

All the glory given to Jesus, by the adoration of the Magi, by the voice of God the Father at His Baptism in the Jordan, and at His Transfiguration on Mount Thabor, by the confession of His Divinity, by the acclamations of the multitudes who saw His miracles and marvelled at them, all faded from His eyes before the first homage rendered to His mystical Body. Is not then the glory which we give to Jesus in the Sacrament of His love, dearer than any other to His Heart?

At that moment, our Lord, to whom the future like the past is but one eternal *Now*, beheld me seated at the Sacred Banquet, and said, perceiving my Communions, 'Now I am glorified in her!' And as I communicate frequently, oh, how should I appreciate the grace of being able to glorify Jesus Christ as He delights to be glorified! My daily sufferings, which serve to purify me from my daily imperfections, permit me to take away as little as possible from the glory that Jesus desires to receive in my heart.

O Jesus, grant me this favour, that in this Com-

munion, and in all other Communions I may hereafter make, Thou mayest be able to regard me with consolation: to take pleasure in my soul purified by repentance and tried by sorrow: to take pleasure in my soul, filled with an ardent desire to glorify Thee. Now do I begin to appreciate all those things that can enable me to cause Thee some little satisfaction. There are so many souls that Thou canst regard only with sorrow! O Jesus, *now* I love Thee: *now* I desire to glorify Thee: *now* I am willing to suffer that I may please Thee. In every hour that shall be marked by sorrow, cause me to rejoice Thy Heart by my patience, my resignation, and my love.

IV. '*Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him*' (St. John xiii. 31).

Our Lord always glorifies His Father; not a single instant passes in which His Holy Humanity does not give the highest possible degree of glory to God. We may infer from this that the Holy Eucharist, in which our Lord multiplies His presence in so many different places, increases the glory that He gives to His Father. And as God never for one moment ceases to receive this glory from the humiliation of His Son, we ought not to cease one moment from uniting ourselves to Him, by the act of thanksgiving, and by the practice of humility. In the Holy Eucharist Jesus chose *the lowest place*, in humility and humiliation, absolute silence, total powerlessness, deepest darkness, excessive abjection from the inconveniences of the places in which the Sacred Hosts are contained.

He exposes Himself to incessant profanations, in the hearts of men and in the ciboriums. How often are the Hosts left negligently to become corrupt! How many pieces are lost and trampled under foot! By means of sacrileges, He is delivered over to the

devil, which is the *lowest degradation of all.* And Jesus shrinks not from outrages such as this, that He may draw nigh to me. The glory that He receives from one fervent Communion gives Him more pleasure than all the mouths of His enemies give Him pain.

Ah, if sure of my love and my fervour I were able to say: By this Communion I have glorified our Lord, and He glorifies His Father in me. Oh, then, what happiness would be mine! But as it is impossible for me to attain to such a certainty as this, I must at least strive to be able to testify to myself that after I have approached the Holy Table, I have sincerely endeavoured to practise humility, and that I seek to take no precedence of others, but endeavour really to render glory to Jesus by the effacement of myself.

O my Divine Master, since I have the happiness of being so frequently united to Thee, I implore Thy grace to enable me to glorify Thee more and more. Cause me to see that humility, that most striking peculiarity of Thy Eucharistic life, is perfectly indispensable to me if I desire to glorify Thee in a state which is so dear to Thy Heart. Receive from me that glory that Thou desirest from my feelings and my works. I accept the humiliation which Thou partakest with me. When sorrow or trouble of any kind assail me, I will say, It is *now* that I glorify Thee, O my God. May my whole being glorify Thee. Receive my sufferings as I have received Thy Sacred Body, and deign to accept them as a faithful act of thanksgiving.

V. '*Know you what I have done unto you?*'

Jesus demanded of the Apostles whether they understood the mystery of His humility. But to me the question bears another meaning. Our Lord asks me whether I understand the excess of love which

caused Him to give me His Body, immolated upon the Altar. It is as if He said to me, Reflect upon this Divine secret that eternity will not suffice to reveal to you. Think deeply of My devotion, dictated by the desire which consumes My Heart to unite you to Myself.

This marvellous operation of the Holy Sacrifice, ought to imprint in my mind a high esteem of the grace of being present at it: and Holy Communion ought to penetrate me with a profound remembrance of the Passion of Jesus Christ, with great gratitude for His love. But I remain there without thinking of all this! And my thanksgiving is sometimes ended with as little fervour as it was begun! I ought not to oblige Jesus to remind me of so great a benefit. My mind is easily distracted, but I will carefully avoid every cause of dissipation, and I will entreat Him to pardon the lightness of my imagination, and the wandering of my thoughts.

Lord Jesus, I know very imperfectly all that Thou hast done for me in this Communion: for my mind cannot conceive an infinite gift. But I know that Thou art come to me with Thy Body, Thy Blood, Thy Soul, and Thy Divinity. I know that Thou hast given me Thy Heart which has so loved me, and which consumes Itself even to exhaustion to manifest to me its love. I know that Thou hast given me all that I can desire in heaven or on earth. I thank Thee for these Divine gifts. I thank Thee above all for having chosen me to receive them; and because my heart cannot fully conceive them, I present to God Thine own Heart, as my act of thanksgiving, and as the only gift worthy of the blessings which Thou hast granted me.

O Jesus, grant that I may love Thee, it is the grace that I prefer to every other grace; and grant that I may persevere in Thy love unto death.

VI. *The silence of the Apostles.*

The Gospel does not tell us that the Apostles uttered any word of thanks to Jesus, after they had received Holy Communion: they were doubtless overwhelmed with astonishment, and their joy could find no outlet. When our Lord makes His presence felt, it fills all things without and within. But in order to rejoice in the Lord to such a degree as this, it is necessary that the soul and heart should be *in silence.*

I have sometimes regretted that I was not present at the Last Supper: that I did not hear the ineffable words of Jesus Christ, that I did not receive Communion from His hands, that I could not hear His farewell discourse. But at that time I did not communicate often; I did not yet comprehend all that the Holy Communion is to my life.

I come to the Holy Table with other Christians, but instead of being the prelude to a separation, each successive Communion draws more closely my bonds of intimacy with Jesus. Each succeeding day and hour, instead of bringing nearer the time of our separation, hastens the hour of my return to the Holy Table, and of the eternal Communion in heaven.

O my Jesus, my heart, alas! is cold, it retains Thee not. Nay, it sometimes grows weary of remaining in Thy presence. If a sudden thought comes into my mind, or affects any of my feelings, I experience a secret impatience, and desire to quit Thee. I almost forget Thy presence, in my haste to run where my desires would lead me. May the humiliation of this avowal be equivalent to an act of love! Receive the most humble feelings of my heart: I shall never know how to express or even to feel them sufficiently.

Enter, O Jesus, enter always more profoundly into this heart which Thou hast waited for so long: which has so long resisted Thee: which has so long lived

near Thee without living by Thee: and which on this day instead of meeting Thy vengeance for so great ingratitude, finds in Thy Heart a kindness and love which overwhelm it with confusion and gratitude. Dwell Thou in my heart, at the price of every sacrifice. Ah, how ungrateful should I be to fear the sacrifices which Thou imposest only to show Thy greater love to me!

Conclusion.

Our Lord has caused the Holy Eucharist to be the memorial of His death, though now He enjoys the fulness of life and glory; and He has given us in Holy Communion an exquisite image of the death of a Christian: we go full of joy to the Holy Table to obtain strength to undergo the providential course of our daily life and labours: but a day will come when we shall say for the last time, *Lætantes imus.* Then we shall no more ask for the Sacred Bread to strengthen us in time of sorrow and toil, but we shall go to taste the plenitude of joy in heaven.

TWENTY-SIXTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS TO ST. PETER.

(St. John xx.)

Preparation.

Listen to the words of the disciples who were assembled in the upper chamber: 'The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.' Meditate upon them, together with the circumstances which surround that short recital in the Gospel: you will learn to comprehend the conduct of our Lord towards sinners, and perhaps to appreciate more fully His love and tenderness to yourself.

I. '*Jesus of Nazareth is risen from the dead: tell His disciples and Peter that he goeth before you.*'

An angel informs two women, who tremble and are afraid at his aspect, of the glorious truth of the resurrection. These women were the humble messengers of that great event to the chosen few who were to publish it throughout the universe. The weak Peter is pointed out particularly. Does not this show that his crime was already buried in the sepulchre of Jesus Christ? The remembrance of it is effaced from His memory, as from His Heart. What delicate considerate affection! Peter, by the special mention of his name is re-assured, and preserved from the anxiety into which the sudden appearance of the Saviour might have thrown him, had he still feared that his fault was unforgiven. This is a fresh proof of the tender charity of Jesus.

Am I not of the number of those souls whom our Lord has often regarded, warned and comforted by His ministers, and drawn more especially to Himself by weariness of the world, and strong attraction to Holy Communion? If I have received so many graces, what influence have they had over my life?

Lord Jesus, 'Thy glorious resurrection has buried all the insults offered Thee upon Calvary,' as my sins are buried in Thy Blood: can I, without hating sin, love justice, and encourage myself by the contemplation of eternal glory obtained through Thy sufferings? Trace, I pray Thee, in my heart those words which Thou didst engrave in the heart of St. Mechtilde: 'I would far rather die, than place myself at a distance from Thee by the commission of the very smallest sin.'

II. '*Peter went out with that other disciple, and they came to the sepulchre.*'

At the voice of certain women, who were uttering the most wonderful and marvellous statements,

Peter rose up in haste, impelled by his loving heart which the name of Jesus filled with agitation and longing.

It was by a special providence of God, observes St. Peter Chrysologus, that a woman received from the angel this mission, in which she may find a peculiar lesson of humility, fervour and penitence. For it was just that *woman* should feel a more peculiar and lively grief at the death of our Lord, because woman was the cause of the terrible fall of the whole human race in Adam. She was the first to visit the sacred tomb where death, first brought on earth by her fault, was now enchained.

God intrusted to woman, who introduced death into the world, a message of life; as a warning to preserve faithfully the germ of spiritual life implanted in our souls by baptism.

The two Apostles who went out together should instruct us to make all our outward occupations subservient to the glory of God, and to sanctify by a pious object or intention all our employments and relaxations.

As your soul so often repairs to slake its thirst at the spiritual fountains of supernatural life, let that life be developed in you daily, in your house and family. Without changing the outward course of your life, animate it throughout with the spirit of Christ: you may obtain this spirit by intercourse with Him at the Altar. Turn your thoughts and your steps towards His sepulchre of love. Kneeling before the Tabernacle you will find repose of conscience, and strength for self-sacrifice.

O Jesus, I will apply these reflections to myself with redoubled attention, as I fulfil those duties which Thou hast given me to do. I will endeavour to exercise a good influence in the world by my deeds rather than by my words. As I frequently receive

Thy adorable Body, may I bear about with me everywhere that healing element of life!

If the timidity of my efforts to do good shows that my courage is small, yet may my desires prepare me to unite myself to Thee, and may my ardent prayer cause Thy love to be awakened in many souls!

III. '*The other disciple ran faster than Peter, and came first to the sepulchre.*'

This holy emulation between the two disciples, ought to incite us to profit by every occasion of practising virtue, and increasing our love to Jesus, by honouring Him in His Person or His members: and we should do this more especially before Holy Communion, for fear of losing by some slight negligence the precious means of sanctification.

The virgin Apostle, the beloved disciple of Jesus, was the most agile of the two. Purity and love are the wings of the soul. 'He that loves,' says the *Imitation*, 'runs, flies: he is free, nothing arrests his progress. No apparent impossibility serves him for an excuse: fatigue does not seem to weary him,' because courage supplies him with fresh strength. A special grace always seems to preside over such souls as are upright and direct in seeking the will of God, or in striving after holiness. It is a free attraction, unknown in its beginning, rapid in its flight, ardent, devoted, moved by love, and is often the privilege of souls who by Divine Providence have been rescued from some great peril, or from the depths of sin and misery.

St. Peter, confused, and still disturbed in mind, walked with less rapidity. It is not astonishing that our sins and infirmities should leave us afflicted with incredible weakness. We commit many faults through temerity or imprudence, rather than because we are really unable to prevent them. In the course of one

day even, how many of our actions and prayers are done without an upright will, in defiance of the warnings of our conscience, or under the influence of doubts and hesitations which we unnecessarily prolong. Duties performed in this half-hearted manner, retard our progress in the spiritual life, more especially if our hearts, when wearied with the combat, do not seek strength and refreshment at the Holy Table. At the feet of Jesus, we may always *love* and *regret.*

Come Lord, I beseech Thee, come to be the principle of activity in my heart, and govern by Thy love, my life and all its actions, as completely as Thou dost govern Thy Sacred Humanity.

IV. '*And stooping, he saw the linen cloths upon the ground, and yet he entered not in.*'

Follow each one of these words with care, they contain a pious signification.

John 'was stooping,' because humility is the inseparable companion of purity and love. If you follow the path of perfection under the guidance of these virtues, your advance will be rapid and sure. If you seek Jesus Christ with humility, you will find Him in the Tabernacle, and in heaven, which is the object and end of all the aspirations of a Christian.

'He saw the linen cloths lying on the ground.' Jesus, before discovering *Himself* to His Apostles, permitted them to find the objects which had been placed with Him in the tomb, in order to join to the glory of His resurrection the remembrance of His Passion; thus teaching us by joy mingled with bitterness, that hope will support us while suffering detaches us from earthly things. In proportion as we acquire more purity, so much more will the divine light, shining upon all the dark places of our conscience, enable us to correct our defects and imperfec-

tions, which like winding-sheets on the body, render the soul *immovable* in goodness.

Be not surprised if you *suffer* during your Communions, that great happiness is not always without its thorns. Our Lord permits it to be thus, because He impresses His greatest graces with the seal of our exile.

St. John, out of humility, did not enter into the sepulchre, until Peter, chief of the Apostles, had entered, and become the witness of the marvellous resurrection of their beloved Master. 'To do good always, and to think little of ourselves, such is the mark of a humble mind,' says the *Imitation.* How many things are contained in this short sentence? Make use of thoughts suggested by it, for your preparation.

Lord Jesus, the thought of Thy triumph over death dries my tears, increases my hopes. I complain no more of the evils that I have suffered in the past. I fear no longer the trials that may come upon me in the future, happy in being permitted to consecrate to Thee my love, and my life.

V. '*Peter coming after him, entered into the sepulchre, and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground.*'

Guided by repentance and humility, virtues most strengthening to faith, Peter, moved by grace, to which he yielded a ready obedience, arrived, and entered the sepulchre. Other graces awaited him there, to complete the work of his conversion. After I have committed some faults, when light begins to arise in my soul, if I were not afraid to approach Jesus and to weep near Him, my repentance would be less bitter, and my fears would be dissipated more quickly. But instead of yielding meekly to the first impulse of grace, I fear to meet the eye of Jesus, and I con-

centrate my feelings in myself. My mind, shut up in this obscure retreat, becomes a prey to trouble and anxiety. Peace does not return until I seek it near the Tabernacle. I know this by experience.

Then Peter 'saw the linen cloths upon the ground.' This discovery was the prelude to a heavenly manifestation. But, by an ineffable miracle, the Eucharistic veils are never separated from the Body of Jesus Christ. Every day before those sacramental veils, I am a witness of the love which retains Jesus in the Tabernacle, having no longer need to bear witness to the power which raised Him out of the sepulchre.

See also how many people at the present day enter the church without perceiving in the Sacred Host anything more than a winding-sheet. Jesus Christ is invisible to the eyes of their soul. Before His death He suffered Himself to be seen without distinction by all men, and conversed with all. 'After His resurrection He appeared only to His friends,' says St. Augustine: 'no wicked person saw Jesus risen from the dead.' We may also say that the indifferent eye does not see Him in the Holy Eucharist. To you, He is revealed; you see the linen cloths; you touch the Body of Jesus Christ. He disappeared from the sepulchre, leaving but a piece of linen cloth behind Him; in your heart the veils disappear, leaving you the presence of Jesus Christ with all its graces. Although 'raised above the purest intelligences, He never forgets one of the least of His creatures,' says St. Leo. Let thoughts like these excite your gratitude and love.

O Jesus, how much do I wish to forget the whole universe when I am in the church, and to enjoy Thy presence without any distractions! Nothing in the things which I leave behind can in any way be compared to Thee; nothing then should have power to

turn away my thoughts from the happiness of adoring Thee, and by Thy grace of *feeling* that I love Thee. In the Holy Eucharist Thy love causes Thee to descend lower than us: Thy goodness is made manifest in giving Thyself to me; Thy power is signally displayed in attaching me to Thee. May my fidelity raise me to the heights of Thy love, where Thy love summons me. Take me away from all that detains me in captivity away from Thee, and do violence to my liberty, if it refuses to yield a ready obedience to Thy will.

VI. '*Then the other disciple, who came first to the sepulchre, entered in, and he saw, and believed.*'

As long as St. John remained outside the sepulchre, his faith continued doubtful. A proof that it is not sufficient to live in the constant practice of every virtue, nor to adore Jesus *before* the Tabernacle, but that we must vivify all our spiritual graces by Holy Communion. 'At all times, and in all circumstances,' says the *Imitation*, 'go continually to the Tabernacle. You will sometimes receive a Divine answer to your queries, and you will be instructed concerning many things both present and future.'

St. John was even then the *beloved* Apostle, and yet what imperfection we may observe in his disposition. He loved our Lord with a natural love, without sufficient faith in His Divinity. He was sorrowful because of His absence, but his sorrow was not exempt from egotism. 'He loved,' says St. Bernard, 'with tenderness, rather than with discretion and prudence, because he was too much attached to the visible presence of Jesus.' Should not our hearts, purified by the trial of our faith, love our Lord with disinterested affection here below, before we come to behold His glory in heaven?

My present feelings have some resemblance to those

of the Apostle. I desire to communicate, perhaps from a sensible attraction to Jesus Christ, without generosity in His service, forgetting St. Bernard's advice: 'If you give not that which you love, you will not have that which you desire.' Which is as much as to say, that unless I am faithful to the inspirations of grace, I shall not enjoy the gifts which God bestows in Holy Communion upon pious and detached souls.

The Apostle saw the linen cloths upon the ground, and believed in the divinity of Him who had been enveloped in them. Enlightened by faith, I contemplate with profound respect, the species which conceal from me the face of our Lord. I do not perceive at the Altar a winding sheet marked with blood from the torments of the Cross, but I shall receive the Sacred Body that suffered those torments, still bearing the marks of those glorious wounds. I shall receive His Blood, and He will apply its virtue to my soul. Will He not bestow His Sacred Body upon me with a special preference over many others whom He has not regarded so mercifully? I fear to receive with coldness a favour so precious, and I will ask Mary to obtain for me the gift of great fervour.

O Jesus, come to me although I have sinned against Thee, for I repent of my sins, and I love Thee more than all things beside. Give me grace never more to infringe upon that absolute right of Thine, to be preferred far before every created thing. But also suffer me not to be discouraged when Thou shalt see fit to withhold those ineffable privileges which are granted to pious souls. May Thy tender love preserve me from all evil, and may I strive, by the help of Thy grace, to prove the sincerity of my resolution to serve Thee faithfully.

Act of Thanksgiving.

After receiving Holy Communion, annihilate yourself, and glorify our Lord by fervent acts of adoration.

You have a just right to exclaim at this most happy moment, 'That which is in me, comes not from myself, but from heaven.'

Heaven is in you with Jesus Christ! Communion *is the commencement of the celestial life.* Entreat our Lord to impart some of the dispositions and feelings of His Heart, to your soul.

I. '*The Lord is risen indeed.*'

What joy is yours at this moment, when you not only possess the Person of Jesus Christ, but remain united to Him by sacramental grace! The death of Jesus is represented in every Mass, as every Communion represents His Resurrection in us, who continue His life upon earth. And I may venture to say, in the words of a pious author: 'Each day of Communion is most truly a day of light, which gives us that living Love, who immolated Himself for love;' a day in which our Lord comes to us resplendent with glory, as when He first issued from the tomb.

Rejoice then, because you receive in each Communion a special right to a glorious resurrection, which right is founded upon the solemn promise of Jesus Christ. 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood *hath* eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' What consolation is contained in each one of these words! Jesus Christ does not say, He that communicates *shall have* eternal life, but He says that he *has* it. *Jesus Himself* brings him this life and maintains it in him by His grace. No power in heaven, on earth, or in hell, can deprive you of this life. Nothing but mortal sin can do it.

St. John Chrysostom tells us that special angels

are appointed to watch over the bodies of those who communicate frequently, because of the reverence due to them for their contact with the Divine Flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our Lord does not associate our bodies with His glorious qualities in Holy Communion, because even if our weakness dared to wish for His immortality and impassibility, our faith reveals that it will be more for our happiness to continue some time longer in a state of suffering here below, in which we can offer voluntarily the sacrifice of our lives to God. O my Jesus, these thoughts bring into view a small part of the goodness of Thy Heart, and increase my desire to be perfectly united to Thee. Death has no more terrors for me; it becomes rather an object of hope than fear. For in giving us in Thy Sacred Body the Viaticum of our pilgrimage, Thou dost bring us to immortality by means of the very obstacle which separates us from it. I will no more ask to be set free from suffering; for, of all the riches in heaven and earth, I ask only for Thy Sacred Body: may It render me invulnerable to the darts of sin, agile and prompt in the practice of every virtue, docile and courageous in my obedience, unchangeable in my love, and ever faithful to the bonds that attach me to Thee.

II. '*He appeared unto Simon.*'

We know not the time or the place of this Divine apparition; but how great was the love and tenderness which our Lord displayed in His solitary appearance to His repentant Apostle. Remaining apart from the other disciples ever since that wondrous look of pity had been cast upon him by Jesus, which had called forth such bitter tears from his repentant heart, Peter had considered and comprehended the fatal effect of his weakness in denying his Lord. His heart, faithless for a moment, afterwards overwhelmed with regret,

was inconsolable until it could pour forth its deep repentance at the feet of our Lord. Ah! God is never far from the repentant sinner, and though He condemns the sin, He pardons the offender.

Jesus appeared! And on this occasion He looked upon Peter with unmingled clemency and love. He received the sincere confession of his fault, and suffered him to enjoy to the fullest extent the consolation of repentance and the blessedness of pardon. He knew that Peter's sincere love for Him would in time efface that fear of God which the soul involuntarily experiences after the commission of sin, and suffered not a bitter remembrance to disturb the general joy at His Resurrection.

Our Blessed Saviour treats me with equal tenderness, nevertheless my memory is burdened with painful recollections. I have been faithless like Peter, and if my weaknesses have not been as criminal as his, what slavery have I not undergone from self-indulgence and human respect! In days to come I shall blush when my subserviency to human opinion and my tendency to self-indulgence are made known to angels and to men.

This state of imperfection, so distressing in a soul that loves Jesus Christ, disguises no truth from the mind, nor does it diminish any suffering of the heart. It is sometimes sufficiently recent to be easily shaken off, and it presents enough attractions to weak and light-minded people to induce them to desire to remain under its dominion. Do not these sacrifices which seem to us so great, appear small indeed when viewed under the shadow of the Cross? Is it not deplorably foolish to destroy our peace, or to arrest our advancement, for the sake of miserable trifles that one act of courage and generosity would destroy? Fear not to confess them all to Jesus, they will be consumed by one spark of the fire of His love.

Jesus appeared to Peter before the other Apostles, to teach us that spiritual authority is the source of light. I will listen to my director with respect. I will receive his words with faith and simplicity, like the Apostles who believed in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ upon the affirmation of Peter, deferring in this manner to the authority constituted by their Divine Master.

O Jesus, triumphant in heaven and upon earth, I beseech Thee to triumph over sin in me, and to give to that happy victory the stability of Thine. Grant that having sought it by penitence, and afterwards pursued it still more earnestly in Holy Communion, I may gain it completely, and may Thy grace inspire me with such courage that, like St. Paul, I may venture to declare that neither life nor death nor tribulation nor persecution shall ever separate me from Thee.

III. *The conversation of Jesus risen, with Peter.*

No human tongue could repeat that conversation: the Evangelist does not attempt to do so. Jesus Christ takes delight in enveloping the secrets of His mercy and love with a veil impenetrable to the eye of human curiosity. He alone knows these precious secrets who is the happy object of them. Before the Tabernacles, where the love of Jesus is revealed, how many souls are ignorant of them, because they love Him but little. Between their heart and that of Jesus, an interval exists which their gratitude and fidelity, nay, not even their repentance, could fill.

St. Bernard assures us, that by this apparition Jesus intended to dry the tears of His dear disciple, who grieved so deeply for his recent fault. If my sins are numerous, I may hope that grace will be *excessive;* for what love is displayed in our Lord's eagerness to come to the consolation of the Apostle who had wounded His feelings so cruelly! What tenderness

in His silence respecting the past! What sweetness in His words! What confidence relieved the Apostle's afflicted heart!

In Holy Communion our Lord has accustomed me to hear Him question me respecting my thoughts, studies, enjoyments, and griefs, as well as respecting my faults, and nothing does me so much good as this opening of my heart to Him. The degree of our confidence in Him is in His eyes the measure of our love.

Lord Jesus, Thou art all my joy! Nothing is more delicious to my soul than the remembrance of Thy mercies; but when I draw near Thee and enjoy Thy marvellous sweetness, then I can no longer find words in which to express my gratitude.

IV. *Peter repentant at the feet of Jesus*

What love to Jesus the Apostle must have expressed! How he must have prostrated himself at the feet of his Lord, kissed them humbly, entreated his Master to forget the past! What fidelity did he not resolve in his heart and vow with his lips, to make amends for the wound which his fault had inflicted upon the tender spirit of his beloved Master! What delight did not Jesus feel in listening to those burning words! Ah! what pleasure does a fervent reparation give to God; how it rehabilitates us in His eyes, and how Jesus loves to see us make such a reparation at the Holy Table!

Repeat to our Lord how much you love Him, and regret your offences towards Him; for our acts of injustice, even when invisible to man, do not fail to wound His Heart. In fact, those which are least apparent are often those which grieve Him most deeply. Leave your bitter recollections and your troubles on the edge of the wound in the Heart of Jesus, and without suffering them to follow you there, shut yourself up in that abyss of love, to forget and

forgive all the wounds that have been inflicted upon the tenderest and most elevated feelings of your heart. The love of Jesus has marked this day; let your gratitude perpetuate the memory of it by acts of generosity. In the beginning of our conversion Jesus only asks us for few and small sacrifices, because our love is still weak. But now that He *knows* that you love Him, He asks much from you, that His union with you may be perpetuated from the Holy Table to the Cross.

In the weak, faithless Peter, I behold myself. In Peter favourably received and pardoned, I see myself again at the tribunal of penance. In Peter happy by the side of Jesus—ah! there I behold the happiness which I now enjoy. May I show the sincerity of my repentance by the perseverance of my fidelity!

O God, Thou hast pitied my troubles, my doubts, my fears, and my sins, and my heart is consoled by Thy tender regard of love. I cast myself at Thy feet; receive my tears, deign to inspire me with fear of sin and strength to turn away from it always. May Thy love henceforward be the rampart and bulwark between my soul and the temptations of the world!

V. *The consequences of reconciliation.*

The sweetest joys are reserved for pure and penitent hearts during the act of thanksgiving after Communion. Enjoy them freely.

If human friendship is so sweet to men, though contracted between beings so full of mutual imperfections, what a rich heritage of happiness must not the friendship of our Lord Jesus Christ bestow upon the soul! If in this life the joy of His secret presence appears even now complete, what will it be in heaven? Meditate deeply upon this sweet thought, and let it rejoice your soul.

It is a great science to know how to converse with Jesus, and a great prudence to retain Him in the

heart. Since our Lord has given us, in His multiplied graces, the assurance of an imperishable love, ask Him to permit you never to withdraw from His operation; let each Communion add a greater idea of His goodness to your mind and a new feeling of love to your heart. The impression of His presence should mingle with every feeling, impulse, and action of your life. Be persuaded that perseverance is the mainspring of the holiest joys the soul can ever enjoy. If you do not persevere unto death in that combat which is the law of the life of a Christian, you will quickly lose the peace and joy of Holy Communion. 'Jesus could not have conquered unless He had first fought the battle,' said St. Augustine, 'and unless He had fought He would not have received the crown of glory.'

O Jesus, the more my faith exalts Thee in mine eyes, the less does the admiration and adoration of Thy greatness suffice to fill and satisfy my heart. It feels its own unworthiness of Thy love, without ceasing to aspire to it. It ardently desires what my conscience accepts with trembling. But as Holy Communion cannot always be deserved by us, how great soever our efforts may be, I will give everything in the world to obtain it, no sacrifice will seem too great to attain an end so desired.

Conclusion.

The glance of Jesus penetrated the soul of Peter with powerful grace after his sin, and that grace was the beginning of his repentance. Afterwards it increased, and developed greatly by his fidelity in penitence, his generosity, and his zeal, which finally received the crown of martyrdom.

What wonderful effects should be produced in our souls, not only by the simple glance of Jesus, but by His Person Itself, united to our being in Holy Communion! Therefore, since God Himself will be our

reward in heaven, and Jesus Christ gives Himself to us upon earth to encourage us to obtain that reward, let us multiply our Communions, so that Communion may multiply our acts of love; and our love, growing by successive degrees, may raise our lives, sanctified by His continual graces, to the throne of God Himself in heaven.

TWENTY-SEVENTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE DISCIPLES AT EMMAUS.

(St. Luke xxiv.)

Preparation.

In this admirable scene Jesus interrogates, consoles, and instructs two disciples who are saddened and discouraged at His death; but He makes Himself known to them only at the breaking of bread. They then arose, filled with courage, to return to that place of trial from which they had but just fled.

It is the same with us: it is the Holy Eucharist that gives us strength to suffer, help to endure sorrow and trial, and enables us to embrace the asperities of duty and of the law of self-mortification.

I. '*Two disciples were going to Emmaus, and talked together of all those things that had happened.*'

Like these two disciples who spoke of Jesus with sadness unmingled with hope, so do men, sad pilgrims of life, journey from earth to heaven, striving in vain to console themselves in their secret troubles. It is from the greatest ignorance that they seek the vague, ephemeral consolations of the world, which, far from

relieving the sorrowful mind, leave it still more empty, more oppressed than before.

I have been but too well disposed to seek from creatures some consolation in my trials; but it was all in vain, and did but serve to render them still more bitter and their weight more overwhelming. I therefore feel an infinite need of confiding to our Lord *all that has happened* since my last Communion, and I can nowhere do this better than at the Holy Table, heart to Heart, and alone with Him.

O my Jesus, what sorrows my heart has experienced, what secret troubles, pains, and weariness! I lay them all down at Thy feet. But also how many have been my faults, by which I have caused Thee no less sorrow and pain than I have experienced myself. If I suffer so much from created beings and from the course of events, yet I must still acknowledge that it is only just that I should suffer, because I sin, and thereby cause suffering to Thee.

Pardon, O my God, I beseech Thee! Thou art rich in mercy, wash away my sins from before Thine eyes. As for me, I shall neither forget my sins nor Thine indulgent kindness. And when I rejoice in the purity which that kindness has restored to me, I will endeavour never more to commit any fault which shall be the occasion of my losing it. Grant me, Lord Jesus, a great devotion to Thy holy Passion; when I consider my redemption by Thy sufferings, I should be ungrateful indeed, were I not to recall often to my memory with the deepest gratitude the price which Thou hast paid to purchase for me the right of approaching the Holy Table. Increase my devotion towards Thy Precious Blood, pour upon my soul the adorable Blood that animates Thy Divine Heart, and cause it to purify, before it nourishes my soul unto eternal life.

II. '*Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.*'

Jesus Christ began on the very day of His Resurrection to accomplish His promise of being amongst those who should meet together in His Name. He heard two of His disciples speaking to each other of His sufferings, and expressing, together with a feeble hope in the accomplishment of the prophecies, a no less feeble love; and He immediately joins them. But the Evangelist points out that the disciples did not recognize Jesus Christ. Ah! how much we ought to fear, in communicating, lest Jesus should not discover Himself to our souls, nor make them feel His goodness and mercy! Therefore let us take particular care to disengage our understandings from those worldly ideas which may obscure them, and our hearts from all thoughts and feelings which are foreign to the Holy Eucharist.

To walk in the company of Jesus, as did these two disciples, is the special privilege of the Christian who keeps himself continually in the presence of God, and meets Him more particularly in the sacred temples under the sacramental veils. Have I considered the facilities which are offered to me to accomplish my pilgrimage in the company of Jesus? Although in every place the creatures of His hand display their magnificence before me, yet I prefer to them all the least of the Tabernacles where He hides His beauty.

I cannot habitually find thoughts in my mind, or feelings in my heart, which are worthy of the Divine Majesty, nor can I, like St. Francis of Assisi, borrow from creatures their praises of the great Creator's beauty and love; but I will endeavour to borrow the voice of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, to render glory to God for that greatest of all His gifts, which He is now about to bestow upon me.

Must I then, Lord Jesus, invite inanimate creatures

to express to Thee my gratitude for the blessings of the faith, my ardent desire to receive Thee, to bear Thee everywhere with me, to remain near Thee without going elsewhere to seek for what the world can never give? Soon Thou wilt approach still nearer to Thy little creature than Thou dost unceasingly do by Thy grace; but shed upon me from Thy Heart the love which I entreat Thee to bestow upon me, and which I desire to express to Thee in each instant of my life. If I have not the happiness of seeing Thee, yet I shall receive Thee, and I beseech Thee to accompany me wherever I go. If Thou art silent, deign to listen unto me. I am not afraid that Thou wilt grow weary of hearing my humble prayer.

III. '*What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk and are sad?*'

Could our Lord thus, at any moment question me upon the subject of my thoughts and conversations without covering me with confusion?

If I were obliged to repeat every evening to Jesus the words that I had made use of during the day, how careful should I be to leave off those little railleries, those light or indiscreet speeches, and malicious expressions in which I am apt to indulge with facility. Should I wish our Lord to discover that I was entertaining thoughts contrary to the spirit of charity, or a desire to revenge myself? Should I dare to indulge such thoughts immediately before or after Holy Communion? That which I would not say to Jesus when I actually possess Him ought not to occupy my mind at any other time, since I am always in His sight and by grace united to Him.

But how merciful of Jesus to take an interest in our sorrows, and to remark the shades of sadness on our brow as He sits upon His throne of glory. And who, alas! does not bear some sign of grief now, or will bear

it before long? This painful condition, through which we must necessarily pass upon our road to glory, is most useful for assisting us to make a devout Communion. Suffering is a prayer of our whole being—a prayer which ascends to God more freely than one which issues only from our lips. Suffering is also a sign of love impressed upon our members or faculties. Happy is he who thus bears the love of Jesus Christ engraved upon him, he becomes the object of the Divine Master's especial attention. And as I aspire to receive His Body, cicatrized with many wounds, it is just that at the time of Holy Communion my offerings and testimonies of love should be of a kind identical with His own.

O my Jesus, at this moment it is I who come to Thy feet to discourse with Thee, to show Thee my miseries, and entreat Thee to heal them. As those poor disciples were made sorrowful by Thy death, I will be more sorrowful still, knowing the part that I have had in it by my sins; but, I believe, as they ought to have done, in Thy most powerful and glorious presence in the adorable Host.

Hear me, O my Jesus. I fear to suffer, as much as I love to Communicate. I know no better how to endure sadness than grief, although it be as good a preparation as prayer, or even perhaps a better. Thy presence, so powerful in its consolation, shines brightly upon our troubles, but not without showing me the memories of Calvary. O Cross, scourges, nails, and thorns of the Passion, be present to my mind, so that I may never more dare to complain of my sufferings. I lay claim to no other resemblance than that of my crucified God. If that resemblance pervades all nature here below, it will be my eternal joy in heaven. I ask for nothing better than to bear in my members the traces of sufferings endured for the love and after the example of Jesus.

'Bruise my heart, O Jesus, that I may become Thy food as Thou Thyself art mine. Bruise my heart, if not by martyrdom, then at least by suffering. May I be like a victim, always immolated upon earth, that I may deserve to contemplate Thee in heaven.'

IV. '*Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?*'

Jesus reminds us of the necessity of suffering, in order to convince us that if suffering was indispensable to His glory, it will be so no less to ours; but that He will mingle and sweeten it with the joys of the Holy Eucharist, until we attain our eternal beatitude. Holy Communion unites in us two things which are quite incompatible in a worldly point of view; namely, joy and grief: that joy which is given by our possession of God, and that grief which is an expiation for sin, and also counterbalances some dangerous sensible satisfactions, and even those spiritual consolations which touching only the surface of our hearts, have no inherent property in our efforts after holiness.

My life affords that union of sorrow and of joy which I used formerly to suppose were incompatible with each other. I feel often in my body and in my soul unspeakable sufferings, which do not diminish the joy with which I contemplate heaven and the Sacred Host, or the joy with which I receive a sweet prelude of heaven in Holy Communion.

Suffering and joy; the double sensation of the Christian on earth: as a penitent, he expiates his own faults by sorrow: as predestined to life, he awaits eternal happiness, to which he advances nearer on each succeeding day.

Yes, O my God: *suffering*, because Thou hast Thyself suffered for me: *joy*, because after Thou hast pardoned me, Thou wilt permit me to suffer for Thee.

Suffering for me to be full of imperfections, and joy to hope that they will be destroyed by Thy love.

Suffering in my heart for the injuries done to Jesus by my sins and by the sins of all men; and joy in offering myself as a victim for the reparation of those sins.

Suffering for me, O my God, so long as I am from Thee; but joy at seeing each moment abridge my exile as it flies.

Suffering to me, my God, because I do not love Thee as I ought; but joy in feeling myself the object of Thy predilection.

Suffering from the prolongation of my life; but joy in being able by that means to augment the love with which I shall love Thee eternally.

Suffering, because I give Thee nothing; and joy, in receiving so much from Thy Heart.

Suffering, because I fear damnation; and joy, because I firmly hope for heaven.

Suffering, because I can only unite myself to Jesus by the shadows of the Eucharist; and joy, in beholding the approach of the day when I shall see Him clearly.

Suffering, from the absence of creatures; but joy, to feel that my soul, unsatisfied by Holy Communion, burns with the desire to possess Thee irrevocably and for ever.

My heart tells me, my God, that I might add further still to this long enumeration of joys as lively as my sufferings, but it suffices me to feel that by Thine infinite mercy, the life which in appearance is most full of trials, is also filled with joys which are unknown to the world. I thank Thee for offering these joys to me at the Holy Table; give me grace never more to desire or enjoy any joys but these.

V. '*The disciples constrained Jesus, saying: Abide with us, for it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent.*'

I ought, indeed, with a firmer hope than the disciples to say to Jesus, 'Abide with me.' I have conversed with Him, I have finished my prayer and my preparation, I have laid before Him my miseries, my sins, my troubles, and my wants. After so long a conversation, which has not wearied His love, I am not afraid of bringing this sweet intercourse to an end, nor have I any need to say, Abide with me, my God, I have still a long recital of my inquietudes and my desires to make to Thee. Suffer me to approach yet more closely to Thy Heart, that It may listen to me better.

And leaning towards me, Jesus says, I will remain, but come to Me.

'It is late.' Yes, perhaps it is towards the evening of my life, and my years begin to decline. But it is never late to the soul that loves in the light of grace and faith, for it always experiences the salutary and active influences of the Uncreated Light. This Light shines from the Tabernacle, and I need not fear that it will ever be obscured or disappear. The Heart of Jesus lends it a living flame, and He enlightens my soul with the same fire which burnt so brightly in the souls of the saints.

O Divine light of love, guide me always towards my Jesus. Your light grows pale in my soul when my faults have overshadowed it with dark clouds, but mercy has now dispelled them all, and I am going to receive still sweeter and more glorious rays at the Holy Table.

O Jesus, shine forth in my soul, and all things therein shall be renewed. Draw me by Thy love, and make Thy life-giving warmth to be felt in the

desolate barren land of my soul. Come, I entreat Thee, dispel my illusions, revive my fervour, attach me inseparably to Thee. O Jesus, come and abide with me.

VI. '*Jesus went in with them.*'

This house into which the disciples besought our Lord to enter was probably their own property. Blessed are they who offer an abode to Jesus, or dwell in a place which is favoured by His presence. The disciples entreated Him to abide with them, and ere long Jesus will reward their hospitality by saying to them, 'Abide in Me:' dwell in My Heart, an indestructible abode, where you shall reign eternally. In the present day men build houses to shelter themselves; but they have no dwelling place, no family hearth, where one generation succeeds another, recalling to mind the virtues which shone so illustriously in their ancestors. I have chosen my dwelling place in the Heart of Jesus, where I find a burning fire of love which has been resorted to by successive generations of saints. They have asked Jesus to be their centre of life and love; He has been so to them upon earth, and He is so in heaven to all eternity. It was in the Heart of Jesus that in the day when disenchanted with the world I fled thither for an asylum, I received my first sensible proof of the tenderness of my God. It is in that blest centre, which is enlightened by the brightness of heaven, that I have found a safe hiding place and sanctuary, and have entreated our Lord to shut me in, and never more to suffer me to wander from that sweet abode.

O Jesus, I come now to knock at the door of Thy Heart, and it has opened to me, when weary of wandering in the resorts of this world, where I found but a passing shelter, and never a home, never a table where I could give food and rest and refreshment

to my weary soul, hungering for life and happiness. Then I came to Thee and said, My God, give me back the family, the friends, the *home* that I have lost. Give me the tenderness that I have never known; grant that henceforth I may be no more a stranger and a wanderer. Oh, how sweet was my entrance into Thy Heart, O my Jesus! How sweet it is to dwell there! Hast Thou not persuaded and assured me that I am loved, and hast caused me to feel that I am destined to dwell eternally *there* where Thou hast so sweetly attracted me. Renew for me these marvels of love: call me. And when I am afraid, encourage me, urge me to come in. Keep me that I may never leave Thy Sacred Heart, for wretch that I am, although I know Thy happiness, I might be capable of losing it, or wandering away from it.

O Jesus, whom I am now going to receive, Thou art my good. I desire Thee with ardour, and I implore Thee to reply to my prayer.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore Jesus who has given Himself to you.

At this moment you are His Tabernacle. Give thanks for so great a happiness.

Every time that you receive the Body of Jesus Christ the work of your redemption is renewed in you.

Consider Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament with an ever-increasing attention. Consider Him as hanging on the Cross, and sheding upon your soul the precious Blood that you have drunk at the Table of the Lord.

I. '*While Jesus sat at table with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.*'

Jesus had hardly rejoined His disciples when, eager to give them efficacious consolation, He consecrated

the Bread in their presence, and divided it among them. By this He teaches us that the Holy Eucharist is the most excellent gift that His Heart can bestow upon us: but I am already convinced of this fact by Holy Communion. It is the most certain means of knowing Him, and of becoming penetrated with His love. The last gift bestowed upon us by Jesus in His passible and mortal Flesh was the Holy Eucharist; the first gift bestowed upon us by Jesus glorified is also the Holy Eucharist, because it contains Him all. In giving you Communion His Heart gives itself to your heart.

O happy disciples to be again communicated by the hand of Jesus. My happiness is no less great than theirs, for as Jesus Christ is the principal sacrificing Priest in the Holy Mass, so it is in His Name that the priest communicates me. Jesus gives Himself, and offers me the gift of Himself. I can well believe in His will, His desire that I should possess Him. I then enjoy a happiness which is offered and shared by Jesus.

I return to this thought, which transports me with joy: I have communicated! It says so much to my mind; it speaks so much more to my heart. I will not say, as the Apostles doubtless did: The Lord has sat down at our side, and He has given us His own Flesh. But in thinking that I possess Him, I will say: My soul is greater than the house where the disciples received their Divine Master; He soon quitted that house, but I carry Jesus away with me. My heart is His dwelling place; the very altar of His repose.

O Jesus, Thou art mine! Thy Heart and mine are united in Thine own life. It is by Thy Heart that I have been enabled to approach Thee, it is in mine that Thou dost unite Thyself to me. Is it possible, my God, that a heart so narrow, so poor as mine,

should bear so divine an impress of Thy love? I believe in Thy love, I believe in the mystery that it accomplishes in me. I adore Thy presence in me. And since it is from Thy Heart that the most excellent Sacrament which is the centre of the Church has issued, give me, I pray Thee, a heart which is able to enjoy it, and to abide in close union with it for ever.

II. '*Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.*'

We may remark two things in this place: the disciples did not recognize our Lord until they had communicated. It is then by Holy Communion that we receive the enlightenment by which alone we can know our Lord and love Him. The soul that does not frequent Holy Communion will never have more than a very imperfect and superficial knowledge of Jesus.

Ah, if at this hour my eyes were opened, and instead of the white Host deposited upon my tongue, I had beheld the infinitely great, infinitely holy and perfect God that it conceals, how greatly would my happiness have been increased! If my eyes were opened, and I beheld the Seraphim, the millions of angels prostrate around the sanctuary, offering their adorations to God, and their love to me who can but lisp mine in return, how astonished should I be at my coldness in making reparation to Jesus for the outrages which are offered to Him even in the sanctuary where He dwells. But I have seen nothing. My faith tells me that God is present, although that which my senses perceive can give no confirmation of the truth. How rare, alas, how fleeting are the moments in which Jesus reveals Himself to my heart after Communion! When He shines upon my soul, everything seems easy to me; my duties appear less heavy, my trials less overwhelming, my sufferings less agonis-

ing. Earth is no longer then a land of exile, for God permits me to find His presence there, and He promises me heaven.

'Wherever I behold my Saviour,' I will say with St. Augustine, 'His beauty delights my eyes. O Jesus, Thou art beautiful in heaven, Thou art beautiful upon earth; beautiful in the bosom of Thy Father, beautiful in the arms of Thy Mother; beautiful in the midst of miracles; beautiful no less at Thy flagellation. Whether in calling us to heaven or in triumphing over death, Thy beauty and grace are infinite. The true beauty of my Master cannot be taken away from Him. His cruel bruises have not disfigured His face: they have only made it more beautiful. Thy Wounds are my delight, O my Jesus. I kiss them tenderly. Thy love for me, in causing those Wounds to bleed afresh, has invested them with a grace, a glory which transports my inmost soul.'

III. '*He disappeared from their eyes.*'

Jesus disappeared immediately after the breaking of bread, thus teaching us that the enjoyment of His sensible presence is not necessary to our act of thanksgiving. We must even confess that this enjoyment is often, through our own fault, an obstacle to graces even far more precious than consolations. When we enjoy these, we have repose in ourselves, our sensibility is excited; but if at that moment we were to cast an inquiring glance upon our interior condition, we should soon discover that we are enjoying God for *ourselves* and not for *Him*. We rest in our present happiness instead of striving to ascend to heaven, where Jesus has returned. Spiritual consolation is, as it were, a luminous trace that He has left of His presence, but it is not *Him;* and it is *Him* that we ought to love and to enjoy according to His will. 'No one recognizes Jesus,' says St. Bernard, 'save he who *feels* Him,

and he that feels Him has hardly time to know Him, because He escapes almost as soon as He is felt.'

Let us not then desire sensible consolations at the Holy Table, lest we should be desiring something *with* God. Let us go to Communion with the intention of giving all to Jesus Christ, that He may be *Supreme Master* in our souls. Let us be contented with having Jesus in our souls; and if it does not please Him to discover Himself to our eyes, let us offer Him that trial which is indeed a most severe one to one who loves Jesus.

The object of the interior visits of our Lord is to encourage me to suffer much for His glory. I should merit neither supernatural graces nor even that other still more precious grace which is denominated *trial*, if I were not always ready to receive everything that Jesus Christ bestows upon me.

I am certainly unworthy of such favours as our Lord bestowed upon St. Teresa; but I will follow her example in tolerating nothing in myself or in my actions which can prevent our Lord from granting, or can oblige Him to withdraw them from me.

O Jesus, I now possess Thee, and the sacred species which place Thee in my heart still leave Thee invisible. But if Thou dost hide Thyself from mine eyes, my faith acknowledges Thy presence, and my heart embraces Thee, holds Thee, clings to Thee: it has no need of more light, for love is better than sight.

Lord, Thou knewest how to give Thyself to these disciples without manifesting Thyself to them. Thou didst kindle in their hearts the divine fire of love without causing them to enjoy Thee in Thyself. Thou didst cause them to regret Thine absence and to long for Thy return. But as for me, Thou dost nourish my hope, while Thou deliverest me from regret. Thou wast with them, and they knew it not, as Thou dost

abide with me, while Thou dost appear to be far away. We receive Thee, and we see Thee not; but Thou canst never be unknown to the heart that loves Thee.

IV. '*And He disappeared from before their eyes.*'

Our Lord alone could read in the hearts of the happy disciples the joy and the affliction that they felt in losing sight of their Divine Master at the same moment that they recognized Him. But I can imagine what they must have felt, from the regret which I also feel when Jesus leaves me after His too short sojourn in my soul.

Thou dost leave me already, Lord Jesus. I desire to retain Thee, and I cannot. I restore Thee to heaven, to Thy glory: it is just that it should be so; but Thou dost resume Thyself only to renew my happiness in the reiterated gift of Thyself. If Thou shouldst dwell continually in the midst of my heart, without any exterior sign of Thy presence, should I not become too familiar with my happiness, and perhaps, alas! I should forget Thee.

I should no longer feel a continued happiness, and without experiencing a satiety that my faith could overcome, the very excess of the blessing would make me feel its value less. Oh, how much imperfection is revealed in me by these too true reflections! Thou hast chosen a gift that passes quickly away, but returns again ever fresh and new, for the very purpose of exciting my desire for Holy Communion by the regret that Thy absence causes me.

'O my dear Master,' I will say to Thee with St. Teresa, 'is it not enough that Thou dost keep me in this miserable life, that for the love of Thee I submit to remaining in it, and that I am resigned to dwell in this exile, where all things prevent me from enjoying Thee—my meals, my sleep, my business, and my

necessary intercourse with the world? Must it also be that in those rare moments in which I might enjoy the delights of Thy presence, Thou must withdraw Thyself from my sight? How does this treatment agree with Thy mercy, and how can the love which Thou hast for us endure it? Lord, if it were possible for me to hide myself from Thee as Thou dost hide Thyself from me, Thy love, I am sure, would not permit it. But Thou art always with me, and Thou seest me always. Such an inequality is too cruel! Consider, I entreat Thee, that it is not just to me, since I love Thee with an ardent love.

V. '*Did not our hearts burn within us, when He spoke to us in the way?*'

How should I wish to feel my heart thus burning after Holy Communion. But I should hardly intrust that sweet secret even to my angel guardian, the faithful witness of the graces conferred upon me by our Lord, and often, alas! of my dissipation. But when it is not given me to feel the presence of Jesus, I will neither be angry nor discouraged. I will strive to be faithful in listening to His voice in those who represent Him to me, and perhaps He will make Himself *felt* in some manner in my soul. If we generously renounce our own desires and will, we shall certainly receive some recompense. In the presence of Jesus I can resolve to sacrifice myself; for it is easy to detach myself from the shadow when I hold the *reality*. O Jesus, I love Thee! I beseech Thee to believe in my love. I would that its ardour might inspire me with words that might touch Thy Heart, because they would express a feeling as lively as profound. And as I cannot *see* Thee, I would desire to *feel* Thee living in my heart, to feel that Thou lovest me, and art preparing me for our eternal union above.

VI. '*They told how they had known Him in the breaking of bread.*'

Oh, that I might in all truth be able to say, like the disciples of Emmaus, that all around me acknowledge Jesus in His goodness and mercies, that all love Him and think of Him! But, alas! to whom can one dare to speak of Jesus in the world, and who ventures to pronounce His name there, lest they should cause it to be mocked and blasphemed?

We can never learn to know Jesus better than in Holy Communion. The oftener I communicate with holy dispositions, the more perfectly shall I learn the secrets of His Heart. I shall not know it well until my last Communion. All that I make now ought to be a preparation for that. Jesus quits me, but only to return soon again; and when I receive Him for the last time, He will appoint His next meeting with me in heaven.

O Divine Heart of Jesus, my asylum, my repose, my hope: I adore Thee, I love Thee. Grant that I may love Thee ever more and more. Fill my heart with Thy feelings, Thy inclinations. I offer unto Thee all my intentions in this Communion. Grant them, if they be for Thy glory; reform them, if they are displeasing to Thee. Inspire me with the zeal which consumes Thee; render me the instrument of Thy mercies, as I have been the object of them; and grant that in all things I may propose to myself no other object than that of loving and pleasing Thee, and causing Thee to be beloved.

Conclusion.

Let us often come to find Jesus, but Jesus hidden, for our probation is not yet ended. If He were to discover Himself to us, it would be in a degree too small to enable us to embrace Him with the glance

of love, and it would be too little to embrace Him with our looks only; it would be too painful to lose Him after we had contemplated Him. Let us love to receive Jesus, just as He deigns to give Himself to us, and if Holy Communion does not completely satisfy our desires, let us think of the glorious reward to which it leads us, of the Beatitude of which it is at once the foretaste and the pledge.

TWENTY-EIGHTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

APPEARANCE OF JESUS TO ST. THOMAS.

(St. John xx.)

Preparation.

THIS appearance of Jesus, in which, without any reproach, He gave so touching a lesson to His unbelieving Apostle, is one of the greatest encouragements to Holy Communion that can be found in the Gospel.

It shows visibly the wrong which a soul does to itself in turning away from Jesus, and the happiness which attends its return to Him. Let us not do so much wrong to ourselves as to leave the Holy Table, and let us seek at the feet of our Blessed Lord the fruits of a good Communion.

I. '*Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with the other disciples when Jesus came.*'

We can easily comprehend of what great benefits the unbelieving Apostle by his own fault deprived himself. He beheld not the glory of Jesus risen; he

heard not His Divine voice; He approached not His Heart, to receive tender and efficacious consolation therefrom. How dangerous it is to go where God does not wish us to go, and *not* to be where Jesus comes to seek for us. The soul apart from Jesus, is like a planet which has wandered from its orbit, a magnet which no longer turns towards the pole.

Let us seek for the cause which inflicted so many losses upon the Apostle. It is apparently a forgetfulness of the mercies of Jesus; a habit of indulging in certain relaxations or amusements which distract the mind from spiritual occupations; and in the absence of prayer. There is a certain order of souls which readily accept a passing sacrifice, but sink under any continued trial; and this is because they are wanting in patience, and still more in love. A great love for God makes the most difficult things easy; it helps us especially to endure suffering and mortification, and to maintain the strife against our own evil nature.

This love, which every Christian soul can feel if it will, is granted to all who sincerely desire to obtain it, to all who pray for it daily. Thomas, who had desired to die with our Lord, had doubtless neglected to ask for grace to endure His temporary absence; therefore he remained without consolation. Can I be surprised if I am easily discouraged, when I spend so little time in prayer, when I remain but a short time in the sacred place where Jesus descends daily, where He gives Himself to us? The Tabernacle tells me, even more plainly than the upper chamber, that the Holy Eucharist was instituted to be our consolation in sorrow and our help in times of spiritual dryness and desertion. It is the desire of Jesus that I should confide all the vicissitudes of my natural as well as of my spiritual life, to His loving Heart.

How just art Thou, O my Jesus, to hide Thyself from the eye of pride. How wise art Thou in defer-

ring the satisfaction of our too impatient desires! How good art Thou in forcing me to desire those good things, which I cannot desire too ardently! It is that I may ask earnestly for more graces that Thou dost seem to grant me less. It is out of condescending love that Thou dost oblige me to wait long for Thee, so that I may desire Thee more earnestly and receive in the end a double portion of Thy grace. Increase my present share of sacrifice and pain, if this increase shall tend to draw the bonds of my union with Thee more closely. If I have too often turned away from Thy love, accept my repentance now, and dispose me to make with generosity every sacrifice which Thou shalt demand of me as necessary to my sanctification.

II. '*The other disciples said to him, We have seen the Lord.*'

A holy joy shines out through this declaration, which must have filled the faithless Apostle with lively regret for having for any earthly consideration whatever, absented himself from the place which Jesus honoured with His presence. What value can earthly things have to one who has enjoyed spiritual blessings? The tongue that has frequently received the Holy Eucharist ought not to take part in idle conversations. The injury which is caused to the soul which is not careful to preserve a spirit of prayer, of recollectedness, and active charity, will sooner or later become apparent.

What immense benefits did not Jesus bestow upon the eleven in this appearance to them. He strengthened their faith, exalted their hopes, and inflamed their hearts with love. Those who love are quickly made known to each other by a mutual sympathy, which may be called the eye of the heart. 'What! you love, and you do not see!' says St. Augustine.

'Does not love give you sight?' What a lesson for me, who desire consolations so extremely, who can with difficulty endure to see others more highly favoured than myself, and am often ready to refuse the very thing I have most wished for, if I do not obtain it at the moment I desire! Should Jesus condescend to gratify an imperious will? Ah, I see how wrong I have been. I do not deserve to *see.*

O my Divine Master, already I have so often come with joy, not to *see*, but to receive my God, that I well know how sweet is that awaiting, how sweet the happiness that succeeds. Come, O Jesus, strengthen my faith, my hope. Come, not alone to show me Thy hands full of graces, but to give me Thy Heart. I know myself too well not to feel myself utterly unworthy of that precious gift; but I know Thou art so near to me, that I hope Thou wilt nevertheless deign to bestow it upon me.

III. '*Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.*'

How can we desire anything that Jesus Christ does not consider necessary or even useful for us; and how can we dare to utter a defiance to God. This boldness is a sign of secret unbelief, and the audacity of the desire betrays the absence of hope. And yet the Apostle had communicated in the upper chamber: might not that mystery have prepared his mind to admit another? But a severe trial had followed his Communion and, as happens in many other cases, it had effaced the Divine impression of the Holy Eucharist. How many prayers and mad desires we utter in the hearing of Jesus in times of suffering, of adversity, even at the hour of Communion, when it would seem that we had no other thing to do but to mould our wills to His. Thus St. Augustine says, 'For

what do you ask, O mortals, since God has given you so much?'

How many prayers have I made which ought not, could not, have been granted, because they were in accordance with my human will and interests, and not offered for the glory of our Lord. I desire at this moment to ask for more than Thomas required. I ask the Body, the Blood, the Soul, and the Divinity of Jesus, and He will deign to grant them to me without blaming me for the frequency or temerity of my desires. I ask Him now for grace to receive Him well, and when I shall have received my God I will beseech Him to inspire me with such desires and prayers as shall be agreeable to Him.

O my Jesus, how much must I love Thee in beholding Thy goodness, which refuses none of my requests. Notwithstanding this ineffable generosity I am not always satisfied, I still venture to express my complaints and my desires. I will not condemn Thine Apostle, O my Jesus, for I know how much weakness is produced by sorrow in my own soul, how much cowardice in my heart, temerity in my complaints, and impatience in suffering contradiction. But I feel yet more my need of receiving Thee.

IV. '*Eight days after the disciples were within again, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut.*'

How merciful of our Lord to return thus again to convince the unbelieving Apostle. He conferred no less a favour on him in preparing his soul to know and love Him better than before. A lively faith, which disdains all visible and perishable things and attaches itself to none but spiritual blessings, is a great gift from God, far greater than even such a signal favour as the visible appearance of Jesus. Let us find in the gift of faith consolation for our inability to enjoy the sight of our Lord.

The desire of Thomas was satisfied: He beheld Jesus. I do not enjoy a similar happiness; but wherein would it profit me? Jesus Christ would not receive more glory, I should not possess more than I am now going to receive, and I should be deprived of the merit of all the acts of faith with which my life is filled. The eye of my soul should be closed to all in which the senses are concerned, but opened to everything that is above my senses and my reason. At the Holy Table I shall not yet behold my God, but I shall possess Him.

Lord Jesus, how deeply do I feel the happiness which Thy Divine indulgence bestows upon me! If, after committing a fault, I were obliged to wait *eight days* before I could enjoy the happiness of communicating, how deserving of pity I should think myself to be! And yet it would be in Thy power to reproach me with having committed *great* faults. I confess them unto Thee, ashamed and confused at my own weakness, and Thou wilt pardon me immediately upon my repentance, nor punish me by departing from me for a long week. Come, my God, I call Thee with my whole soul, I desire Thee with all my heart. I feel that Thou alone canst fill the immensity of my affections, because I am made to be loved by Thee and to love Thee alone. Grant me to verify my faith by loving Thee above all things.

V. '*He stood in the midst of them.*'

As He stood in the midst of His disciples, Jesus shed various influences upon them from His Heart; one kind of grace and heavenly benediction upon St. Peter, another upon St. John, another upon St. Thomas. Thus it is with souls, and even with each individual soul. Jesus proposes Himself to come to you; offer to Him all your faculties, your intelligence, your will, your heart, your activity, even your

passions, and rejoice, because He will give you that special influence and grace which each one of your faculties requires. You want light, Jesus is the Light of the world. Your will is wanting in energy, Jesus has energy in reserve for you. Your heart is cold, but love will flow into it from the Heart of Jesus when you come to Him.

One of the most precious influences that Jesus communicates to us is the grace of love to Him; for why do you love Him, when so many of the people around you love Him not? What a privilege you possess! and to what do you owe it? To nothing but the love of Jesus! It even seems that in His dispensation of the grace of love He gives it to those who are naturally least disposed to receive it. And if you interrogate your heart, will it not tell you that because of the graces that you have received you ought to love Him incomparably more? How many fine characters are you acquainted with, who would love Jesus ardently if He discovered Himself to them, and who may perhaps remain ignorant of Him during their whole lives! Consider, then, the worth of that eternal preference that our Lord has shown you, and preserves for you, notwithstanding your unworthiness.

O Jesus, how much love do I owe Thee! How much do I wish to express my love to Thee, to attract Thee by sentiments ever more tender and more profound. Never can I praise sufficiently Thy mercy, which chose me out among so many souls more worthy than myself of Thy graces, and loads me with them, notwithstanding my unworthiness. Lord, prepare me by a grace of gratitude to receive a still greater measure of the same, to increase in gratitude in measure as Thy benefits are multiplied in me. I offer Thee my heart as the altar on which I beseech Thee to come and receive my adoration and my love.

Act of Thanksgiving.

You have communicated. You are now penetrated with the presence of Jesus Christ. He is really present in you. Adore Him in this blessed union, the heaven of earth. If your heart is too dry or too much moved to find any words, look at our Lord even less than before; the thought of the heart is sufficient to true love. When all the sounds of the world have ceased in your soul, Jesus Christ will murmur in its ear words of ineffable signification, which cannot be expressed in earthly language.

I. *'Jesus said to Thomas, Put thy finger into the print of the nails. Behold My hands.'*

Jesus, replying to the bold protestation of Thomas, shows that He sees everything, knows everything, hears everything. 'He shows also,' says St. Bernard, 'that He has taken a great deal of pains to give us a great deal of love.' In His glorious hands He still preserves the print of the nails that pierced them, to remind us eternally of all that our salvation cost Him. It is probable that the martyrs in heaven will retain in their bodies the glorious traces of their combats, so that Jesus Christ may see through all eternity the proofs of what their love has enabled them to endure for His glory. Ought we not by our patience and resignation in suffering, or by our courage in self-mortification, offer to Jesus the sight of all that we have done and suffered for Him?

His holy Humanity, bearing the marks of His sufferings, is in my heart, and perhaps instead of showing to Jesus what His love can enable me to endure for His glory, I permit Him to hear nothing but complaints, to see nothing but my repugnance to self-mortification. Nevertheless I am compelled to acknowledge that all the powers of the Soul of Jesus

have contributed to my salvation! There is not a single member of His Body that has not suffered for my ransom! not a pulsation of His Heart that has not been moved by love! not one drop of His Blood that has not been freely shed for me! I will no longer be so cowardly and sensual in my behaviour. I desire, on the contrary, to bear in my whole being the eternal traces of my love for our Blessed Lord.

O my Jesus, I adore Thy sacred Humanity that Thou hast given to me. I remain at Thy feet, beseeching Thee that Thou wilt teach me to suffer, by permitting me to enter those openings that the nails have made in Thy sacred hands. There I will await Thy call to enter Thy Divine Heart. When wilt Thou by Thy gifts of grace make full amends to me for not having beheld Thee in Thy Flesh, endued with incorruptibility? Make amends to me for not having kissed the marks of Thy Wounds, the print of the nails; for not having been able to enter with tears of gratitude the cicatrices of Thy sacred Body! O my God, I beseech Thee at least to grant me, as some consolation for Thy absence and the pains of my exile, an augmentation of faith, hope, and charity: grace to pray well, and to remember frequently to employ prayer as a preservative from sin, a support in temptation, and a sure means of obtaining strength for all the duties of life.

II. '*Bring hither thy hand, and put it into My side.*'

The confusion of Thomas was as great as his happiness, when, at the command of our Lord, he placed his hand in the wound which opened to us the Heart of our God for an asylum.

The hand represents the activity of the soul. If ever we are more especially obliged to obey the principal law of our lives by directing all our activity

at all times towards God, it must be specially at the happy hour of our act of thanksgiving. Let us concentrate into this moment the whole stock of activity and intelligence that our minds and wills possess, and let us lay it all at the feet of Jesus Christ.

The hour of our act of thanksgiving is also the hour of love. Consequently, what could you do in it apart from the great centre of love, from the focus of love from which its rays eternally proceed: from the Heart whose tender solicitude calls you to Him, only that He may pour forth His love more abundantly upon you? Strive to enter into that Heart. It is a holy audacity that will be pleasing to Jesus. Expose to the shining of His love all the activity of which you are capable; employ it all day long in such works as are worthy of being presented to our Lord.

'O Divine Heart, O sweet Heart, Heart overflowing with love, I plunge my soul completely into Thy most tender part, and I bury my negligences and iniquities in that profound depth of Thy mercy.'* I ask not, O Jesus, to know the sweetness of Thy Heart, but I will venture to say to Thee: Lord, shall I love Thee always? Oh, if I knew that the day would come in which I should cease to love Thee, I would implore Thee to take away my life before that day arrives. I prefer death to the misfortune of losing Thy love for a single moment. And even should Thy mercy restore me promptly to sanctifying grace, and re-establish me in Thy love, yet could I not endure the thought of losing Thy tenderness and favour for one single moment of my existence.

O Jesus, I offer Thee my heart; keep it always Thine. Let one only feeling enter it—a reflection of the unity of Thy love.

* St. Mechtilde.

III. '*Be not faithless, but believing.*'

Jesus shows me plainly how great is the happiness that the soul can find in the exercise of such a humble and submissive faith as procures it great enlightenment from God. The earth is the land of faith; but the mystery that I receive at the Holy Table, and bear in my heart, prepares me for the brightness of eternal day. If the sacred species were to disappear for a single instant, I should be overwhelmed with the weight of Divine glory: there would be no longer any difference between the altar and heaven. The more I feel the blessing of faith, the more earnestly I ought to entreat our Lord to extend it to all mankind. Such was the prayer of the saints. The wants of the Universal Church were ever present to their minds. They prayed for the increase and unity of the faith throughout the world, that Jesus Christ might be everywhere known, served, loved, and glorified. The thought of the blindness of heretics plunged them into the deepest grief. I will ask our Lord what it would please Him that I should do to prevent the eternal damnation of those souls whom He loves tenderly, and for whose salvation He came down upon earth.

I rejoice, my God, in being able to offer Thee the sacrifice of my reason. As I feel my heart enjoying Thy presence, I understand that Thou wouldst not disturb the order of Thy designs, but the marvellous apparition of Thy glory, though it would make me happier, yet would not cause me to love Thee more than the prodigy by which Thou dost veil that glory from mine eyes.

Lord Jesus, as often as I shall have occasion to labour for the salvation of my neighbour, give me grace to temper my eagerness with prudence. But keep me always so indissolubly united to Thyself,

that after I have occupied myself without reserve in doing good to others, I may return to Thee in my own heart as promptly as the waves of the sea return to their ocean bed when the turbulence of the wind has ceased to agitate them. I pray Thee, Lord, to sanctify me, so that I may labour for the salvation of souls by my example rather than my words. Pour down great graces likewise upon Thy Church, and extend throughout the whole world the knowledge of Thy Name.

IV. '*My Lord and my God.*'

The conduct of Thomas is a figure of the effects of grace in the soul of the worthy communicant. He had appeared careless after leaving the upper chamber; incredulous of the Apostles' affirmations; and bold in requiring a special appearance of Jesus for his own personal satisfaction. What a list of faults! But hardly does his Divine Master appear to this obstinate disciple than he is overcome with astonishment and transported with love, and proclaims in words which will last as long as the world endures, the Divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. He acknowledged for his God one who still bore the marks of a shameful execution. He comprehended in an instant the infinite mercy of our Lord in giving His life for us. And the Apostle who was determined to be convinced by nothing but a palpable proof, after he had put his finger into the wounds, ended by falling on his knees and adoring his Lord and his God.

Frequent Communion, which reveals to us the secrets of the Holy Eucharist, renders the invisible presence of Jesus so evident, so easy to be confessed, that it is impossible to understand how heresy can dare to deny or the indifferent Christian to disdain it.

Oh, how delightfully I feel that the sacred Host really gives me my Lord and my God.

How would I desire after Communion to be able to pronounce these words only once with the same accent as St. Thomas when he exclaimed, 'My Lord and my God.' Everything is comprised in these words: faith, repentance, and love—all in an inexpressible degree. We feel that he could find no words strong enough to express the emotions of his heart. Ah! how Jesus loves to see before Him a soul mute with joy, love, and gratitude. How well I can understand the feelings of St. Chantal, who when cruelly tried by interior suffering, esteemed herself happy in being condemned to eternal torments, if it were to be for the glory of God, because, said she, 'even in hell He would still be my God.' If when I suffer I look to the crucifix, to the tabernacle, or to heaven, and utter these words, 'My God!' they will convey to the Heart of our Lord a sensation a thousand times more delightful than He experienced in hearing the same words from the lips of His admiring and joyful disciple.

My Lord and my God, kneeling at Thy feet, I envy the happiness of Thine Apostle when he contemplated, through tears of love, the glorious and everlasting impressions of Thy love for us. And I also contemplate Thee by the light of faith, and I discover in Thy Heart the same love which filled St. Thomas with admiring rapture.

My Lord and my God, deign to give to these words the same accent of faith, veneration, and love as they bore when they were first addressed to Thee by Thine Apostle.

My Lord and my God, who art now present, and who wilt be my guide, my support, during all this day: whatever cross Thou shalt see fit to lay upon me, whatever trial I may be called upon to bear, remembering my present happiness, I will say, My Lord and my God! Through all the difficulties and

temptations of life, in poverty or in abundance, I will always say, My Lord and my God! And in after years, when lying on my bed of death, and expecting the time of judgment, I will still murmur with my latest breath, My Lord and my God; And at last, when I enter the gates of heaven, may I again cry in a transport of overwhelming admiration and love, My Lord and my God!

V 'Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed!'

These words give us an insight into the deep meaning of the Holy Eucharist, by indicating It as the hope and consolation of all ages. Let us not give cause to our Lord to complain that His love to us is not honoured by our firm faith in It. We deserve such a reproach when, after communicating, we do not believe with a firm and lively faith in the love of our Blessed Lord. Be careful to make acts of faith in His love; and, in regarding Him, say to yourself, Yes, He loves me! Look at the print of the nails in His feet and hands; and believe that those wounds were made for you. Look at His head crowned with thorns, and say to yourself, with ever-increasing faith and confidence, It was out of love for me that Jesus permitted that crown of suffering to be placed upon His brow. Look especially at the Sacred Heart, opened by the lance, but represent it to yourself as being in your own heart. You will have no difficulty in saying, I believe in the love of Jesus to me; for I behold that love in my heart.

However, the faith that adores, that regards, is not alone at the feet of our Lord. Ah, how my heart flies to meet Him; and how great is its happiness in *possessing* without *beholding* Him. In truth, I see nothing, I hear nothing, and yet, after communicating,

I should be much more guilty than Thomas were I to complain of being obliged to depend upon my faith alone. I feel too well that I possess my God. I am probably nearer than I imagine to the full enjoyment of Him. One day, perhaps very soon, I *shall see* Jesus! Then it will be said to me no longer, Believe what you do not see; but rather, Rejoice, for *you see!*

O Lord my God, my eyes desire to see; but faith is sufficient to a loving heart, and I prefer not to *see*, that so Thou mayest believe in my love for Thee. My eyes would delight in Thy beauty; but if I lost myself in the contemplation of that ineffable beauty, I should feel joy rather than love, and I now rejoice in being able to prove my greater love to Thee by resting satisfied with less joy.

Give me grace, by my confidence, to honour Thee more and more under the veils of the Holy Eucharist. May I ever more despise the promises, attractions, and pomps of the world, for Thy love which I have known and felt in this adorable Sacrament, for Thy love in which I hope and trust to all eternity!

O celestial Beatitude, composed of love *exempt from suffering*, I desire thee, without asking that the days of my earthly happiness, which consists of love *in* suffering, should be shortened. I give Thee my trials of this day, my God, and am content to await the eternal happiness which Thy bounty will hereafter bestow upon me.

Conclusion.

Our act of thanksgiving after Communion ought to be a prayer full of faith, hope, and love, such as might fitly be inspired by the joy which the presence of Jesus confers upon us in the present, and the thought of Jesus glorified.

TWENTY-NINTH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

PROVISION FOR OUR LAST JOURNEY.

Preparation.

WE know not what the manner of our death shall be, whether sudden, or preceded by a long sickness; nor do we know whether the nature of our sickness, or our mental condition, will permit us to communicate. It is then an exceedingly useful practice to offer sometimes one of our Communions to our Lord as if it were to be the last of our lives, and to beseech Him to grant us graces equivalent to those which He would bestow upon us when we receive Holy Viaticum.

I. *Regarding the past and future.*

We never for an instant cease to make steady progress towards the end of our existence. The years past belong to death, they are so much taken away from our length of life. We may all say: "I know that I shall soon put off this tabernacle."* Where? In what manner? God only knows. Shall we die suddenly without long illness or warning? Shall we die after committing some sin? To these formidable questions every one is compelled to answer: I know not. But one who is expecting death at every moment cannot fail to die well, however suddenly it may at last arrive.

I have felt the weight of time no less than that of sorrow; nevertheless, in Holy Communion our Lord reserves a happiness for me which increases in proportion to my enjoyment of it, while every passing year

* 2 St. Peter i. 14.

takes away from me a part of my time, my affections, my pleasures! How many things are passed without return! I do not dare to recall them to my memory; the remembrance would be too painful, too dangerous. But at this moment two things remain, and will remain to me until the end of my life: Jesus Christ and sorrow! Jesus Christ, who is willing to be mine; and sorrow, which prepares me for Communion and for heaven. Without Jesus Christ, I could not make reparation for the past, nor suffer resignedly; and without sorrow, I should be too unworthy of Jesus. I communicate that I may be able to suffer well, and to love more. I suffer, that I may communicate more worthily, and prepare myself for my blest abode in heaven.

O Holy Eucharist, continual source of graces, what heavenly balm is shed by thee over my life! Thou openest to the soul a source of most sweet remembrances that never can be closed, that preserves our innocence, or leads us gently to repentance.

My heart, regret nothing upon this earth, where all is perishing, expiring. Attach thyself more and more closely to our Lord, who never dies, whose love can never grow cold.

O sweetest Saviour, I could not have endured my life on earth without the Holy Eucharist. Why should I not hope to enjoy in the world to come, without a veil, that mystery which I have loved so much in its obscurity. Come, Lord Jesus, and give me grace to receive Thee with the dispositions with which I would desire to appear before Thy terrible tribunal.

II. *Repentance for our past life.*

Our Lord has ordained that the time of our death should be hidden from us, in order that as we can neither delay nor hasten its arrival, we might be always prepared to meet it. As it is certain that we

ought to appear before our Sovereign Judge with a conscience cleansed from every stain of sin, we ought in the first place to excite our souls to sincere repentance for our past sins, and a firm resolution to avoid as much as possible the commission of any fault for the future.

Not one of my actions is hidden from the eye of Jesus! Not one of them can ever be lost sight of by Him! Oh, how much of my past life would I gladly conceal or annihilate! But it is impossible for me to efface anything from the thoughts of God. What vigilance should I then exercise over all my words and thoughts! How should my smallest actions be regulated by a spirit of faith, because every one of them either precedes or follows Communion, which unites me more closely to Jesus than looks or words could do.

If it is terrible to me not to know the hour of my death, it is far more so to be ignorant of the state in which my soul will be at that supreme moment.

How happy am I in having to deal with Infinite Goodness in the great matter of my salvation. When I remember my sins, I ought to fear; but I can find room for nothing but hope when I look at my Redeemer, who, out of pity for me, has treated Himself without pity by accepting death that He might deliver me from hell. I ought also to observe the ever faithful love of Jesus, who pitying my fear in looking back upon my past life, comes daily to His Altar to make reparation for my sins and negligences.

Lord Jesus, I know that I have committed, and even still commit, many sins, which deserve a severe punishment, but I repent that I have offended Thee, I detest all my iniquities, and desire never to commit them again. Punish me for them in this life, as I deserve; cause me to expiate my faults and my ingratitude in this place of exile where I am never-

theless permitted to receive and possess Thee. Send me whatever trials Thou shalt see fit to inflict, but preserve me from Purgatory, and from being deprived of Holy Communion.

My divine Saviour, since Thou art the witness of my dispositions as well as of my faults, enter now into judgment with me according to Thy mercy, and delay not until the next life to require from me a strict account of Thy benefits, of which I have made so bad a use.

I should be ashamed, if Thou hadst not granted me Thy pardon, to come again to Thee after failing so often to keep my promises. My past life appears to me an unfathomable abyss of malice, capable of separating me eternally from Thee, but in virtue of which I have been washed in Thy blood, clothed in Thy grace, loaded with Thy gifts of love. I still shed many tears of repentance, but more, far more, of joy. The more I have offended Thee, the more do I desire to love Thee. Forget, O my Jesus, the offences that I have committed against Thee; give me strength to remain faithful to Thee for the rest of my life. In the Communion that I am about to make, deign to grant me a more sincere repentance for my past sins, a more perfect forgiveness, and grace never more to wander away from Thee.

III. *Ask for the grace of detachment from all earthly ties.*

Every one of us, when we quit this world, when w come to our last hour, must leave everything behind us, for as we brought nothing into this world, so it is impossible that we should carry anything out. How can we cling to the love of any earthly thing when we know what must be the inevitable end? Nothing is more useful for acquiring a wise moderation in all things than the frequent thought of the brevity and

uncertainty of time. When we have our last hour before our eyes, we can easily detach ourselves from what we are unable to retain. Ah, how much better it is to seek for an imperishable love in the Holy Eucharist, and to fix our hearts where change and sorrow can never come!

If I were sure that Jesus Christ was now about to give Himself to me for the last time, I should find no difficulty in making any sacrifice, however great or costly, because I should then be on the point of quitting for ever all those things which He desires me to offer Him freely during my life. Our Lord is so jealous of my heart, that He will not permit it to derive perfect happiness from any created thing; and He desires to make me feel that true happiness can be enjoyed in Him alone. My present happiness is in Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, who will make me more and more happy in proportion as I become united to Him.

O my beloved Saviour, Thou art going to bestow upon me in Thyself the best that Thou hast: I will offer Thee all my best. Everything in me is Thine; my body, my soul, my blood, and my life. I consecrate everything that I possess to Thy service; henceforward I consider myself as consecrated to Thy Heart. I offer myself to be ground by sorrow like a grain of wheat; that I may preserve Thy love, that I may be more sure of attaining unto heaven. Deign to bless with Thy abundant grace this passing life which Thou mayest soon take away from me; for it is not a gift, but a loan which Thou hast granted me for awhile, as a means of acquiring eternal life.

IV. *Trusting entirely to the mercy of God.*

During our lives we have at our disposal the mercy of the Heart of Jesus and the use of time; but we too often neglect the one, and waste or fritter away

the other. Time passes away, each day diminishes our part in it, and we act as if we believed it would last for ever. We leave so little room for Jesus in the employment of our time, that it seems as if we hardly believed that we could trust fully in His mercy and goodness.

It is a great gift to believe with our hearts in the Divine mercy, to rest completely upon it and to consider our sins as our titles to that infinite mercy which alone is able to save us from the justice of God.

It is especially when we think of the near approach of death, its uncertain arrival, its eternal consequences, and our own sins and unworthiness, that we feel the need of throwing ourselves unreservedly into the hands of our Lord, and of saying to Him, with heart-felt earnestness and humility, 'Have pity upon me, O my God, according to Thine infinite mercy.' This disposition ought to prevail in us, inasmuch as it includes resignation, patience, confidence, and love.

O Jesus, Thy goodness forces me to love Thee, and to trust entirely with filial confidence in Thee. Give me grace to receive Holy Communion and death, in this same feeling of love and thankfulness that Thou art now going to give me one, and that Thou wilt send me the other before long. Teach me to hope for eternal felicity by reason of the felicity that I enjoy from Thee at the Holy Table; and to hope for it also by reason of the care that Thou takest to purify me by many and great afflictions.

O my Jesus, I hope in Thy Cross, in Thy Heart, in the merits of Thy Blood, in the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, my Mother, to save my soul, which has deserved eternal damnation.

My God, I believe in my salvation, and I hope to obtain it from Thy mercy, Thy sovereign goodness; for my salvation is the cleansing of my soul in

Thy most Precious Blood; it is Thy glance of love attracting me; it is Thy voice absolving me; it is Thy hand blessing me; it is Thine arms surrounding me, and leading me from my natural life, to the life of suffering, mortification, and self-sacrifice, but which will also carry me one day from that life of suffering to a life of eternal glory in heaven. O Jesus, grant that confidence may give wings to my soul to fly over the abyss of my sins; and that led by the cross which is the unfailing guide of my life, it may plunge blindly but joyfully into the sea of Thy divine mercy.

V. *Preparing ourselves to receive Jesus Christ as our Judge.*

A bishop of the middle ages explained to his people, that a bell was rung at the moment of the Elevation to imitate the trumpet which will summon all communicants before the Supreme Judge at the last day, and to warn them that the Christian at the Holy Table eats and drinks his own condemnation, as St. Paul tells us, if he receives the Body of our Lord without discernment. This explanation is too terrifying. I prefer to think that the silvery sound of the bell is meant to remind us of the song of the angels who celebrated the coming of Jesus Christ, and to summon us to partake with them the happiness of possessing Him.

I place myself at the feet of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom I am going to receive, as I shall do when the Holy Viaticum is brought to me. He will then be on the point of becoming my Judge, but yet He will still come as my Saviour. I will ask Him to inspire me with a lively regret for having offended Him so frequently. Oh, how shall I grieve when my last day of life arrives, that I have been so mad as to displease my God so often; when He loaded me with benefits, when He called me so frequently to His Holy Table;

while yet He saw me so resolved to satisfy my own desires at the expense of my conscience.

As Sovereign Master of my destiny, Jesus strikes my whole body with pain, to make me feel that I am approaching very near to His awful tribunal. Ah, how desirable it would be that each Communion should find me prepared to render up my account to Him! I desire, notwithstanding my faults, to support my confidence by the hope that having always opened my heart to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, I shall not find Him a severe Judge, but a Father, a Friend, who will open to me His arms, and receive me with tender mercy and compassion. O Lord my God, Thy title of Sovereign Judge would terrify me hadst Thou not done everything to prove Thy desire to be favourable to me? Ah, at this moment, when I am going to receive Thee perhaps for the last time, I would desire to have dispositions similar to those in which I would wish to die; I am thinking of nothing but Thy mercy. Thou art about to search my conscience to its remotest depths, but have not they been laid open before Thee in many Communions which placed Thee in the very centre of my being? Let it not be that in the day of the Last Judgment my Communions should arise like mountains to crush my soul. Show me with what discernment I ought to receive Thy Adorable Body, and suffer me not to fall into any deplorable error or illusion. I have often offended Thee, but I have often received Holy Communion, which proves that Thou hast forgiven me much. Reproach me for my abuse of Thy sacramental grace, my negligent preparations and acts of thanksgivings; but I will remind Thee that I have never loved anything so much as the Holy Eucharist; and that the kindness with which Thou hast granted my desire for Communion assures me that Thy kindness will grant my still more ardent desire to see Thee, and to possess Thee eternally.

Act of Thanksgiving.

Adore Jesus in His holiness, His goodness, His mercy.

Pray Him to preserve you from the rigours of His justice. Ask Him that you may love Him so much, that His love may consume in you the stains of sin that are inherent in our fragile nature.

Disdain all weariness of suffering. Say, Lord, make me to suffer in this world, but spare me in the other.

I. *The entrance into life.*

In Holy Communion we receive eternal life in a certain degree, and the more frequently we communicate, the more fully do we assimilate that life. As long as our souls remain united to our bodies, they dwell in a foreign land awaiting their recall to their native country. The aged and holy Simeon, when he held the Infant Jesus in His arms, asked to be permitted to depart in peace. He asked God to *permit* him to depart, as if he had been detained on earth forcibly, against the natural desire and impulse of his soul. The hope of beholding the Saviour of the world had sustained his strength till then, but when once he had seen Him, nothing could retain him longer upon earth.

Ah, if but a single moment's contemplation of the Infant Jesus could so completely detach the soul of Simeon from his life upon earth, how is it that my numerous Communions have not performed the same work in me far more effectually? Every one of them has augmented my faith, increased my hope. My faith points to heaven; hope shows me its glories; and love obtains me an entrance into it by the gate of the Heart of Jesus. Communion often opens that Sacred Heart to me. Why does it not find me there?

My happiness would consist in dwelling there by love, and never leaving it for a moment. I ought to love Jesus so much, that I would desire to die a thousand times rather than commit voluntarily one mortal sin. I long to be fully assured that I shall love Him for ever and ever. But if my existence must be still further prolonged, may I receive grace to do something more for the glory of God.

Death is the gate of life. By means of every Communion I enter more deeply into the life which shall never end; and I ought in a like degree to arise from my natural life, and strive to rise above my senses. Every Communion prepares me to unite myself perfectly to Jesus.

My Lord and my God, I hope in Thee, and I shall not be confounded. I hope to see Thee and possess Thee eternally in heaven. My hope is to enjoy Thee for ever. Thou hast given me a pledge of Thy goodness, and of my eternal happiness, in these words: 'He that eateth Me hath eternal life.' And if any further pledge were needed, Thou hast also given me Thy Body and Blood. Give Thyself to me in heaven, since I already possess Thee upon earth.

My soul, bless the Lord, and let all that is within me bless His holy name. Jesus, my Light, my Guide, my support in every moment of my life, be Thou, at the hour of my death, my sweet Viaticum. Grant me the grace of coming Thyself to fetch me away from earth, and to put me in possession of heaven. Having been united to Thee so often during so great a number of years, permit me not to be separated from Thee after death. Lord, Thy justice may doubtless oppose it; but I entreat Thee, purify me in this world, and send me not away to Purgatory, where I should be far from Thee. By the intercession of Mary, I ask this from Thy mercy. I will request it from Thee every day of my life, and until my last sigh.

II. *Making the sacrifice of our lives to Jesus Christ.*

As we cannot go to enjoy God except by death, St. John Chrysostom advises us to offer with a willing heart the inevitable sacrifice of our life. When can this be done with greater confidence, or received with greater satisfaction than in time of Holy Communion, when it comes in as the necessary consequence of our act of thanksgiving.

Let us understand that one who offers his death to God, and accepts it in whatever time and manner shall be most pleasing to God, performs the most perfect act possible, and renders himself, says St. Alphonsus Liguori, like the holy martyrs. It is a sign of having little love to God when we have but little desire of going quickly to enjoy the vision of God, with the assurance that we can never again lose it. But great courage is necessary to enable us to sacrifice the natural enjoyments of time, so as to desire death, and to regret nothing in this world. Happy is the soul that does not seek to *enjoy life*, and that makes no use of its liberty except to enjoy the happiness of devoting it, or of sacrificing it, to Jesus Christ! Such a soul will regard death as the hope fulfilled of its reunion with God; as the sign of the visible embraces of the Lord Jesus Christ. It finds no difficulty in placing itself completely in the hands of God, and asking that it may either live in His love, or die, so as never more to lose that love.

O my Jesus, I have perhaps but a very short time to live; I desire to make use of that time by loving Thee as much as possible; I offer unto Thee all those sufferings which will bring my days to an end; I make Thee the sacrifice of my life, in union with Thine own sacrifice upon the Cross and upon the Altar. I accept most willingly, and for Thy love, all those pains, lighter and fewer by far than my sins

deserve, which may await me in my last days. I would rather suffer whatever Thou shalt be pleased to lay upon me on earth, than endure the lightest pain of Purgatory. When I think of all that I suffer from the loss of one Communion, there is no possible pain that I would not consider preferable to being deprived of Thy presence.

O my most sweet Redeemer, I place my soul and my body in Thy hands. I give Thee back all that Thou hast bestowed upon me, except the innocence which was conferred upon me in baptism. It is just that as I had lost the life of my soul, I should lose in expiation of it the life of my body. I make unto Thee an entire sacrifice of my whole being, against that day and hour upon which it may please Thee to take me out of this world. Thy death is my hope, O my Saviour. I place my soul within Thy hands, pierced with nails for my redemption. Thou didst give Thy Blood for our salvation, give me grace to enjoy that inestimable benefit to all eternity.

III. *Final consolations.*

Do we not find great consolation for quitting this life in the thought that as soon as we cease to live, we cease to sin? How can we desire to prolong our existence when each day increases the sum of the offences for which we shall have to give an account hereafter.

Many persons find their declining years more sad and mournful than the days of their youth; but there is no age for souls, they always possess the full strength of their immortal nature, with which they can love God in old age as ardently as in youth. It even seems as if the weight of years, while it diminishes their outward expression, enables them to ascend more easily to God, as every day brings them nearer to the enjoyment of His presence. Finding happiness

nowhere but in Communion, they feel their happiness increase with every succeeding Communion. This happiness prevents them from perceiving the ravages committed by time, it saves them from suffering as severely as they would otherwise do from the bitter trials of absence and separation from their beloved ones. It assists them in bearing all their sorrows, it enables them to make every sacrifice. The oftener we receive Jesus, the more earnestly we desire Him; and as we feel our lives becoming a burden to us, we aspire still more ardently to the blessed day of eternal Communion. But as the dawn of that celestial day draws nearer to us, so much the more ardently and impatiently do we desire to enter into that abode of the blessed. Let us ever draw more closely to that eternal life by means of Holy Communion. The Communion that we are now about to make may be our last, let us make it then in such a spirit as we would wish to bring to the performance of the last act of our life. Let us consider it the greatest happiness in life to have suffered much, and communicated often.

The multiplication of our Communions appears to be one of the sweetest privileges attached to the multiplication of our years, for the reason that as we then approach more nearly to God, both naturally by our age and intellectually by the development of our faculties, we approach Him also supernaturally by Holy Communion, and by the sanctity to which it leads. When we have possessed Jesus Christ very frequently in the Holy Eucharist, 'we hardly make any more distinction,' says St. Gregory, 'between dwelling in heaven and being shortly to arrive there; because we possess the God of that eternal country, with the sweet and happy confidence that we shall hereafter enter therein.'

O my Jesus, when shall that day arrive in which I

shall possess Thee without the possibility of losing Thee? When will those veils under which I receive Thee be rent asunder? When, certain that I shall love Thee always, shall I behold Thee face to face for all eternity? Oh, how the happiness of receiving the Sacred Host that I have loved so much, and desired so ardently, fades into insignificance when I consider these eternal joys! Come, O Jesus, my God, and give me in Thine own presence the blessed confirmation of all my hopes. I believe confidently that it is Thou who didst bestow upon me my love and desire for the Holy Eucharist, in order to take away the love of the world out of my heart, and to deprive me of many occasions of offending Thee. I thank Thee for this favour of which I am so unworthy. I beseech Thee to inspire me with the most lively desire to belong entirely to Thee; and to show me in what manner I can give myself to Thee more perfectly. Make of me what Thou wilt, it suffices me to love Thee, to communicate, and to be beloved by Thy Sacred Heart.

IV. *Desiring heaven.*

When the dissolution of the sacred species deprives me of the sacramental presence of Jesus, my soul desires to follow Him into the regions above; but being detained here below by her earthly prison, she endures with regret the burden of her mortal life. And as death is but the echo of life, may I not without temerity, after I have so often communicated during all these long years, hope assuredly that our Lord will give me grace to die in union with Him, and to pass from the banquet of the Holy Eucharist to the eternal feast of the angels in heaven? But my union with Jesus on earth must precede our union in heaven. True union with God consists in having one will with God in every circumstance of our life. 'As

for me,' said St. Teresa, 'that is the union that I desire.' In another passage in her Life she says: 'Our Lord has caused me to comprehend that true union with Him consists in the elevation of the mind above all earthly things; and that nothing of its own will, which might draw it aside from complete submission to the Divine Will, should remain in it, but that, detached from all earthly things, it may seek the glory of God alone. No trace of self-love must remain in it, nor any remembrance of any created thing.

This is a picture of the state in which my soul ought to be after receiving so many graces, which should enable me to live in a state of habitual union with our Blessed Lord. Then I could give free reign to my aspirations after heaven. O my promised Beatitude, Thou art the object of my hope! The pledge of that hope I behold in the Person of Jesus Christ, whom I possess; and fixing my eyes with reverent attention upon Him, I will strive to reproduce His Divine features in my own soul by my imitation of His virtues. But how much need have I of His grace to enable me to accomplish so great a labour in the short time which still remains to me to pass upon earth! How earnestly I ought to entreat our Lord Himself to perform this work in me.

O Jesus, I thank Thee for bestowing upon me that taste for heavenly things which I had not deserved to feel. Also, I know not whether I feel most gratitude or joy in seeing that the end of my exile is now so fast approaching. I have not waited until my last days to value more than the whole universe beside, the adorable Host that brings all heaven within my reach, in bestowing upon me my God! And yet I have often heaven in my heart, while my affections are still tied to earth! I implore Thee, O my God, to detach my heart from all creatures. Transform my coldness into ardent love.

If the small part of creation which I already know appears so beautiful to me, what will be my happiness when Thou shalt appear, Thou who art Beauty itself, far surpassing all things beside. David said, in the seventy-ninth Psalm, 'Lord God of Hosts, show us the light of Thy countenance, and we shall be saved.' And I add to these words, 'Lord, give Thyself to me eternally, and my happiness will be complete.' The same Prophet exclaimed, 'My God, I shall be satisfied when I behold Thy Son in Thy likeness.' I have been happier than in beholding Him really present, faith has shown me the glory of His majesty shining through the veil of mystery in which He is enveloped. Hidden though He be, I have still as great consolation in possessing Him as if I beheld His glory, because my hopes are united to the merit of the sacrifice.

V. *Demanding final perseverance.*

The Holy Scripture compares the just man to a tree whose leaves never fall nor decay. By this figure is doubtless intended the care with which he preserves himself from mortal sin, and thereby retains the merits which should adorn His soul.

That we may preserve until our entrance into eternity the merits of our prayers, our virtues, and our sacrifices, and that we may be saved from the terrible misfortune of dying in sin, let us constantly and fervently pray that all our other graces and virtues may be crowned by the grace of final perseverance. Let us ask this favour every day and every night, but at no moment of our lives have we so great an assurance of receiving a favourable answer to our petition as during our act of thanksgiving. The thought of death, which a thousand unforeseen circumstances may render imminent, ought to excite our desires

to see our lives ended and crowned by a happy death.

O my Jesus, grant me, notwithstanding my unworthiness, the favour to love Thee as much as I am capable of loving, in order that by my love I may have the happiness of being united to Thee until the very last hour of my life. In the hope of obtaining that love, and the gift of final perseverance, I accept all the inward and outward crosses which Thou in Thy goodness hast resolved to lay upon me, beseeching Thee that all these trials may not be to my weakness an occasion of sin, or a temptation to abandon my duties towards Thee. O my Jesus, I am ready, by the help of Thy grace, to do and suffer everything that can conform me to Thy sacred will. Deign to maintain me in this resolution until my latest sigh; abandon me not to the malice of mine enemies, who will endeavour even to the end of my life to deprive me of Thy grace. Disappoint their perfidy and malice, and suffer me not to fall again into a state of slavery to them. Grant me the inestimable grace of final perseverance, and grant me another and no less important favour, that of always demanding it; and that in all my prayers I may recommend myself to the powerful protection of Thy holy Mother, from whom I look for succour and aid in obtaining my salvation.

Lord Jesus, my Saviour and my God, be Thou my Guide in that last passage, which must decide my eternal destiny.

Conclusion.

Rejoice, because the hour of your deliverance draws nearer every day.

Ask our Lord that your death may be a deliverance from sorrow as much as a deliverance from the power of sin.

Ask Him that Holy Communion may deliver you from having the misfortune to offend Him, and may support you in the trials which are inherent in every situation in life.

THIRTIETH MEDITATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

THE PRELUDE TO HEAVEN.

Preparation.

ENTER the church with as much joy as if you knew that you were going there to behold Jesus in His glory. For although He is obliged to hide His visible majesty and glory from our feeble sense, He is none the less truly in the tabernacle, in all His beauty and grandeur, and as fully deserves the respect and love which you would show to Him if He were to appear visibly before our mortal eyes.

This idea is so truly Catholic, that the entrance of the church was formerly called Paradise (now abbreviated to *parvis*) because by it we really enter the presence of God. As soon as you have chosen your place, prostrate yourself as if Jesus were about to appear to you. He does more than that in giving Himself to you.

I. *Earth—Heaven.*

When we remember that the whole world was created for the use of man, we may imagine the admiration, the transports of love into which saints would be thrown by the sight of an exquisite flower, when they said, God created this flower for me. This thought applied to all the noble and lovely works of God that met their eye, filled them with lively and

uninterrupted gratitude. But compared to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, the most magnificent works of creation sink into insignificance; and my heart is more deeply affected when I consider the tabernacle, which was also erected for me, than when I look at all the marvellous works that the Almighty Hand of God has created out of nothing. For then all the beauties of earth dwindle into insignificance in the presence of their Creator. When I look abroad I say, My God, how beautiful are Thy works! They incline my soul to love Thee; but I feel more strongly inclined by far to forget all besides in the contemplation of the Sacred Host, in which I adore and love the Eternal Creator of all perishable things.

In permitting me to receive Holy Communion, our Lord bestows upon me the most wonderful gift, except the Incarnation, that the power of God has made.

It is a marvel which surpasses the Creation as much as heaven surpasses earth; and this *marvellous thing* is but the prelude to heaven.

But if you wish to enjoy celestial things, you must impose silence upon your thoughts; repress every word which is contrary to charity; refrain from scrutinizing the intentions of your neighbour; fix the eyes of your heart upon heaven alone; and you will then find it easy to let earthly things pass away from your mind without causing you any further distraction or agitation. Look steadfastly at heaven and at the tabernacle. In these two directions you are certain to find Jesus, and when you fix your eyes upon Him let them be accompanied by your heart.

In everything you do, *Sursum corda!* So will you find peace; and peace in this world is equivalent to happiness.

Yes, you should lift up your eyes to heaven, your country, your everlasting resting-place. There you will shed no more tears; you will feel no more sad-

ness. God will be known, loved, possessed eternally by you. Is not this hope satisfying enough to make you forget yourself and fix your heart on things above?

How glorious are Thy tabernacles; how dear are they to me, O my God! If I find such happiness in them upon earth, what shall I feel when I enter Thine abode in heaven? My soul rejoices to enter into the house of the Lord; it rejoices still more in the assurance that it will not quit His abode until it has itself become His sanctuary and dwelling-place. Thy tabernacle, O my Jesus, is the place of my repose. I come to ask Thee for grace to forget myself in thinking of Thee alone; for grace to love Thee only, like the saints in heaven, who can never cease to think of Thee and to love Thee for ever.

II. *The Eucharistic joys are mingled with our tears.*

Eternal happiness is but a transfiguration of our souls in an ever-increasing glory: it is the eternal flight of created love towards the Infinite. Heaven is its glorious region above; but we must not forget that love must first commence its flight upon earth before it can reach those blessed abodes where sorrow shall be no more. Before we attain the heights of heaven we must traverse the 'valley of tears.' Without reckoning the *adversities* of life, the pious soul can find in its ordinary occurrences abundant cause for tears. The instinct derived from that infinite love of which we are the objects causes us to feel the utter impossibility of finding any affection upon earth which is able to give full satisfaction to the soul. Sadness arises in every soul that feels an unsatisfied craving for the love of God. It finds itself pent in and circumscribed upon earth without knowing the true cause of its uneasiness and longing desires. For on

the other side, our Lord presses our hearts in order to wear out the life of nature in them and lead them to seek the higher life of grace. We then feel deprived of all outward or inward support, and attribute to ordinary causes or chance events that distress of mind which should be the first step to our spiritual transformation. Out of Jesus we can find no rest. Our sufferings, although they are severe, are yet not entirely without sweetness, because God brings with Him a feeling of celestial happiness, which the soul enjoys without knowing from whence it derives it. This feeling appears strange at first, because nothing upon earth resembles it. We experience a sudden thrill of happiness, strong as love, rapid as lightning, which passes through the soul, leaving an impression of *sadness* behind, because it is the remembrance of a happiness which has *passed away*.

The soul that loves Jesus Christ only, finds no difficulty in praying, humiliating itself, renouncing worldly pleasures, and suffering patiently. The more it acts, wearies itself, or suffers for Him, the more it desires to act and suffer. Nothing can satisfy its ardour, because love is a consuming fire that grows by the sacrifices upon which it feeds, and it never thinks it can do enough or devote itself sufficiently. It is by love that Jesus rules the heart.

O Jesus! sorrow is one of the conditions of my union with Thee. Receive, then, all that I suffer in my soul, my heart, and my senses, as my preparation for receiving Thee.

My cup of life is filled with bitterness. I might, like many others, have only touched it with my lips, and turned away without ever draining the bitter dregs, or receiving the fulness of Thy heavenly consolations. But such was not Thy will, O my God. The mournful shadows which have darkened my life have always been brightened by the soft rays of the

Holy Eucharist. It is not in a complaining spirit that I now speak of my trials; it is only in hopes of receiving a little consolation. And yet I prefer the grace of suffering to all the joys of earth, and I would not exchange my tears for any worldly happiness. O Jesus! leave the sadness which oppresses me always at the surface of my heart, and may its depths be stirred only by the joy of Holy Communion, mingled with perfect resignation to Thy will.

III. *Preparing our souls to receive grace from God.*

Lord Jesus, behold me before the Altar as if in the porch of heaven and divided from Thy presence only by a veil. Send Thine angels to purify my heart, which is soon to be Thy abode, and to adorn it as they invisibly adorn the Altar upon which Thou art going to descend. On the day of my first Communion I was permitted to obtain a glimpse of heaven, and the beatitude which my heart then first enjoyed has been prolonged since then by successive Communions, so that it has now only the intuitive vision and perpetuity of enjoyment to expect in heaven. But that I may really enjoy this beatitude, I must faithfully preserve the graces of each succeeding Communion.

What praise and blessings do I owe Thee, O my God, for so mercifully admitting me to partake by anticipation of the happiness of angels and saints! But as a perfect union must embrace all our outward and inward acts, I beseech Thee to enable me to live in the purity of true love. Transform my whole life by the uprightness of my desires, by the veracity of my acts of love, into a succession of preparations for Communion, followed by continual acts of thanksgiving. Deign to establish my soul in such an union with Thee as shall make it in some measure a partaker

of the lot of those blessed ones above, who enjoy the unclouded sight of Thy Divine Essence.

O Jesus! give my heart grace to love Thy house upon earth. Its doors are always open to my desires. I can go in and out freely; but grant also that nothing may prevent me from enjoying to the full the infinite good that I go thither to seek.

IV. *The sure road to everlasting happiness.*

A sure road is one that goes straight to its end. It should also provide us with all necessary assistance for the journey and with certain protection against our enemies. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the sure road that leads to God—to happiness. Our Lord has said, 'I am the Way;' and we should understand Him to mean, that when we are united to Him we cannot fail of arriving at our predestined salvation. The light of His grace enlightens you, prevents you from going astray. It keeps the enemy of your salvation at a distance and encourages you by its salutary influences.

Holy Communion is our most sure and certain guide in the road to heaven. That road of light and glory begins at the Holy Table; it passes through the tabernacle, and ends at the gate of heaven. Jesus is this Way; and when He invites you to receive Him, He invites you to advance in His path of life.

St. Augustine, preaching at Hippo, put this question to his people: 'If you were free to remain upon earth to all eternity, in the full enjoyment of all earthly happiness, but without ever knowing God except by faith, or else to dwell in a state of suffering here below, and afterwards to pass by death into the world to come, where you might behold God face to face, which of the two states would you choose? And he added, 'If you hesitate for one moment to

make your choice between these two destinies, you know not the love of God. Humble yourselves, therefore, because you are still worldly minded and carnal.'

The great African Doctor would find at the present day many Christians who, if a similar question were put to them, would think principally of their worldly possessions. But if he had addressed himself to those souls frequently nourished by Holy Communion, ah! how ardently would they sigh to be admitted into the eternal presence of Him who on earth had been their hope, their consolation, and their daily bread! Nothing can make us so fully comprehend the difference between earth and heaven as Holy Communion. Jesus will be our All in heaven, and He is no less our All upon earth in the Holy Eucharist.

O sweetest Saviour, I beseech Thee to detach me wholly from earth. May my sorrows be the means of leading me to heaven. May I ascend thither more rapidly in proportion as I lighten myself of the burden of all earthly things. Ah! if it is sad to feel that all the things most loved on earth are falling away from us, leaving us stripped of all our heart's desire, it is most sweet to feel that we shall find it all again, and more than all, in heaven.

I receive from Thee, O Lord, many immeasurable benefits. Thou hast received from me nothing but unpardonable ingratitude, by which I have richly merited the condemnation that I now fear to receive. By thy mercy I now venture to hope for the heaven which Thou hast promised to bestow upon me. Why did I not sooner begin to love Thee?

O most Holy Eucharist, Thou knowest what Thou art to my soul, and how Thou hast led me out of the land of exile, to seek my native country in heaven.

V. *Our place at the Holy Table, at the Cross, and in Heaven.*

Three things alone are worthy to be desired: the Holy Eucharist, the Cross, and Heaven. The Holy Eucharist awaits the Christian in the church; the Cross in the world; and Heaven at our death. The Holy Eucharist gives us strength to take up the daily cross of our lives; and the Cross, united to the Holy Eucharist, permits us to look calmly in the face of death, considering it as the gate of heaven. Your present and your eternal destiny are bound up with the life of Jesus. He assumed upon the Cross that lowest place which He occupied during His life on earth. You cannot pretend to choose a different one, or to quit it if you already occupy it. You will not remain in it very long; and before you quit it irrevocably, you may, as often as you will, soften your cross by the consolations of the Holy Eucharist. Our true place in the world is, then, at the foot of the Cross and at the Holy Table. Never forget this truth. Seek no other place but this. Then Jesus will offer for you to His Father that ineffable prayer which He addressed to Him after the Last Supper: 'Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with Me where I am.'*

Yes; the God whom I adore in the tabernacle, and who is the Creator of Heaven, has prepared a place there for me. That place awaits me; and when I have deserved it, God will immediately admit me to His eternal beatific vision. I can already say, How vile does earth appear to me when I regard the tabernacle! But much inferior is the tabernacle to heaven, and heaven to the vision of God.

O Jesus! when shall I be inseparably united to Thee? and when shall I no longer need to say, Come,

* St. John xvii. 24.

Lord Jesus! I call upon Thee, and I desire Thee. I ardently long for the passing and imperfect Eucharistic union with Thee. How, then, should I not desire with infinitely greater ardour the day on which I shall possess Thee for all eternity? Hasten the coming of that blessed day, O my God! but prepare my soul to behold it and to become inseparably united to Thee.

Act of Thanksgiving.

You are near our Lord Jesus Christ, and He is more than near you: He is in you! He is yours! You possess Jesus as truly as the angels do. Adore Him with them, and you will never grow weary of praising His infinite perfections, of which the greatest and most marvellous perfection of all is at this moment in yourself.

Comprehend your happiness in being already united to Jesus Christ. Ah, remain in Him always! Desire also to arrive *there*, where you will be sure of never losing Him.

The season of our act of thanksgiving is a foretaste of the life of heaven: the prelude to the eternal hymn of praise.

I. *The possession of God upon earth.*

God has made us *spirits* like the angels, that we may enjoy Him. But as our present situation does not permit us to enjoy the vision of His Divinity in the same manner as the angels do, the Word made Flesh has become *our Bread*, in order to enable us to participate in the benefit of an actual union with God, under a form appropriate to our condition. We may participate in it in a degree proportioned to the strength of grace in us and to the earnestness of our own desires.

I could not define the difference between heaven and Holy Communion in any other way than by

saying that Holy Communion is *God in me:* in the midst of, or in spite of all my miseries; while heaven is *myself in God*, in the purity of a love that can never more be weakened or extinguished. When shall I be able to love Him thus!

The saints are absorbed in the Divinity, it is true; but when I possess Jesus Christ, although He is united to me in an unspeakable manner, yet I am unhappily capable of suffering my thoughts to wander from His presence.

Lord Jesus, I feel that Thou art present to me: and this certainly ought to be amply sufficient to concentrate my thoughts upon Thee; and yet it does not do so. Thou art mine, but soon Thou wilt be so no longer, and in a few seconds Thou wilt be at an immeasurable distance from my adoring heart. Therefore it is that I cannot fully enjoy my happiness in possessing Thee. My joy is always mingled with sadness, and my thoughts transport me to the place where Thou wilt never more disappear or depart from my longing eyes.

O my Lord Jesus, shall I say to Thee with St. Bonaventure, after enjoying the Sacred Host, the fruit of the true life, the life that is to come: 'I will no longer desire or enjoy any of the pleasures of life.' Having found sovereign happiness in Thee, I renounce that shadow of happiness which is offered to us here below. The Holy Eucharist, in which I possess without beholding Thee, is even now the paradise of my present life. I hope in Thy mercy that I shall be permitted to see Thee and possess Thee in heaven, for my eternal felicity.

Hasten, O Lord, in Thy mercy, the coming of that blessed day of sovereign felicity, that day of Communion on which the sun shall never set, and in which the favour of Thy presence, now but a passing happiness, shall become immutable and eternal!

II. *The prelude of the intuitive vision.*

The saints in heaven will receive fresh revelations of the wisdom and love of God, and experience a new delight in Him during every moment of their celestial existence. You should hope that each Communion, in like manner, may cause you to participate more intimately than the last in the substance of the Incarnate Word; and if you do not receive more sensible consolations, you will at least obtain new graces.

I possess God, whom the angels adore in heaven; but they contemplate Him face to face, while I do not behold Him! So long as I am not permitted to see Him in His beauty, I will count for nothing all the marvels of the world. At this moment, I cannot find either in earth or heaven, anything greater, more holy, or more beautiful than God, whom I adore in my heart. But to satisfy my desires in full, I should be obliged to ascend higher than the highest heaven, and to aspire even to the throne of God. There only can my soul be satisfied, and never upon earth can it find in any created being aught but the incomplete image as it were of the God whom it possesses, but desires still more ardently to see as it is seen by Him.

My God, in Holy Communion I ascend to Thee, or rather Thou dost descend to me with the same love which will form our happiness in heaven; but I ask for more even yet. I entreat Thee to pour the riches of Thy mercy, at all times and in all places, upon my life on earth, until I exchange it for a life in heaven; that so my soul may finally attain to that blessed day in which its ardent desire to behold Thee shall be swallowed up for evermore in the blessedness of the eternal contemplation of Thy glory.

O Jesus, how do I long for the arrival of that day when I shall behold Thee for ever and ever; when I

shall love Thee with a love immutable as Thyself; when I shall be united to Thee so closely as no longer to belong to myself, and when I shall feel Thee to be my life for evermore! But that I may see that happy day, grant that my frivolous desires, once extinguished by Thy Divine mercy, may never more revive. In Thy presence I vow to fix my mind and heart upon Thee alone: suffer them no more to grovel upon the earth. The earth would soil their purity, and prevent me from loving and enjoying the Holy Eucharist. Save me from such a terrible misfortune.

III. *Assurance of eternal happiness.*

By these words, 'I will come again, and take you unto Myself, that where I am, there you may be also,' our Lord consoles His Apostles for His approaching departure. He spoke to them, as God, of His abode in heaven in the bosom of His Father, and promised them that He would take them to dwell there also at the close of their earthly career.

Jesus expresses the same intention to me. He desires to see me occupy in eternity the place which He has prepared for me in the house of His Father; but does He not also desire to find me at this moment where He is, that is to say, dwelling in thought and affection with Him in the tabernacle, in His Sacred Heart? If all my life long I dwell in His tabernacle upon earth, shall I not have a good hope of being received at the hour of my death into the eternal tabernacles of heaven by my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?

What a favour is bestowed upon me in permitting me to know Jesus Christ now present in my heart: to know that He loves me so much that He desires to dwell with me as much as it is possible for Him in His glorified state to dwell with any of His creatures.

Others may say, These lands, these possessions are mine; but it is enough for me to say, This tabernacle is mine! This is all I have; but in it every good thing is contained. Jesus Christ is my treasure. I want nothing upon earth: I want *nothing;* for I have *All.*

Jesus Christ is my All. By day, I regard Him in the tabernacle; at night, I awake with His Name upon my lips and His image in my hand. If I weep, it is from the fear of losing Him, or wandering away from Him; when I fly to His feet, it is because life itself seems to fail me when I am away from Him. All is so sad without Jesus! With Him one can bear anything. Yes, Jesus Christ is my All; and therefore am I indifferent to everything which does not interest Him, or has not any connection with Him.

O Jesus, if I had not learned by faith that to contemplate Thee in heaven is a joy far greater than to receive Holy Communion, I should not have believed that there could exist a felicity superior or even equal to that which I experience in receiving Thee into my heart: in loving Thee in the Holy Eucharist. Now, as in every other time of Communion, trials may come, sadness may cause my tears to flow, but I have received strength to bear my cross, even to bear a still heavier one, in the hope that it will speed me on the way to heaven. Lord, grant me Thy spirit of strength, constancy, and generosity, and no earthly obstacle shall keep me at a distance from Thee.

IV. *Holy Communion is the commencement of eternal felicity.*

Eternal happiness is, God seen and profoundly loved. Beatitude begun, is Jesus known, loved, and possessed in the Holy Eucharist.

The tabernacle transforms the earth into a new

heaven; but now that I have communicated, my heart is that heaven, which has no cause to envy the blessedness of heaven above. Jesus, the true happiness of the angels and saints, will He not be my happiness also? The elect have *all* in God: they enjoy Him without want and without satiety. I have enjoyed a share of their happiness. In truth, Jesus is no less completely to me than to the saints the light of my mind, the love of my heart, the happiness of my whole being; but my happiness knows no satiety. As it is of short duration, the want of it is often felt, and its return most ardently desired. Jesus, unless I oppose any resistance to Him, remains my strength in Holy Communion, the fountain in which I can quench my irresistible thirst for happiness.

It is sweet to me, O my God, to enjoy at the Holy Table this foretaste of the happiness that Thou hast prepared for me in heaven. It is sweet to feel Thy love shining in me and around me: sweet to see the effects of the great charity of Thy Heart in the souls of other communicants. This is the only resemblance that we can find upon earth to the happiness of the saints in heaven, which extends to all, yet is as complete and perfect in each one as in all. It is so with my happiness. I have received it from Thee, complete in itself, but taking nothing away from the happiness of others. And Thou dost give Thyself to me so completely that there is nothing for which I could envy others. In heaven the elect are mingled with the angels. It is affecting to think, that beside every communicant who approaches the Holy Table an angel prostrates itself with him before the Sacred Host. But the angels and the saints adore and love without division or distraction of mind. Shall it then be possible that when heaven is opened before me here, I should adore Thee and love Thee less than Thou art adored and loved by my Angel Guardian?

O my Jesus, Thou now givest me so much of heaven, as in my present condition it is possible for me to receive. Grant that I also may offer unto Thee all that it *can* offer of gratitude, love, and praise.

Thou art my love and my joy; grant me then this favour, that, out of Thee, nothing may affect me, nothing may either attract or please me. Be Thou my All, and may I be all Thine: so shall my heart be lost in Thine.

My God, I desire to keep my heart *so high*, and so near to Thee, that the voices *from below* may pass over its surface only, without in the least affecting my union with Thee.

V. *Of learning patience, by looking unto heaven.*

'It is from heaven,' says Bossuet, 'that Jesus has brought us a commencement of glory in the blessing of grace; a foretaste of sight in faith; a portion of felicity in hope; and a secret pleasure which does not trouble the will, but calms it, and powerfully attracts the whole heart to God.' Let us be contented with what Jesus gives us. Is it not a thousand times more than we deserve? In the holy sadness which often follows the too rapidly fleeting moments of our union with Christ in the Holy Eucharist, let us not lose sight of the happiness in reserve for us when our exile is ended.

There are three degrees of that happiness: *seeing* God; *possessing* Him; *enjoying* Him. By faith I am assured that Holy Communion has put me in possession of Jesus. I behold Him by an illumination of grace, over and above the simple action of my faith. I enjoy Him; for my supernatural, although invisible, union with Him is complete. The door of my true home and native country is indeed closed to me for the present; but this delay does not prevent Jesus from initiating me by hope into that celestial happi-

ness. He leaves His throne, He comes down to me, and He says, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'* Does He not also say, Take courage, I will continue to come to you, until the day when all your chains shall be broken to pieces in the last kiss of My love!

What a glorious promise! How can I thank Him for it, except by preparing myself to receive new favours by the exercise of continual fidelity?

United to Thee, Lord Jesus, I begin this day, as if it were a day in heaven. The saints possess no more than I do now, only they preserve their happiness, while I am still obliged to return to the fight. I have placed in Thy Heart my desire to love Thee and possess Thee. Grant me also a desire to suffer all that Thou shalt see good to lay upon me. This suffering, so repugnant to human nature and feeling, is my greatest good. I accept it gratefully, and I beseech Thee to glorify Thyself in me in all my trails.

Lord Jesus, complete my act of thanksgiving, and prepare me for a new Communion which shall lead me straight to heaven. Make me able to cling to nothing, to desire nothing, to regret nothing. Grant that I may ascend nearer to heaven in proportion to my detachment from earth, and that I may die when I shall be too near Thee to remain longer upon earth.

Conclusion.

The material edifices that we inhabit here are only passing abodes to shelter us during our short pilgrimage on earth. 'Oh, how easy would everything become to us if we were fully convinced that the less we have possessed here below, the greater will be our happiness in eternity, where our dwelling-places will correspond in glory to the love with which

* Apoc. ii. 10.

we have imitated the life of Jesus Christ our Lord!' Let us tend with all our might to heaven by Jesus Christ. Let us come frequently to Holy Communion to ask from Him an assurance of our beatitude. But let us not fix our minds upon Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament only while we are at church, but let the remembrance of Him always nourish our hearts and attach them to Him more closely, by raising them to the hope of that blessed time when every veil shall be withdrawn, and we shall enter into the full possession of God.

THE END.

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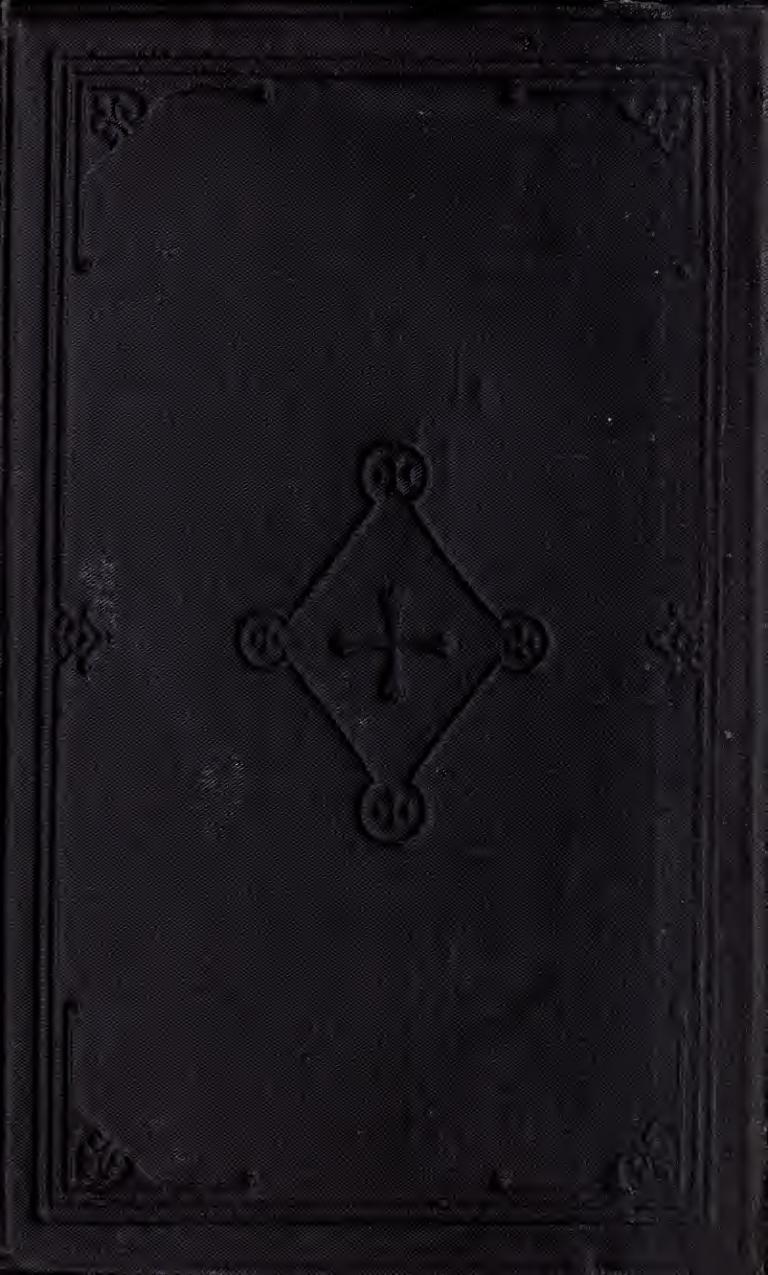
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