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Spiritual Retreats

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SPIRITUAL RETREATS.

Emprimatur :

HENRICUS EDUARDUS,
Archiep. Westmonast.

OCT. 19, 1888.



SPIRITUAL RETREATS

NOTES OF MEDITATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

GIVEN IN THE

CONVENT OF THE SACRED HEART, ROEHAMPTON

BY THE LATE

MOST REV. GEORGE PORTER, S.J.

ARCHBISHOP OF BOMBAY

Third Edition

14416
LONDON: BURNS & OATES, LIMITED
NEW YORK: CATHOLIC PUBLICATION SOCIETY CO.

1890

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ADVERTISEMENT TO THE SECOND
EDITION.

To the Notes of the three Retreats originally published have been added in this Edition those of a fourth given in 1877.

The work was intended primarily for those who assisted at the Retreats given by Father Porter, and who welcomed the attempt to have the lessons contained in them recalled to their memory: it has, however, been equally welcomed by many who have never made retreats, but who have found in the Notes helps to meditation and rules for practical guidance in the difficulties of their spiritual life in the world.

C. L. C.

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7

PREPARATORY PRAYER.

5

ACT OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE.

“O LORD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER.”

“I WILL SPEAK TO THE LORD, THOUGH I AM DUST AND ASHES.”

My God, I firmly believe Thou art everywhere present and seest all things. Thou seest my nothingness, my inconstancy, my sinfulness. Thou seest me in all my actions; Thou seest me in this my meditation. I bow down before Thee and worship Thy Divine Majesty with my whole being. Cleanse my heart from all vain, wicked and distracting thoughts. Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will, that I may pray with reverence, attention, and devotion.

PRAYER.

O God, my Lord and my Creator, look graciously on Thy child, the work of thy hands, and mercifully grant me the help of Thy grace, that all my intentions and acts during this meditation may be directed purely to the service and praise of Thy Divine Majesty. Through Christ our Lord.

JULY TWENTY-SECOND, 1885.

[8.30 P.M.]

Points for the Morning's Meditation.

ON THE DISPOSITIONS WE OUGHT TO BRING TO
RETREAT.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—For a Composition of Place imagine yourself kneeling in the Presence of our Lord, wondering, pondering what you are to accomplish during this retreat.

SECOND PRELUDE.—“Enlighten my understanding, O Lord, and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may know what Thou dost wish from me; inflame my will that I may give generously whatever Thou shalt ask.”

FIRST POINT. Look back over your past life; see how it has passed away most completely, like an arrow shot through the air, leaving no trace behind, or like the foam which rises with the wave, breaks and is dispersed. During these years there have been days of sunshine and of joy, days of weariness and sorrow; there have been pleasures, excursions, visits, a great deal which pleased, and now all these joys and pleasures are gone as though they had never been a reality, but only a dream. And much in the same

way our cloudy days—days of trouble, disappointment, vexation—are gone likewise. What remains? Only our merit or demerit.

That which has been shall be again. We shall have a succession of light and dark, meeting events pleasant and unpleasant, and in the end all will be past. So we may think of past life, and learn from it how sorrow and joy will become to us one day a matter of indifference.

From that consideration I must draw this lesson, that I must not fix my heart on the present; I must not be too eager for joys, too frightened at sorrow and suffering. All that remains is the good or evil I have done, the merit or demerit, life or death. Everything else passes away, that is all which remains. If I am wise I shall arrange the future in accordance with that grand truth. Pray for light to understand how transitory everything here is. Pray to lay it to heart, and try to spend the time of retreat profitably.

SECOND. If I had spent all my life perfectly, as well as possible, avoiding all sin, faithful to God's grace till now, it would be no more than I ought to have done: had I been perfectly holy, I should have been only what I ought to have been. How far has it been in my mind that I must spend my days well? How far have I lived with that idea?—for one week, or even for one whole day? If so, thank God. If not—if I have been indifferent about merit, if I have been following my own will, anxious for pleasure, then say *Peccavi*. I have sinned. I strike my breast, I have sinned, I have failed in my duty. Now I shall

bring myself to a right view and judgment of my life. I shall wonder at my own dulness and blindness, how I could have been bewitched to follow foolishness and vanity. I shall be amazed at myself. Esau was angry with himself for having sold his birthright. I have been a fool when I forgot all I should remember. Pray heartily for grace.

THIRD. In what dispositions am I to make my retreat? Possibly I may know what I want from God. I may have a definite object in view; if so, put it well before you and always come back to it. If, on the other hand, you don't know, pray that you may discover what is wanting—some fault to be corrected, or some duty you are performing carelessly. Have some definite object, if it is only the proper manner of going through your spiritual duties, or your way of dealing in your family, the overcoming some coldness, some attachment.

Resolve to take each exercise quietly, leisurely, with a great desire to profit by it. Accept each, hour by hour, and you will make an immense advance in the service of God. New light will open out to you; you will see farther, and understand better, and be better disposed. Don't let your mind be carried away to another exercise that is to follow.

In order to secure the necessary calmness of mind, you should observe recollection and silence. You will then apply more easily the subject of meditation. Once more. Don't lay down terms with Almighty God, but say, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth".

End with a colloquy. Pray for all who are making

the retreat, that to all it may be a time of grace and abundant grace. Grace is going begging if we will but take it. The more we pray for others the more grace shall we have for ourselves.

FIRST DAY.

[10.45 A.M.]

ON GRACE AND GLORY.

THIS meditation on grace and glory is the old meditation on the end of man put in a particular light. What is the teaching of the Church with regard to grace and glory? Grace is the supernatural gift of God which makes us friends of God and heirs of heaven. We can't be God's enemies and be in a state of grace. Grace is a quality of the soul,—not my nature,—and is represented simply and graphically by the white robe in baptism. "Receive this white robe, and see thou carry it without stain before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ." The white robe is the fitting symbol of that supernatural gift with which the soul is invested. It is a "participation of the Divine Nature," as St. Peter says. Further, it makes us heirs of heaven. If we pass out of life in grace, because of this robe of grace and being partakers of the Divine Nature, we have a right to heaven—a right freely conferred by God. The state of grace is the first stage, the state of glory the second stage following from the first. So long as we are in this

life of probation grace is the nearest approach to glory: it has a resemblance to glory, it is a foreshadowing of glory—considerations which should raise the esteem we have of grace.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine you are kneeling in the Presence of God, of our Blessed Lady, and of the whole heavenly court.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O my God, and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding to see the relation between grace here and glory hereafter; inflame my will ardently to desire and seek after Thy grace in this life that I may share Thy glory in eternity.

FIRST POINT. God has created us for eternal glory, and therefore He intends us to lead our lives in a state of grace. Glory is our true end, the possession of God through all eternity. In this life we are marvellously dependent on our body, our senses, nerves, health. It seems as if the soul depended entirely on the body. In the next life the spirit will assert its supremacy, and the body will be its obedient servant, not so necessary to the soul and much more spiritualised. A glorified body is a spiritualised body. Here the soul obtains knowledge through the senses; it is almost entirely dependent on the senses.

What would satisfy our nature? The two great objects of our endeavour—truth and goodness. We have two powers—understanding and will: understanding, that we may hold truth; will, that we may

follow goodness. In glory these two find a perfect object, and therefore perfect happiness. All truth, all goodness, will be revealed to us, without insecurity, for ever. It is a state in which all our longings will be satisfied. When we consider that, we should be filled with gratitude to God who has created us for such a glorious end. Our understanding will apprehend truth in God distinctly, clearly, face to face; our wills rise to God, are absorbed, filled with Him. He more than fills all our capacity. That is the perfect happiness for which we are destined. How we should thank God that He has made us what we are! If we have ever had a thought "I wish I had never existed," let us confess it was wrong, bad; ask Him to banish it, and thank Him for the blessing of existence. Poor, finite beings, to be for ever happy with Him! We should marvel at His goodness in calling us into existence in order that we may share His happiness. Works of art delight us greatly; but what is the greatest work of art to this? We think of earthly joys, joys that have made us overlook dreariness, disappointments, and sorrows; but what are earthly joys in comparison with the happiness of heaven?

The lesson to be learned is—I should be very grateful to God. My gratitude should know no limit. I should always have that end present to my mind. It is this which renders life bearable, and not bearable only, but sometimes joyful, sometimes almost a foretaste of heaven. Without it there is dreariness—dreariness not of God's making, but of mine.

SECOND. He gives me glory on condition that I

maintain myself in the state of grace, that I avoid sin and obey His commandments. How little God asks in comparison with what He offers! Suppose He says, "You must spend fifty years in grace, and I will give you fifty millions of years of all the happiness you can imagine": how could I hesitate for a moment to accept? Anyone who refuses such an offer would be a victim of the greatest folly. One year, not all sorrow, not all sadness, and to be rewarded by a million happy years! It does not depend on me whether I have health or riches, but I can always make my life one of comparative happiness if only I preserve the grace of God, and then I am to be rewarded. It is not a question of millions of years, but of eternity. *There is a point I should dwell on—How little God asks of me, how much it is for my interest even here.* Then I should renew my act of faith and resolution.

THIRD. I am made for glory and grace. All else is nothing to me. All else is only framework. "What will it profit to have gained the whole world and to have lost my soul?" What can compensate for loss of friendship with God? Money, honour, could not compensate for the loss of eternal happiness. What pleasure and what delight, what charms of art or music or poetry, can compensate for such a loss? All comes to an end, and I find myself face to face with eternity, and I look at the glory of God and of His Mother and the Saints for one moment; and then to know I have forfeited it for ever for the sake of some wretched creature! That will be a moment of supreme misery.

End with a colloquy. That I may lay deeply to

heart this relation of grace and glory, that I may understand what eternity is, what the prize is that is within my reach, and that it only needs a slight effort to secure it. If we only could understand what is offered to us, all in the world would appear the merest dross. We should see that all the pleasures of earth are only deserving consideration as they offer the opportunity of spurning them.

CONSIDERATION.

FIRST DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION.

SOME people imagine meditation is something very mysterious. I will try to say as much as can be said about it in the time.

Meditation is a form of prayer. Now prayer is a raising up of the mind and heart to God in whatever way you do it. There is another definition given by St. Thomas. He says prayer is the raising up of the mind to God with *petitions* for those things of which we stand in need. Forms of prayer are very nearly infinite, for how many ways there are of exercising the mind and will on God. Use your memory; recall the blessings He has given you; thank Him, recall your own sins, and wonder at the mercy He has shown you.

Or take the Attributes of God and dwell on them—

His Power, Wisdom, Justice, Holiness, Bounty, etc. You may spend a long while in contemplating these and make excellent prayers. Take him as King—look out attributes of royalty ; or again as Father, as Master, as Friend, as Teacher—what attributes ? Or dwell on His works, rising from effects to causes, to motives. Why did He decree the Incarnation ? Why did He not create a body for Himself from the earth ?

Why did He take a woman for His mother ? Dwelling on considerations such as these is raising up the understanding to God. Then I may pray, lifting up my mind without opening my lips, or vocally I may say the same prayer over and over as Jesus did in the garden,—the “ Our Father,” attending to the words— or thinking of a mystery of our Lord’s life as we do in the Rosary, or go through the *Miserere*, and after each verse, say, “ O God, be merciful to me a sinner”. Take the *Te Deum* or any psalm of praise and make an act of admiration at the mystery of the Incarnation, after each verse saying, “ The Word was made Flesh,” and so with combinations and repetitions you may make a great variety in prayer ; and these are very serviceable when you come to make a formal meditation, that is, exercising the three faculties of your soul—memory, understanding, and will. You may make a prayer with each of the three faculties, without calling in the others. With the memory merely recalling mercies. With the understanding considering the Incarnation—what an act of love it was in God ! The more you look at it, the more it will expand, and the more easy will it be afterwards to make affections. The beauty of His

love in inventing the Incarnation. The knowledge of God how perfect, without effort or toil as it is in me. How everything is bare to the knowledge of God, that may occupy me for a long time—that is prayer of the understanding.

Now to come to meditation. It should begin with an act of the Divine Presence and with what is called a Preparatory Prayer ; for example—“ I will speak to the Lord though I am but dust and ashes. My God, I most firmly believe that Thou art here and that Thou seest the most secret motions of my heart. I acknowledge that I am utterly unworthy to come into Thy presence on account of my great unworthiness. I adore Thee from the depth of my nothingness. O Lord my God, I offer unto Thee this my prayer. Grant that my offering may be acceptable to Thee, and do Thou vouchsafe to direct to Thy honour and glory all the thoughts, words, actions, and sufferings of this hour, which may be the last of my life.”

1. Then follows the Composition of Place. I put myself in a certain scene, as, for instance, at the foot of the Cross, or kneeling by the side of Jesus as in Confession, or on my deathbed, etc. To have some scene of this sort present to the mind prevents distraction. The use of it is that if I am distracted I bring myself back more easily by reverting to the scene.

2. Next, I make a petition for fruit : “ Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will : enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend my last end ; inflame my will that I may desire it above all things ”.

Take the point we were meditating on this morning. God has created me for an eternity of happiness, and has placed me here that I may gain it. For this I must observe His commandments. The effort of memory and understanding will always be easy if you ask, What does this mean for *me*? What instruction for the guidance of *my* life? For example, I am promised a great reward. Were this reward to last only for a few years or a million of years, I should try to be patient that I might obtain it, but it is for eternity! And what sacrifice have I to make? Not much. The service of God is not such an intolerable yoke. He lays on me the easiest conditions. What follows? I shall never risk my eternal happiness. I shall never think anything too hard. I shall submit to the will of God in everything. So I will love God with all my heart, willingly do all that is necessary.

You can develop the idea of eternity and the shortness of life, and how little the servants of God suffer. Then you will desire this happiness. You will be sorry you have thought so lightly about this eternity. Make acts of contrition for having let so much of life go by in what leaves you only regret and sorrow. Henceforth may I think all that passes of little worth. No wonder St. Jerome passed hours in the desert repeating, "Eternity, Eternity, Eternity". *There* is an object which could occupy the understanding long: it will take hold of the mind, shape our affections, rule our life, prompt us to make resolutions.

Meditation, then, is not very difficult, you see. You take a scene from our Lord's life, or a truth of

theology, and work it out in the way I have described.

The real truth is, if we cared much for our soul, we should go to God as our natural refuge. The hour of prayer would be our hour of consolation. Shut out from the world, we should find converse with God delightful. We should not say, "I have nothing I want, nothing I can think of, to talk to him about". Alone with a friend, the time is short. With a parent, a counsellor, a confessor, we have plenty to say. We want direction; why can't we go to God as to our loving Father? If only we could look on prayer as the talking of the soul with God, the intercourse of friend with Friend; but we imagine prayer to be something which is not prayer, and the idea we form of meditation is not real meditation. Cast yourself before God. It should not be difficult. Some mornings you have no power of speech. Say, "My God, I am dumb; loosen my tongue". Make use of passages from the Psalms, as simple as possible.

We won't surrender ourselves to talk to God, yet we are in such want, and there are so many relations that bind us to Him. The secret of prayer is not to fear it, but to think "I am going to my friend".

You finish your meditation with a colloquy. Renew your resolutions, pray for grace and help to keep them. We don't *ask* enough of God. He reproached His disciples, "You have asked *nothing*"; as if we were not very poor and miserable, and had not so many things we want. We come to prayer with a regiment of distractions, cares, troubles, pleasures. That regi-

ment should be left behind. If we could go to prayer in a spirit of confidence, as to a Father, a Friend, then prayer would be most sweet, most precious. Suarez said, "I would not part with a quarter of an hour of my meditation, not for all my theology". If we come to that state, we know how sweet it is to converse with God.

Spiritual Reading, First Day, *Imitation*, Book iii., chaps. 20, 21.

FIRST DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE MEANS GOD OFFERS FOR OBTAINING GRACE.

THIS morning we considered our final end—eternal happiness—and the means whereby we attain this end—the knowledge, love, and service of God in this life. If you know, love, and serve Him, you secure grace here and glory hereafter. Now, consider the means offered for the attainment of grace.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine that we are at the foot of the Cross on Mount Calvary.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O my God, enlighten my understanding that I may see how many and what great helps Thou hast given me towards my salvation, and inflame my will to desire them ardently.

FIRST POINT. The light of the true faith. We have been called to the Kingdom of Christ, to be members

of His Church. We might be saved outside the Church, but with what difficulties! Idolaters, Mahometans, etc., how little light they have, how many obstacles, what few graces compared to ours! If the choice were put before us, we would sooner remain Catholics in whatever poverty and suffering than go somewhere where we could not be Catholics. We are placed near all the appointed channels of grace; it rests with us to make use of grace, to receive it more abundantly or less abundantly. God has provided lavishly for us. First He has sent His Son to found the Church. Then He sends the Holy Ghost to perfect and complete this Kingdom, to establish, adorn, and perfect it in true doctrine. Think how the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity abide in the Church to preserve the truth and the Sacraments. Then consider how he has given His Mother to be our Mother and to be Patroness of the Church, because of her Divine Maternity. She is the Mother of those redeemed by the Blood of her Son. God might have created a body for Jesus Christ from the slime of the earth; but no, He would give Him a Mother that she might be Mother to us. Then there are the martyrs, the doctors of the Church, virgins, holy people, all for us and for each one of us—all, so many benefits which assist us to receive the light and grace we need to secure salvation.

The practical conclusion I draw is that God has provided most amply for me, that it is impossible to conceive a redemption more complete. He has provided most liberally, and if I fail I cannot reproach

God, but He can reproach me. “*What could I have done that I have not done? Could I have done more?*” If I fail, the fault will be wholly and entirely mine. I can never call in question Thy liberality, my God; it could not be greater. How much have I been wanting! How feebly have I corresponded with Thy grace! How have I neglected the stream of living waters! The fault is all mine, and I confess it. My God, I confess that I have sinned exceedingly by my want of correspondence to Thy grace. I have not understood the treasures at my disposal. I have not made a right use of my talents. I, like the unprofitable servant, have buried perhaps all my talents. I have complained that Thou wert harsh and austere, but Thou art most liberal. Give me grace to realise the means of grace that are at my disposal. I thank Thee for Thy liberal provision. May I never again squander it. May I prove my gratitude by my zeal in corresponding. I will make a wiser use of my opportunities. Give me yet longer life that I may redeem the past. I will do the best I can in the future. Invoke Jesus Christ, who purchased this grace for you. Invoke Mary, who corresponded with it so perfectly. Invoke the Saints, who understood the value of grace.

SECOND. Almighty God has so lovingly ordained our life in this world that everything in it may turn to good. To those who jealously cling to grace, who are resolved not to forfeit it, *all* that happens may turn to good whether it be long life or short life, health or sickness, prosperity or adversity, honour or contempt. We believe this; we believe that God has placed us

here, and that there is no sorrow, no condition or circumstance, that may not add to our glory in heaven; some we must renounce, some we must embrace. In every state, if faithful, we may increase grace. Grace enables us to accept with resignation what is difficult, what causes us to suffer—but also to merit. We ought to thank Almighty God that He has placed us in a probation where all may be turned to good, where all may increase our degree of glory in heaven. I thank Thee that Thou hast so ordained my life that so much that is wearisome and painful may be made so profitable, that for the little sacrifices I make Thou wilt give me the possession of Thyself.

CONCLUSION. To accept the life that is before us from the hands of God with resignation and thankfulness. Whether it be sweet or bitter, smooth or rough, it is from the same loving hand, and we may turn it to profit and gain a hundred-fold if we are only contented to accept the will of God in our regard.

God has provided great graces—and that greatest of graces, the weapon of prayer. When it seems as though I could not stand another hour, I have always prayer. If only I persevere He will not deny me what is necessary for attaining glory. How our trials are sweetened by the graces offered to us, and by the example of Christ our Lord!

I have not used the weapon of prayer as I should. I have not persevered in prayer. When I needed special help, too often have I been unwilling to seek it, too often not zealous to ask for it.

Make these thoughts your own. The fruit that

comes to you in meditation is much more precious than my words. Meditate well and long on these truths, and let them sink into your heart.

FIRST DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

ON THE PUNISHMENT OF GRIEVOUS SIN.

You have meditated on God's design in creating you, how He gives us grace here that we may have glory hereafter. But He has left us our freedom, so that it is possible for us to forfeit glory by renouncing grace, that is, to commit a grievous sin. "In the day you eat the fruit, you die the death." Grievous sin is the death of the soul. A great part of the foundation of spiritual life is in the horror of grievous sin. An immense part of the foundation of spiritual life consists in a spirit of compunction, detestation of sin, a sense of guilt and confusion. These are dispositions we shall cultivate to-morrow. We are going now to consider the punishments of sin. These punishments give us the standard of Almighty God. They show us how He regards sin. If only we could know what a grievous thing it is to forfeit grace, to be cast off from the friendship of our Creator!

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Let us imagine that we are on

Mount Calvary, and kneeling at the foot of the Cross where Jesus Christ hangs dead.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O my God, enlighten my understanding that I may know the number and malice of my sins. In flame my will to conceive a hearty sorrow and detestation of them, and to make a firm purpose to serve Thee with the rest of my life.

FIRST POINT. The fall of the Angels is always a useful exercise. God created an immense number—millions of Angels. It is commonly believed that one-third fell away. He created them pure spirits, entirely independent of matter, with great natural capacity for knowledge, infused knowledge, and God revealed to them secrets of nature unknown to us, and much more of His own Nature and Attributes than we understand. He gave them an upright will, great energy for goodness, and in addition the robe of grace: He made them heirs of heaven on condition of their obeying Him and meriting. He would not save them without their free consent. It is supposed their trial was that they were required to pledge themselves to do homage to the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity made Man incarnate in a nature inferior to theirs. (In old Christian art the Angels are represented as coming in choirs to do homage at the Nativity.) To us it seems incredible that such spirits *could* have rebelled. We know they did. It removes in part our difficulty when we think how *we* sin, with our eyes open, knowing what we forfeit. We have done it. Let us, then, cease to wonder at the disobedience of the Angels. Let us learn to understand and realise what lies beneath pride. Pride

destroyed the Angels. Pride destroys us. Lucifer said, "I will not obey". When we offend we too say, "I will not obey". That is the defiance of pride.

In one instant every one of the rebel Angels were cut off from happiness and cast into everlasting fire. There is the punishment for one sin of thought. If one in a thousand had been punished—but all! One single sin punished in this terrible manner! And I have sinned not once, but often, in thought, word, deed and omission, with resolute will. My insignificance compared with the Angels makes it worse. What I must try to understand is, the picture my soul must present to God! Nothing in it worthy of His favour. Make acts of great confusion and shame. Who can confess all the sins of a long life? Be merciful unto me, O my God! I hate my sins. I will never offend Thee again. Strengthen my will; confirm my resolution.

Some very great sins seem impossible to us because of the way in which we have been brought up, such as murder, theft, intemperance, etc. Why? Because from education we have conceived so great a horror of such sins. Why should we not have the same horror for all sins?

SECOND. The Sin of Adam. Adam disobeyed, though so gifted and furnished with such great knowledge, on very little temptation. Almost all the misery of the world comes from the sin of Adam. But think of particular sins of particular persons: those who lose honour, who suffer through intemperance. What depth of suffering follows on one sin!

But God gave Adam time to repent, and He gives us also time.

THIRD. Jesus nailed to the Cross. This is the monument sin has raised, which may indeed fill us with detestation and horror of mortal sin. God did not order that crime to be perpetrated—He permitted it. Think of His figure hanging there wounded, bruised, bleeding. That the punishment! How dreadful sin must be in the sight of God! End with a colloquy.

SECOND DAY.

[10.45 A.M.]

ON PERSONAL SINS.

TO-DAY is to be given up to sorrow—regret for sins and opportunities neglected. Make constant acts of sorrow. Repeat the *Confiteor* and the two prayers that follow it over and over again. Say the Penitential Psalms, visit the Blessed Sacrament, making acts of contrition and self-abasement in God's Presence. The petition, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner," should form the burden of the day. Don't be afraid that this will bring despondency: it will rather bring peace.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Let us imagine that we are on

Mount Calvary, and kneeling at the foot of the Cross where Jesus Christ hangs dead.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O my God, enlighten my understanding that I may know the number and malice of my past sins. In flame my will to conceive a hearty sorrow and detestation of them, and to make a firm purpose to serve Thee with the rest of my life.

FIRST POINT. Make a hasty survey of your life, dividing it into three or four periods. Think how you have offended God, how you have not spent your time usefully, how you have omitted the duties of your state of life, how much evil you have done, how little good, and that little how imperfectly. Then think what you might have been had you only been faithful to grace, how much nearer to God, how much happier, what an instrument of good to others.

As I am now, how far do I put God's will before me? Am I much in earnest in the service of God? Do I go to Him as my Father, or do I only do what I can't help doing? Am I in earnest? A certain degree of earnestness is implied in your coming here to make a retreat, but how are you in reality?

What lesson am I to draw from this consideration? That I ought to be so much better than I am. I have wasted many opportunities, many graces—wasted them perhaps to some extent fearfully. My life has been a failure, fallen far short of what it ought to be; I have lost a grand opportunity. If I am in grace, as I hope I am, how much higher ought I to have been! I confess the error of my past life, that I have fallen very short, abused many graces, neglected oppor-

tunities, omitted duties to which I was bound, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. You may pause and dwell on this for some time with great advantage till you fill your heart with a sense of shame. Take words from the Psalms expressing grief: "Who can know all his sins? From my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord." Sins lightly, thoughtlessly committed. Sins into which others have been led by my example. Say the *Miserere*; ask to be confirmed in good dispositions. Go on making such acts as long as you can.

SECOND. When God asked the Angels to promise homage to the Incarnate Word, He did not ask anything very exorbitant. What He asked of Adam was not a grievous hardship, only an act of obedience, and that an easy one. What does He ask of me? To sacrifice all I possess? No. To humble myself *very* much? No. But, thou shalt not have false gods; and the rest of the Commandments, which are all benefits to mankind in general and to me in particular. They preserve the dignity of the rational being. They teach us not to be undutiful to our fellow-men. They teach us to listen to the voice of reason. You go against nature when you transgress the Commandments. They are not so severe in their demands: indeed they only demand of us that we consult our own happiness, that we obey reason. If I violate them, I sink below my own nature and dignity. Every deliberate sin is a violation of nature. If I can persuade myself of this I have laid the foundation of a Christian life. What is the dignity of

human nature but obedience to the voice of conscience? How much harm comes from the neglect of conscience, not only to self but to others!

What lesson am I to learn? To cultivate reverence for the voice of conscience, listening to it, obeying it—not acting by caprice, according to my humour, the weather, the people by whom I am surrounded. It depends on me whether I make conscience the rule. We may stifle conscience, render its voice uncertain, or we may educate it that it may speak with authority and carry great weight. The lesson I am to learn, then, is that I must cultivate conscience, that I must learn to respect my rational nature. What have I done in the past? Have I respected it? Have I made it the rule of my life? If so, I thank God. If I am swayed by temptation, if I am the slave of weather, of circumstances, I humble myself that I have forgotten I was a man—a rational being—that I have forfeited such great privileges, such great dignity. May I understand what conscience may tell me. May I reverence it, O my God, as Thy Voice, which it certainly is. May I school myself more readily to catch the Voice.

THIRD. The grievousness of mortal sin from the outrage it inflicts on God. He talks of sinners as despising Him, contemning His Justice, contemning His Mercy. Theologians say that all mortal sin would destroy God, would annihilate Him. When sinners were able to kill God they did; they nailed Him to the Cross with ignominy. Sin is such a slight to God; if He could grieve He would grieve so that

He would live no longer, for He sees the malice of sin in a way we cannot see it. Suppose a peasant able to utter an outrage that would strike everyone in the world, that would be an insult to all; we should be astounded at his audacity, more especially if he were provided for by the bounty of those whom he insulted. But what is all the nobility in the world compared to God? Every sinner aims at God an insult—yet what an interval separates him from God!

Lessius gives another comparison. Almighty God is much pleased by the good actions of His servants, but all the good actions of all the Saints do not honour Him so much as one grievous sin dishonours Him. All that the Saints have done is only what He could claim as a right, but one sin aims at His very existence, and would set up a vile idol in His place. Some little satisfaction in the place of the Infinite God! All the service of all the Saints is not so much addition to His glory as one sin is a dishonour to Him.

What lesson am I to learn? The exceeding grievousness of sin. I must renew my sorrow. I must give thanks to God that He bears with me, that He still gives me time and opportunity to amend.

The points, then, of this meditation are :

FIRST POINT. A survey of past life and of present dispositions.

SECOND. All God asks by the ten Commandments is that I respect myself and my own dignity.

THIRD. Every mortal sin is such an outrage against God because of the infinite distance between the soul and God. The contempt of God involved in sin is a

more grievous dishonour to Him than all the service of the Saints is an honour.

To the instruction on meditation yesterday should be added that you prepare your meditation over night before going to rest. Take a book of meditations and read what is provided there, or a portion of Scripture, the Psalms, or teaching of our Lord. Select one, two, or three points. If you make only half-an-hour's meditation one point is sufficient. You should also fix the fruit you wish to derive and the grace you want to obtain, and in bed before closing your eyes go over the points and the fruit.

When you rise the great object is to exclude all distracting thoughts. Say the Litany of the Holy Name very slowly, and so keep your thoughts more in harmony with what you are about to do. When you wake briefly recall the points and the fruit.

CONSIDERATION.

SECOND DAY.

[3.P.M.]

ON THE GENERAL EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

I WILL give some hints about self-examination, the object of which is to cleanse the soul and enable us to

confess more profitably. I will presuppose three kinds of thoughts: my own, because they are the thoughts I deliberately choose, and those which come to me from without, from the good spirit or the evil spirit. There are two ways in which we merit when an evil thought comes from without. Suppose the thought of committing a sin is presented to me and I repel it at once, I gain merit. As often as it comes to me and I repel it, the greater is the merit. This should console those who imagine it is because they did not repel it properly at first that it has come back. If only we continue to repel such a thought we do but gain merit. A venial sin is committed if, when the thought of committing a mortal sin coming from without comes to me, I take a little pleasure in it, if I turn an ear to it, delay in it, or when there is some negligence in resisting. (If you consent to the temptation of committing a mortal sin, you have committed a mortal sin.) It is very important to understand this clearly. If rightly understood it ought to be a great consolation to those who are trying to lead a good life. Such people are more liable to temptations from without and from themselves also from fussing about temptations. To *consent* to a temptation to mortal sin—to murder, for example—is a mortal sin; it is more grievous when carried out, because it has been in the mind for a length of time; there is more malice in it besides the injury to another. The same will apply to sins against faith, hope, purity, and to sins of ill-will and revenge. There may have been no wish to consent, but

perhaps not enough promptitude in putting them away. Some imagine they can be tricked into mortal sin all of a sudden. You can't do it against your will. You can't consent to a thought, so as to commit grievous sin, without knowing it as fully as if you knocked your head against a wall.

So much for thoughts, now for words. We must avoid idle words. Idle words are words that are no good to myself or anyone else. Any word that is of use to anyone is not idle. In our conversation we merit if we have a good intention, and we sin if we have no intention or a bad intention. The weather often affords a very useful subject for beginning a conversation; affairs, politics, commerce, anything sensible and rational, we should talk about, and if harmless it is not idle conversation. It is more civil and charitable to join in it. To spend an hour with a friend talking about his misfortune is kind. Remaining silent is not avoiding idle speech. Talk about what has gone on. Recreation, unbending the mind, is lawful and desirable. The merry member of a family is entitled to special prayers. Where there is a good deal of lively chatting there is not so much uncharitableness. Those who have their eyes open can cheer up others.

We should never say anything to the discredit of others. We should not murmur at those in authority. Political ministers are considered as evils to be endured; it is very difficult to treat them with respect—they don't expect it, so we need not say much about that.

But it is different with ecclesiastical authorities and parents ; it is a distinct sin to grumble at our parents or parish priest or bishop. We should be on our guard against this. I have remarked that those who were undutiful to parents get their punishment here. In our system of government, grumbling against authority is part of the system, but in the family it is a sin.

As regards defamation, if I make known the mortal sin of another, I commit a mortal sin because I injure him grievously. I must observe whether the wrong is a grievous one. If I injure his character I inflict a grievous wrong. If I mention of a soldier that he was drunk it is no injury to him, but to say it of a priest is to inflict a grievous wrong.

It is allowable to speak of the faults of others when we have a good intention in doing so—if a person is a notorious bad character, for instance, and doing great injury, or if I could get him corrected, as might be the case in telling a father about his son. If I speak without a right intention against a public sin, out of malice and spite, it's a sin against charity.

Spiritual Reading, Second Day, *Imitation*, Book I., chap. 24.

SECOND DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

GRIEVOUS SIN THE DEATH OF THE SOUL.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine myself in the presence of the Cross of Jesus Christ on Mount Calvary.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O my God, that I may comprehend how grievous sin is the death of the soul; inflame my will that I may conceive a great fear of sin, and dread mortal sin as the greatest evil in life.

FIRST POINT. I return to the meditations of yesterday, that we may rouse ourselves by seeing how truly grievous sin is the death of the soul, and conceive a great detestation of it, and so secure ourselves against ever committing it. Lightning produces startling effects sometimes: it strikes the sword and leaves the scabbard untouched. Three peasants were under a tree all killed by lightning, but their bodies left as though alive. That corresponds to what happens in real life. How often is the spiritual life taken away and the outward appearance remains the same! How many amuse themselves, eat and drink, yet are spiritually dead! Go through the gradations of life—vegetable, animal, rational life, and then spiritual life. St. Austin said, “The life of the body is the soul, the life of the soul God”. The soul partakes of the Divine Nature—when it commits mortal sin the three

other lives remain, but spiritual life goes. Notice the effect of death, of the separation of the soul from the body. The body loses colour, flexibility, motion, and in the same way the soul in sin loses the image of God. The body loses form and shape: it is only the outline of what it was. The soul is left not only to its natural state, but the brand of the devil is on it. It becomes the slave of Satan. With this image is forfeited sonship and heirship. It no longer lives in the Kingdom of God. If death comes when it is in this state there is separation from God for ever. What lesson am I to learn? That of all the woes that can be conceived the greatest is the loss of supernatural life. The life of grace is the most precious thing there is—nothing can be put in comparison with it. I believe this. What can I compare with the life of the soul? Not the life of the body—that may be soon over; and when the separation takes place is it a great loss? Is not life very weary? Do we not often find it a great burden? Many are glad to die, and welcome death when it comes. No great loss—this of life! But to purchase eternal life for me God became man and died on the cross. Not all the treasures of this world can purchase one single degree of grace. Therefore this life of grace is the most important. This natural life presses upon me, but grant that I may not forget that supernatural life. This is the misery—that we forget the supernatural, that unseen life, that divine life. O God, in the past I have thought too little of this divine life. Grant me hereafter to be Thy prudent servant and secure this pearl.

SECOND. One effect of death is, the dead body is motionless. Also the soul when dead can perform no single work meritorious of heaven; you can make no step to heaven; you can do nothing meritorious in mortal sin. We don't realise that. We don't realise that a soul in sin is cut off from God. Think of the soul of St. John; if in his hundredth year he had been guilty of a grievous sin, all would have gone, all the merit accumulated in those long years. These two considerations should lead us to the conclusion that we are to consider mortal sin as the greatest possible evil. (There are two doctrines which offer some consolation. A soul in sin, by almsgiving and penance, may move God to grant it the grace of repentance. Secondly—Though the soul forfeits its merits by sin, if it afterwards repents, the merits it forfeited are restored. What a beautiful thing is the repentance of a soul in grievous sin! It shows how mighty is the power of repentance.)

Have we a sufficient horror of sin? A priest is so familiar with souls that intend to return, but who keep putting it off one, ten, twenty years. All those years are lost to eternity. Pray for a lively faith in the beauty of the supernatural life. We should have greater eagerness to improve our time, to make the most of every action.

You have come to spend eight days in retreat.

Everything you do will be represented in heaven by a distinct degree of glory proportioned to your fervour.

Others will pass these days, and they will be utter blanks, if no worse.

SECOND DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

ON DEATH.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine yourself stretched on a bed of death and told there is no hope of recovery.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O my God, enlighten me that I may see this present life—its business, trials, and pleasures as I shall see them when I die—and give me grace to seek now what then I shall wish to have sought.

FIRST POINT. What is death? The end of life, the end of our possessions, the end of poverty, the end of ease, the end of riches, the end of whatever we possess of the goods of this world, the end of all our friends, relations, admirers, enemies, the end of all pleasures, amusements, innocent recreations, sorrows. Everything closes with death. It is the end of the life of the senses. Our soul now is imprisoned in the body, hampered by the body; death is the end of that mode of existence. The soul will come to know everything apart from the senses. Wonderful moment! How much of the delusion and deception of life depends on our bodily organisation. What will it be to shake off all that, and know things as they are? What a wonderful disclosure! Death puts an end to the body, which can survive but a short time: it is the end of my opportunity of meriting eternal life: if I fail in that I fail in my end.

What conclusion must I draw from this? Not to fix my heart on a life that escapes me at every moment. It is not merely that we are going away from this life, but we are hastening away. How foolish if we fix our hearts on its business or pleasures as though it were to last for ever. It is but an hotel on the roadside which we must leave—not our home. Have I been so foolish as to look upon it as my home? If I don't often remind myself of death, I am guilty of great folly. This world is but my passing abode, which I must quit very shortly. Many never receive Holy Communion without saying, "If this is to be my last Communion, my Viaticum, may It strengthen me," and at night they always pray for a happy death. It is a simple practice, but serves to recall the thought of death. It is useful to recite the prayers of the dying. Some have a prejudice against thinking of death, but, believe me, nothing so disarms death of its terrors as to look at it and be familiar with it.

SECOND. The certainty of death. It is inevitable. There is no escape. No one could hope to escape. Being so certain, what conclusion must we draw? The obligation of preparing. To live as many do, as though we were not to die, is the greatest of follies. It is but common sense to prepare. We may wonder at our blindness in turning away from what we must one day face.

THIRD. The time, manner, place of death uncertain. Why is this? I suppose that we may be always prepared, that we may always live as though at any moment we might die. Am I always living

in such a manner that death won't find me unprepared? Being always prepared for death will not prevent me from sharing in what is going on.

It is the teaching of the Church that special graces are granted to special prayer. If we want to obtain a good death it should be the object of special prayer. Often pray for a happy death, in saying the *Ave* particularly. There is a prayer in our prayer-books it is well to use every night with great attention: "O my God, I accept of death as a homage and adoration which I owe to Thy Divine Majesty, and as a punishment justly due to my sins, in union with the death of my dear Redeemer, and as the only means of coming to Thee, my beginning and last end".

End your meditation with this colloquy to God the Father.

THIRD DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

ON THE PAIN OF LOSS.

THIS meditation is calculated to fill us with great gratitude: it ought to enkindle in our hearts a great love of God.

PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Place yourself in Presence of the Blessed Sacrament exposed on the Altar.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding,

O my God, to comprehend the pain of loss. In flame my will to conceive a great fear of Thy judgments, that if ever I cease to serve Thee from love, fear of Thine anger, and above all of losing Thy Presence, may hinder me from offending Thee.

FIRST POINT. What is meant by the pain of loss? An intense grief and heartache for the loss of God. The soul when she hears her sentence understands she has lost God, and for ever. "You will not be My people, I will not be your God. You have chosen to turn your back on Me, and I let you go your way." At that moment the soul understands completely that Almighty God will never again be her Father, Benefactor, and Friend; that He will never watch over her again. He has no more patience, long-suffering, forbearance. The soul will remember how the rich man in his place of torment asked for a drop of water and was denied it. It will see its Saviour only as a Judge, an Executioner, an Enemy. It carries away no love of God, but only an impotent, bitter hatred, cursing, blaspheming in its powerlessness. It can't be otherwise: the soul can only look on God as a Judge who carries out inexorably His sentence. What a terrible thing must be that loss of God! What a void in the heart when the conviction comes that all is lost! Even when we offend Him here, we know He is waiting, ready for us to turn to Him. But after the sentence, all is over, there is no ray of hope, but universal misery—loss, simply loss; the soul must part with every shred of the love of God, and know that it is its own doing because it said, "I will not obey".

What lesson am I to draw? I must learn to cling to God with all the strength of my soul—to cherish the life of grace here. I will cleave to Thee, my God, and never be separated from Thee. During the rest of my life may I never tamper with this fearful possibility. May I make it as remote as possible: I may, if I correspond to Thy grace. Fill my soul with a fear of Thy chastisements.

What a wilderness the world would be without God, though we only see Him by faith! What, when there were no nature, no self to compensate! What a void in the heart to be without God and to know that He only looks down in anger! Give me to understand this terror. To pass one hour in God's anger would be dreadful. If I can get some glimpse of eternity, then I shall battle bravely. Imagine a well-born person, brought up in luxury and suddenly deprived of her father and of everything she possessed. What desolation! the loss of all that gave her happiness, and the future that has to be faced. Or think of a man occupying a great position, staking all on the throw of a dice, and becoming a ruined, despised beggar. Many in this state put an end to their lives, and in ignorance prefer to encounter the terrors of the next life. We must not trifle. We must cling to God here.

SECOND. When I lose God I lose everything. I lose heaven and all contained there, the Sacred Heart of Jesus, belief in whom has cheered me so much. What a boon has my faith in Jesus Christ been, and His Mother, what a bright spot in my life!

Her graces, her humility and purity! To read about her, what a consolation! and I shall not see her. The Apostles, martyrs, confessors, holy people I have known in the world—those who have helped me, with whom I have talked, who have taught me to get nearer God,—an abyss divides those who are in heaven from those who are cast away. Music in heaven is far superior to earthly harmony, and the eye is fully satisfied there with beauty of which all beauty of colour and proportion on earth is but a faint shadow. And the reprobate have lost this. All that is good and beautiful and can bring joy is lost, and instead they meet all the sworn enemies of Jesus Christ and every soul which took up the defiance of Lucifer and said, I will not serve: and instead of the hierarchy of the Blessed, the hierarchy of the bad. Vanity, avarice, lust, pride, gluttony, sloth—every form of rebellion to be seen there: instead of brightness, gloom and despair—everything most fearful to human nature. In this world the most wicked have points of goodness. If we were to be surrounded with every comfort and beauty, but to have the companionship only of horrid people, what a hell it would be! Is it not the good qualities of our friends that redeem the monotony and sufferings of life? How unbearable would life be without friendship! Such is the pain of loss. The soul losing God loses all things.

THIRD. Here we can distract our minds. For the lost there is no recreation, no escape. This separation from all that is good knows no relief, no change. This meditation should fill our minds with the fear of

God, with the love of God. "If I may not see the Face of my Father I cannot live." What would it be never to see the Face of God, to know only that He looks down in anger at His rebellious child? Pray very earnestly that if at any time in your future life the love of God does not suffice to keep you from sin, at least the fear of losing Him may.

CONSIDERATION.

THIRD DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON TEMPTATIONS AGAINST FAITH.

OUR age is one in which temptations against faith are very frequent, very prevalent. How are we to account for this? One reason may be found in the peculiar form literature has taken. Every month there are publications in which able men ventilate their ideas, magazines which profess to publish both sides. We become familiarised with all sorts of discussions.

Then there are great discoveries in science. Many devote themselves to the study of nature, and some have jumped to conclusions which are not justified at present.

Again, it is the fashion of the day to be irreligious, to laugh at religion, and to treat it as a thing of the past. Contempt for revelation is supreme, and so supreme that it ought to awaken a suspicion. No

wise person will treat lightly what has satisfied the intellect of an Augustine or a Thomas Aquinas. One who does so is deserving of blame rather than of credit for knowledge. Real knowledge is always modest. Newton, La Place, Galileo, were all remarkable for modesty. To hear some of these men you would think they had discovered everything. It has become very much a fashion with learned men to deny revelation. We are to be set free from those old women's tales, they tell us. All this sort of influence filters into Catholic life, and so you will find many who have temptations against faith. We all, more or less, feel the influence of this spirit of the age. It is important to know how to deal with the books and the friends we meet. It is a big subject; where are we to begin? 1. Well, we will begin with remarking that a difficulty is not an argument. How can there be three Persons in one God? I don't know: it is a difficulty. How can Jesus Christ be present in the Blessed Sacrament? I don't know: if anyone does know he has received a special revelation. A difficulty is no argument, and this observation is not peculiar to the truths of revelation. The blade of grass, how does it grow? I don't know. What is life? I don't know. Some learned man has written a book upon it; and the end of it is, "All I can tell you is, life is life". Bear this in mind, that a difficulty about a fact has nothing to do with not believing it.

2. There are a great many questions to which there is only one answer; for example, that the three sides of an equiangular triangle are equal, that a

city called Rome exists, etc. There is no argument against such facts as these. But there is another set of questions in which there may be reasons on both sides, like the corn laws, for example. Reasons may be brought for and against. I say there is more to be said for free-trade, but something for protection. We call that weighing probabilities.

3. Imagination plays wonderful pranks. We English are practical; yes, but we are very much slaves of imagination—that is, we find a great difficulty in believing what we can't imagine. One of these learned men has said: "It seems to me that the idea of a Self-existent Being is not more conceivable than the eternity of matter". But we don't conceive it. I can conceive a person with four arms, but I can't conceive a thing I have never seen, like a Spirit, an Angel, or God. I can't conceive such an one; I have no data to work on. So, often people say—as though it were an argument—I can't conceive, I can't imagine, this or that; and I reply, Very likely not, it is not to be imagined.

4. We know truth in different ways. For instance, we know the existence of bodies by our senses. Some truths we don't know by our senses. The Andes: we have not been there, but we have a certain knowledge of them, not by our senses, but by the testimony of others. Some truths we arrive at by reasoning. From certain points given I draw a conclusion. Other pieces of knowledge are beyond all reasoning. No reasoning would prove the existence of the Trinity. The fact of the Divinity of Jesus Christ I can't come

to entirely by reason or the senses, but partly by these and partly by faith. My soul: there is a spiritual existence within me which enables me to carry on my life. I never saw any soul: I know of it by the effects it produces. I know there is a voice within me which says, "This is right, that is wrong". Oxygen will never scream out "Right". We can bring arguments from reason which will give proof that this soul is immortal.

Let us pass on to the question how we are to hold our faith. We mix in society. We hear a great deal said of objections against the Church, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, the inspiration of Scripture, the immortality of the soul, the existence of God, and I begin to think perhaps it is all a dream, perhaps there is no future life. Let me have some reasons for my belief.

You can't attend to all the difficulties that are raised: a long life would not suffice to go into all the questions as to the inspiration of Scripture, and it cannot be that God expected us all to give up our life to such a study. The history of the creation, the meaning of the word *day*—what a number of questions to be solved! God never meant us to weary our life out with these questions. Here am I in the world, and I have come to the conclusion that I have a soul, and I want to know whence I came and what I have to do. When I look round, I become conscious of one great fact—the Catholic Church to be found all over the world—rich here, poor there, made up of a body of believers, with priests who have a definite message; its constitution an episcopate with a pope at the head, the successor of 260 popes whose suc-

cession is traced up to Peter, placed there by Jesus Christ, who said He was God. This Church tells me : "I will tell you where you came from and what you are to believe. I am a Kingdom. My empire is over all the world. I have subjects in all parts of the earth. I claim to come from God. No human institution could possibly survive, could be alive after two thousand years, unless it were sustained by the Divine breath, animated by a Divine life."

I call that an argument. You may ask how is it that we have bad priests, bad bishops? That is a difficulty—no argument; and the same may be said of thousands of other difficulties. So complete is that argument we should want nothing more. But the Church will tell you : "I was founded by Jesus Christ, who said He was God. His discourses were marvellous; the miracles He worked were very wonderful. Everyone knew that He said He was God. They seized Him and put Him to death for saying it. If He were not God He would be guilty of a fearful crime—He would be the greatest of culprits."

I have the Divinity of Jesus Christ at the back of the Church. The ancient prophecies of the Redeemer are verified in Him. If I listen to arguments against Jesus Christ I must renounce my reason. So when I have temptations against faith, when people come to me with their theories, I say : "It is *possible* you may know what happened six thousand years ago, but will you deal with a fact that is before my eyes? Here is this fact, deal with it, satisfy me it is not divine." Any poor man or woman can see as far as a

philosopher in that matter of the divinity of the Church.

“But how do so many clever men deny this, and deny the existence of God?” Because, clever as they may be in their own line, they are absolutely ignorant on these matters. You have care of a household: would you take this learned man and put him to make the pastry? It is just the same with religion. Dissecting an animal is his line, and he can teach me wonderful things about that, but when he says, Listen to me about religion, I answer: “No, there I am on my own ground. I should no more trust you to make me a religion than I should to make me a pie.” With all their culture, with all their science, such men make the greatest mess of religion, as anyone with common sense may see. Don’t mind philosophers and their speculations. Confine yourself to three fundamental truths: (1) God the First Cause of all and Giver of Law; (2) Jesus Christ, Man and God; (3) The Catholic Church, a divine, not a human, institution. God’s messenger sent to teach me. Give up your reason if you give up these three things. Beware of listening to human authority. Faith is like purity. You can’t trifle with it. A spiritual sense leads to a spiritual knowledge. You can’t knock that about. It is to be dealt with reverently. If we take no care of faith it may grow weak, but if we take care and protect it with reason it grows strong. My God, I believe in Thee. If I have been misled, Thou hast misled me, so plain is the assurance that Thou hast given me.

THIRD DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

ON THE MALICE OF VENIAL SIN.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine the souls of the just suffering in Purgatory expiating their sins.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O my God, enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend the evil and malice of venial sin ; inflame my will that I may guard more carefully against these lesser sins in future, and may strive to serve Thee more lovingly and more faithfully.

A hatred of mortal sin is the foundation of all spiritual life. Now we must try to get a horror of venial sin. There are two classes of venial sins—those which are committed deliberately, and those many little faults and imperfections we fall into through the infirmity of our nature and without deliberation.

Now I speak of those which are done deliberately, in cold blood, and these, if we will, we can eliminate almost entirely. Suarez says there are many holy souls who pass months without deliberate venial sin.

FIRST POINT.—Such sin is after all an offence against God. His will is known forbidding such and such an act of uncharitableness, disobedience, etc., but He does not attach the penalty of death to the committing of the act ; there is no passing into the state of enmity with God : otherwise it is difficult to make out the difference between it and mortal sin. It is an insult

to God, refusing to do his will, but does not entail the state of enmity to God. No consideration can ever justify a venial sin. It is never lawful to perpetrate it even to save the whole world. We commit these sins often wantonly with very little reason, from perverseness, against our better judgment. I must make it my law never to commit a deliberate venial sin.

What leads us to it? Often our own evil disposition, temper, love of ease, fear of what others may say. We ought to be able to control these things. God has a sovereign claim to my obedience, so I will avoid all venial sin. Look back on your sins of ill-temper, uncharitable judgments and speeches, vanity, seeking for praise, etc. I confess to Almighty God that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word, and deed. I deplore my sins; I look back on them in horror and amazement. At every moment he had a claim to my obedience. I should reproach myself with my selfishness; He had a claim to my self-denial, and I confess He is most reasonable. It is fitting my life should be subject to the law of God. I must consider what I am inclined to and make resolutions accordingly. It may be selfishness, sloth in the service of God, uncharitableness, love of admiration, etc.

SECOND. Some of the effects of venial sin. It pre-disposes the soul to mortal sin. It sometimes is very difficult to say when one becomes the other. The life of the soul is the grace of God. Mortal sin is the death of the soul, because it takes away from it the grace of God. No amount of venial sin will ever take away the grace of God, but it enfeebles this life of the

soul. It gives strength to the enemies of the soul, and weakens that sense of right and wrong which is so precious. It makes the voice of conscience become very feeble.

Further, we are protected from mortal sin by barriers. Venial sin throws down the barriers, makes them of little use. Venial sin weakens the will till there is no self-command. Repeated venial sins, especially in one kind, very much lessen the power of the will. Persons acquire a fatal facility of spying out the faults of others. Again, irritability, from whatever cause it comes, if given way to, becomes worse and worse. These sins weaken us in our power of resisting temptation and impair the understanding also. Clearness of judgment is a great help in serving God. So, though venial sins do not take away grace, they enfeeble it, and take away what protects the life of grace.

Venial sin would wound Almighty God, as mortal sin would destroy Him if it could. Mortal sin kills, venial sin wounds the soul. A wounded life is a feeble life. Numbers of souls fall into mortal sin from attaching little importance to venial sin. We should be very much on our guard that there be no class of venial sins we *often* fall into. We should resolve not to commit a deliberate sin for anything in the world. It is a tremendous step when we can keep this resolution for a length of time.

THIRD. The life of the soul is the grace of God. Certain servants of God have seen the beauty of a soul in the state of grace, and say that no earthly beauty can give an idea of it. St. Catharine of Genoa had a vision

of a soul in deliberate venial sin, and said it was so terrible she could not have lived if it had not been withdrawn. Though that soul is still the friend of God, it is in a very sad plight, like our friend, if wounded and covered with mud. Moreover, such a soul ceases to be very dear to God. It loses an immense amount of God's love. How dear to God is His own image! When a child is like its parent, how endeared does it become to that parent! Deliberate venial sin impairs the likeness; the will no longer reverences the image of God. God makes allowance for sins of surprise and human infirmity; but when the will is wrong, when there is a deliberate offence against Him, that is what repels His caresses. He can't give His special favours to a soul that cares so little for Him and drives Him to a distance. He longs to impart to us His greatest graces. Let us, then, conceive a great horror of venial sin, and do away with any class of venial sins to which we are subject.

THIRD DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

ON PREPARATION FOR HOLY COMMUNION.

PREPARATION for Holy Communion comprises many acts of virtue—acts of faith, hope, charity, adoration, humility, thanksgiving, desire, reparation, etc. As we can only take a certain part, we will confine ourselves to the three theological virtues.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—For a Composition of Place let us imagine our Lord with His disciples at the Last Supper, as represented by Leonardo da Vinci.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Let us ask for light to comprehend some part of the treasure offered to us in the Heavenly Banquet, and that our will may be moved ardently to desire to receive this Divine Food in order that we may become more worthy to receive It.

FIRST POINT. Faith. This Sacrament of the Blessed Eucharist is called the mystery of faith. It is the compendium of all other mysteries. I believe, O Lord, help Thou mine unbelief. I believe that Thou art here really, truly in Thy Body, Soul, and Divinity, with all Thy graces, with all Thy attributes, with all Thy love. The Jews said it was a hard saying, but I confess it is a most welcome, sweet, soft saying. With Peter I say, "To whom shall I go if not to Thee? To what voice shall I listen if not to Thine? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Go on with this exercise of faith, expand and develop it. There are so many points of belief, you may spread it out indefinitely with great profit. "I believe." Pray that you may have greater faith. The world may have no more sense of the Great Presence than a dumb animal—strengthen my faith.

SECOND. Then let us make an act of hope. "I trust that through this Blessed Sacrament Thou wilt give me eternal life, remission of my sins, the grace to fulfil my duties, to overcome all my temptations, the

crowning grace of a happy death. I hope, because Thou givest me the pledge of eternal glory. I hope for forgiveness, because all forgiveness comes from His Blood, and He gives me His Blood. I hope for grace to fulfil the duties of my life, for is not He my Life and Strength?—does He not support my life? I hope to overcome temptations, for is not He who comes to me the Terror of hell?—who set us free with the freedom of the children of God—who died that I might shake off the death of sin. I receive the foretaste of glory. I receive Him who gives us all that is necessary to attain eternal glory, the Sacrament of Sacraments.”

THIRD. Charity. “I love Thee truly present in this Sacrament, in Thy Divinity and Thy Humanity, most worthy to be loved and served by me. I love Thee truly present here, more lovable because in Thy love Thou hast put on lowliness, and hast become my Food. I wish to give Thee something of myself, of what I am. Therefore, as Thou givest Thyself to me, I give myself to Thee wholly and entirely. Would that the gift were less unworthy of Thy acceptance!

“For Thy sake I love my neighbour as myself; he bears Thy Image; all hearts should be one in Thee. Grant me love and sympathy for all my fellow-men. I love my enemies, I forgive them all. I beg they may be reconciled to me. I beg that all my thoughts and words and works may be animated by Thee. Grant that I may live by Thee, abide in Thee, my whole life be coloured by Thee.” . . . So you may

take these acts of faith, hope, and charity, or others of humility, praise, desire, etc. Spread them out, make some resolutions and prayers.

If we don't receive more abundant grace in our Communions, the explanation is that we don't prepare and cleanse our heart sufficiently. He would make our heart His throne.

We should make Him some offering. Never go to receive Him without some gift, some repugnance overcome, some self-conquest. He will repay us with royal magnificence.

FOURTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—To imagine the cities and villages of Judea and the different places which were the scenes of the preaching of Jesus Christ.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask of God the grace not to be deaf to the calls of His Divine Son, but prompt to obey Him and follow Him.

O my God, enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend Thy teaching; inflame my will to follow Thee. May I know myself, may I know Thee, that I may hate myself and love Thee.

FIRST POINT. The contemplation on the Kingdom

of Christ, as given by St. Ignatius, follows on the first portion of the exercises. He supposes an earthly monarch at the head of Christendom, dear to God and to men, commissioned to play a great part, calling together all his dependent princes and subjects, and inviting them to follow him in a great enterprise he is about to undertake for the benefit of mankind. He explains to them it will involve great hardships and sufferings, but that no one will be called on to undergo such hardship and suffering as he, their general, will take on himself; he will share all their privations; he promises them success and such rewards as will make them forget all they have had to go through. Would not every soldier be eager to follow his king in such an enterprise? What opinion would soldiers have of one of their number who would hesitate and wish to remain at home?

SECOND. The application of this parable comes in the second point. Jesus Christ, the King of kings, invites all to take part with Him in the enterprise which brought Him from heaven to earth. The King of kings, the fairest of the sons of men, beautiful, worthy of all admiration, the perfect type of human nature, has come to raise up the fallen race of man. Dwell on the Kingship of Jesus Christ—what manner of King He was—how He had a right to the service of every human being—how royal was His character; there was nothing in it petty or small. Learn of Me, He said, for I am meek and gentle of heart—a royal quality that of gentleness. How prodigal He is of His gifts—prodigal of natural and still

more of spiritual gifts. How lavish of His Blood. What courage He has—how courageously does He encounter His enemies in his Life, in His Passion. No ostentation or vanity is mixed up with His courage; it is all farthest removed from what is paltry. Make acts of admiration of Jesus Christ. Thou art the King of kings—Thou art the most noble, the highest, the most magnificent. Cast yourself before Him, begging Him to accept your homage. This is the King sent by God—hear ye Him. He is to wage war on the enemies of God, for the enemies have broken up His Kingdom. Sin entered into the world. For a long time He selected a particular race to be faithful to Him, but the race proved faithless. It suffered terribly before it could be confirmed in the profession of one only God, and when Jesus Christ came it was on the verge of destruction. The Jews had borrowed Greek ways and luxuries and unbelief: their kingdom seemed tottering. Then God sent His Son to build up His true Kingdom—a kingdom not made up of unwilling subjects, but existing through our free-will and subjection to our King. Christ, our King, says: “I am sent to lead you to life. I wage war on the devil—on carnal love, on self-love. These have destroyed the Kingdom of God. I invite you not to make them your friends. I have chosen poverty, pain, humiliation. It was not necessary: I might have accomplished your redemption without, but I should not have taught you how to secure your salvation. You must fight against an inordinate love of the things of the world. I will show you how. I

ask you to follow faithfully in My footsteps. In proportion as you offer yourself in this warfare will I make you reign with Me in My Kingdom. The disciple is not above his Master. You must war against self; you must reach glory by trampling on riches, honours, and pleasures. Never let your love of them lead you into sin. You *must* be poor in spirit, at least in affection." To all Christ gives this invitation: "Wage war against ease and the honour and riches of the world".

St. Ignatius does not suppose it possible anyone can be base enough to say, "I will not join, I will remain in peace at home". All should exclaim, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest". Everyone with right sense and feeling must accept the invitation of Jesus Christ. Everywhere there will be generous souls, fired with longing and love, who will be led on to make the greatest sacrifices. There have been many who said, "Master, I will follow Thee," and who have heard, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me," have less a home than the birds or the foxes. Let the dead bury their dead. Go thou and preach the Kingdom of God. There are thousands who have had the invitation. Some obey it while living in the world, make every sacrifice they can, and wish to make one more perfect. Others follow Him more closely, and renounce all, and become religious in cloisters. Others are called to labour exteriorly for the salvation of their brethren. There are endless ways of preaching the Kingdom.

The apostolic vocation is the highest of all. That invitation has sounded to how many! Some have gone away sad—ignoble, base spirits, with weak faith and little love, and no generosity.

THIRD. Then come those who must choose their side, and they follow Christ so far as to refuse deliberate sin and all that would interfere with the strict keeping of the commandments of God, and theirs is the lowest degree of service.

For there are those who have trampled on all and set up the love of Christ in their hearts, though it is not their lot to leave the world; and higher still are those who have renounced all in *effect* and embraced a life of poverty and self-renunciation and become fishers of men, with no country, no home, no ties, and so in all times He has spoken to chosen souls, and sent them forth to preach at the peril of their lives and to seal their preaching with their blood. If only we had lively faith and ardent love, how would the thought of His life carry us forward to follow Him more closely, to draw nearer to Him, to serve Him more generously! Pray that you may understand He is your Captain, your living Model, telling you to deny yourself and to follow Him. Go against nature and self; set love to Him and loyalty to His service before everything.

Beg that He may speak powerfully, that we may live in the world and triumph over it by poverty of spirit, self-renunciation, and preference of Jesus before all else.

CONSIDERATION.

FOURTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON DESPONDENCY. RULES FOR THE DISCERNMENT
OF SPIRITS.

YESTERDAY we spoke of temptations against faith ; I might complete what I then said by strongly recommending frequent acts of faith, frequent prayer for faith as means of strengthening faith, especially where we are much exposed to danger.

The virtue of hope is a theological virtue which disposes us to hope that God will give us eternal life if we do what we can. Not only will He give us what is necessary, but what is abundant. Many who in retreat have been much moved are apt to imagine it is all done, that they have taken their ticket and will be landed safe at their journey's end. But life is not a railway journey. The devil never leaves you alone for a moment, so that we ought to prepare ourselves for temptation. But this is what we do not do. Temptations come and we are astonished. We can't believe in God. He has told us to prepare. The devil will never leave us at rest. God does not abandon us ; He is near us to raise us up and carry us forward.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty for people who are trying to be good is despondency. They lose heart and think they will never be able to fulfil such and such a duty. There is no danger more to be feared.

St. Ignatius gives us what he calls "Rules for the discernment of spirits," that is, rules which enable us to distinguish the different actions of good and bad spirits. There are two sets of such rules—one for beginners and one for those more advanced. To-day we will take the rules for beginners.

1. When a soul easily falls into mortal sin, in order to make it fall deeper the evil spirit constantly places the pleasures of sin and indulging the senses in most attractive forms before such a soul. The good spirit, on the contrary, in order to turn him from sin, never ceases to prick his conscience with the sting of remorse and the counsels of reason.

2. But if a soul sets itself in earnest to get rid of sin and serve God, then the evil spirit will try and make it sad, and will worry and disquiet it. When he can't tempt a soul to sin, his object is to make the service of God wearisome.

The good spirit, on the other hand, as soon as we begin to amend, encourages and consoles us, gives us a feeling of calmness and strength, enlightens our understanding, so that prayer-time passes we know not how, conquests over self become easy, all difficulties and obstacles are smoothed.

3. True spiritual consolation may be known by the following signs. A certain interior impulse raises the soul towards the Creator, makes it love Him with an ardent love, and no longer permits it to love any creature but for Him. Sometimes gentle tears cause this love, tears which flow from repentance for past faults, or the sight of the sorrows of Jesus Christ, or

any other motive that enlightened religion inspires. I have known great servants of God who could shed tears over a little flower, who were in tears always when praying, always weeping but always joyful. Sometimes God gives us a sensible increase of faith or a flash of light which makes us confident that He will never fail us. Sometimes even when listening to worldly conversation or at a party the thought comes, "What vanity!" Many a holy life has been commenced in a ball-room. A sudden flash of light puts life before us in quite a new aspect. Finally, all interior joy and gladness, all that attracts us to retirement, prayer, holy reading: all that makes us more careful of salvation is true and spiritual consolation: God is constantly giving us moments of consolation, moments when we find repose and peace in Him.

4. Spiritual desolation is everything that is opposed to the description just given of consolation. We are in darkness and as if we could see nothing; our thoughts are concentrated on things of this life; there is disturbance and agitation in the soul, a fluttering and restlessness, a drawing to earthly things, weariness in prayer, disquietude from conflicting thoughts which move us to distrust God. We find ourselves heavy, sad, tepid, and we seem unable to do anything. This is spiritual desolation. St. Francis Xavier in one of his letters says, "I can't go on," and gives a terrible description of his desolation. But he fought against it resolutely.

But there is a natural desolation as well which comes from liver and physical causes. It proceeds sometimes

from overwork, or it may be the effect of being up all night dancing, flying from one party to another instead of resting. It is important to understand it may be physical, and may be met by physical remedies. One of the wisest rules is, Don't go to the end of your tether, don't overdo yourself. Meditation would be done better, Mass would be attended more frequently, if there were not this great waste of strength on unimportant things.

5. St. Ignatius says, during times of desolation, the evil spirit makes us feel his influence; we must therefore beware at such times of making any change whatever in what relates to our resolutions. For example, in retreat I make a rule of life, then desolation comes, and I want to give it up. Omit nothing, hurry nothing. Even if you do it all in a wooden way, don't hurry the wood! When you battle with desolation you can keep it down.

6. Though you are not to change your resolutions in time of desolation, there are means you may employ to rid yourself of it, such as taking *more* prayer and *more* penance, and other means of rousing yourself. Self-examination is a great help, often neglected. I have been going on well, and there comes this dreariness. Examine whether it has come through your own fault. Often there is a cause. You have given yourself to utter dissipation, never turning to God. You have done what you can to indispose your soul to prayer. If I am in desolation I want a special grace. I must pray more than I do at other times, *Deus in adiutorium meum intende!* If I use desola-

tion wisely, it brings me nearer to God. I am inclined to do nothing, but if I attack the devil my spiritual life becomes stronger than it was.

Therefore when desolation comes upon us let us do all we can to preserve ourselves in patience and calmness, making frequent acts of hope. Have you noticed how at such times it comes over you that you will never be in consolation again, whereas you ought to remember that this dark cloud will not last long, if we employ these means to dissipate it? And when we are in consolation we must prepare for desolation.

In these rules you will find great help against what is a great trouble to those who are trying to lead holy lives.

Spiritual Reading, Fourth Day, *Imitation*, Book II., chaps. 7, 8.

FOURTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE NATIVITY.

THE Nativity of Jesus Christ gives us an illustration of the warfare He came to wage against pleasure, riches, and honours—the three enemies He has taught us to combat.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine the stable at Bethlehem—a large cave in a rock, and at the end a ledge where

the manger was. There our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph laid our Lord, and she and St. Joseph knelt and worshipped.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask in the mystery of the birth in Bethlehem to know and follow Jesus in His warfare against concupiscence and pleasures of the world.

FIRST POINT. Desire of pleasure. Many pleasures are innocent enough. Open air, beautiful scenery, music, parties, etc., are innocent, but if sought too keenly such pleasures become inordinate. “They prolong their days in pleasure, and in a moment go down to hell.” Some go through life without a serious thought. Some seek pleasure that is forbidden. Our Lord gives a lesson of flying from pleasure. He might have come into the world a full-grown Man, or with a glorified impassable body, but He chose a Body very dependent and capable of suffering. He possessed the full use of His reason from the first moment of His human existence, yet He preferred to remain a helpless Infant. He might have been in a palace, and He chose a stable, and to be born as a poor man’s child. We may consider who Jesus Christ is ; why He is born into the world with such a capacity for suffering. What is the lesson I am to learn ?

Jesus Christ is my Lord and my God. I believe in Him. I hope in Him. If He has taken my nature for me, surely He will grant me all that is necessary for eternal life if I do what I can myself. I adore Thee, my Lord ; I love Thee because Thou hast given

Thyself for me. I will give Thee the adoration, the praise, the homage, that is due to Thee.

Jesus Christ in His birth gives me this lesson—not to seek pleasure too keenly and inordinately. When I think of Him it ill becomes me to wish for a life of pleasure. Perhaps few here have lives of pleasure, but none should covet such a life. So I renounce a life of pleasure. I don't desire it. I fear it. We may have a thirst for pleasure though we have not got it. We ought to be better satisfied if we look forward to some serious work. If we look quietly at life, much that seems most trivial may be very pleasing to God. Take a young woman who remains at home to give her care to an aged mother or aunt. It does seem a life wasted; all her hopes and pleasures sacrificed to one who is perhaps impatient, difficult to please, irreligious. But if God leaves aged mothers and aunts in the world, there must be people to look after them. In doing such a work how much virtue may be practised, how much good done! I have known conversion given as a reward in these cases.

Take ordinary family life: the father has his breakfast in a scramble and goes off to his work. In the evening he comes home and must be amused. A splendid field for virtue! He has worked all day very hard; you should be kind to him and amuse him. In this you are doing a good work for God and especially if it is done with a good intention.

Each one has a place in life which God has appointed. Promise that you will endeavour to make life serious. Above all fear an inordinate love of

pleasure ; those who seek pleasure are, of all, the most dissatisfied. The happiest are those who take life as it comes very seriously, and do whatever has to be done thoroughly and cheerfully. Look at the past and make amendment. "After all, my toils are nothing compared to those of my Captain."

SECOND. Love of riches. We all like nice things. If we don't control this liking it leads to sin. Against all desire of the things of the world Jesus Christ in the stable at Bethlehem preaches to us. The whole place indicates abject poverty. All there proclaims the greatest poverty. And who is Jesus Christ? The King of the universe. He called all out of nothing. He renounces all to lead us to renounce all. He is our King, our Captain, the Master of all. "In all Thy poverty I believe in Thee. I believe that Thou art my Lord. I hope in Thee. Thou hast left all things for me. I trust in Thee. I love Thee because Thou hast made Thyself poor for my sake. Grant that I may have poverty of spirit, that I may desire nothing inordinately. Grant that I may use all in dependence on Thee." Make acts of adoration, praise, worship. Make also acts of self-accusation. "I have been wanting in poverty of spirit. I have been too easily disturbed at losing the goods of this world. I have sinned in being over-attached to them. Teach me to be poor and prepared to resign them. Give me a generous heart. May I be glad to share my wealth with Thy poor. Give me a great reverence for the poor. They may be rude, but their poverty is Thy poverty. Spare me from that error of looking on

poverty as a crime." Pray much for true poverty of spirit.

THIRD. Love of honour. Jesus Christ waged war against honour. We are all prone to seek honour. The desire of esteem no doubt prevents many a crime, but it may be carried too far. We are all apt to have an inordinate desire for honour. The Child in the manger at Bethlehem strikes a blow at this. Who is He that is born thus? The Creator, who empties Himself to put on the form of a slave. "I am meek and lowly." Can any be less honourable, more unlike what the world esteems? Contemplating Him seeking humiliation, renew your acts of faith, hope, love, adoration, praise, thanksgiving, worship. Renounce all inordinate desire of honour. Bear patiently contempt, neglect, slights. When we are slighted, then we know how we love honour. Let us promise to bear patiently the refusal of any distinction we are entitled to.

Look at Mary and Joseph, how brave they were; accepting all privations gladly, joyously. All nearest to God are invited to come near to Him in the war He wages against inordinate pleasure, love of riches, and desire of honour.

FOURTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Picture to yourself the Child in His Mother's arms, and the kings kneeling before Him, offering their gifts.

SECOND PRELUDE.—“Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend how they proved themselves valiant soldiers under Thy standard; inflame my will that I may desire to imitate them, that I may seek Christ my Lord, find Him, and adore Him.”

FIRST POINT. These kings sought Him with great promptitude and generosity. We don't know that they believed in one God. But they received a grace: an extraordinary star appeared, and this they knew was the herald of the Redeemer. Millions perhaps saw the star; only these three went in search of what it portended. Those who remained behind laughed and scorned; wise people advised them to wait a little, but they had got the grace of God and they started. The lesson of promptitude which they give is very suggestive. We receive warnings, but we lose many a grace because we are slow and not watchful. They had many obstacles. They did not mind being laughed at for going after the star. They disregarded all the difficulties and dangers of the road. In their

generosity in undertaking this journey there is a lesson for us in our life of faith. We see a star—the teaching of the Church, and are inspired to accept that teaching. Many say it is too old-fashioned. Christianity must be given up now. How many obstacles there are if we stop to think about them! We must go on bravely. We start under a certain sign and with the grace of God to help us, but where we are going we know not.

SECOND. How these wise men behaved in the presence of Jesus Christ. They adored and offered Him gifts. This was the duty they owed Him, the virtue of religion, to render all those external and internal acts due to Him as God—praise, thanks, adoration. Nothing daunted by the poverty that surrounded Him, they fell down and adored. They were full of lively faith, firm hope, ardent charity. Their hearts overflowed with joy at finding Him. We may imagine their peace and exultation, how they forgot the wise counsel and the ridicule of their relations—the words of praise and wonder they spoke.

Let us suppose we are in His Presence after such a journey, and let us try to imitate them. What is our conduct to our Lord when He comes to us in the Blessed Sacrament? Do we honour Him with acts of faith and adoration?—do we offer Him gifts? What satisfactions, what pleasures, do we renounce for His sake? When in Holy Communion He is enthroned in our hearts, how do we honour Him? Is there not matter for improvement here?

THIRD. How the wise men persevered and how

they obeyed the guidance of God. The star disappeared: this was the first great trial to their faith. What blank looks! They did not pack up and go home, but did the best thing they could under the circumstances. They asked, "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" The first they meet is surprised at such a question, and the next also, and they go to the King. No one knows about Him. No one is giving Him a thought. They are out with their question, "Where is He?" And Herod calls the scribes and consults them, and they tell him Bethlehem is the place where Christ should be born; and so he gives the wise men the information they sought.

When the star left them you see how they did what we sometimes fail to do—the best they could. It is a wise rule to do the best you can when you are in a difficulty. They were rewarded by definite instruction. They started on the search, and then the star reappeared, and they rejoiced with great joy. They were safe from the Jews and Herod. How great must have been their joy!

They had the warning not to go back to Herod, which warning they obeyed, utterly despising all human respect—a lesson to us to perform our duty in defiance of everyone: to do what is right without hesitation. These soldiers of Christ teach us to be brave. They have plenty of difficulties to their faith, many reasons why they should give it up, but God always gives them that grace they stand in need of. With no attachment to the world, leaving everything

behind, they press on and find Him. If we seek Him thus we shall also find Him. We shall find Him in many ways. We shall find Him in the Blessed Sacrament—in our hearts and minds—guiding us on our way, giving us the victory.

FIFTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

ON THE HIDDEN LIFE.

THE hidden life never grows old, for our life is always changing; and as this life of ours presents new phases, so from the hidden life of Christ come fresh instructions and applications. Pray that these may sink deep into your hearts.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The Holy House, St. Joseph at his carpenter's bench, our Blessed Lord helping whilst His Blessed Mother was engaged in household duties.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend the lesson Thou teachest me of humility and obedience in Thy hidden life. In-flame my will that I may desire to follow and imitate Thee. Grant that, as in my daily life I meet with new trials, new sufferings, new work, I may ever turn to Nazareth and apply that lesson afresh to my own life.

FIRST POINT. Christ remained in this obscure

hidden life up to thirty years of age, working under St. Joseph, and after St. Joseph's death under Mary, practising obedience, leading the life of a carpenter, a life of toil, working contentedly, voluntarily. What is the lesson for us? To accept our duties, the greater part of which are necessarily obscure, with resignation.

If we do this, if we are content with the daily round, and do not fret and chafe against it, we may go on till we arrive at joy and delight in that round of duty assigned to us. How natural it is to wish for change, to wish to escape from the monotony, to think we could serve God more fervently with other occupations! Yet the example of Christ should convince us we should accept what He appoints us. It is good reason, good sense, to make the best of our lot. Discontented people are always longing for something else. Those who make the best of their lot are always contented, always in peace. The lesson is driven home to us if we consider who Jesus was. "My God and my Lord," I say when I see Him on the carpenter's bench. He who is working there is the King, the true visible King, the leader of all good souls, of all who are loyal to their Maker. He has been sent to establish this kingdom by His teaching and miracles: all depend on Him, the salvation of all is in His hands. Had He chosen to spend these thirty years in going to Rome and the other chief cities of the world, we should say He would have done more good; but He knew better than we do what would be best for the world, and therefore we must conclude this was the most important lesson He

could teach. A very urgent, valuable lesson. What acts of praise and gratitude are due to Him! O my King, I will learn this lesson. Instruct me that I may be contented, thankful. I believe that Thou hast disposed all for my welfare. I love Thee. For love of me Thou hast accepted Thy lot; let me accept mine, and let me learn to be contented and satisfied and rejoice in my lot whatever it may be.

RESOLUTION. To accept all that is most repugnant to me after the example of my King, to wage war against self-love—that fond fancy of ours that we could fill a higher destiny—that appreciation of self we have. Teach me to give up self, to live for Thee and those Thou hast confided to me.

Examine how you stand: whether you drag through your duties rather than fulfil them joyously.

SECOND. His obedience. “He was subject to them” with the obedience customary to the time and place. In the East the subjection of children to their parents was much greater than it is here; and here it is much less than it used to be. Children now are not taught to be so obedient. Christ our Lord had to do many menial acts. Everyone has to obey some authority, ecclesiastical and civil, which is not very palatable. Perhaps we obey and murmur, or refuse to obey, or obey with a bad grace. The true idea of obedience is being subject to authority for the sake of God. We should dread slavish obedience, and obey with alacrity and dignity: we can’t imagine Jesus Christ murmuring. We should submit with a good grace, in a proper spirit. You can’t see that what

you are told to do is the wisest thing, but you can see it is the wisest thing to obey. Disobedience is the vice of a weak mind. To serve God is to be a king. Obedience is a grand virtue: it raises and ennobles those who possess it. Well-trained soldiers like the Guards obey willingly: it is the wretched army of riff-raff that won't obey. Obedience is a kingly virtue. We should cultivate habitual deference and respect for those in authority. Affectation of freedom of manner is a mistake. "Honour thy father and mother" implies a spirit of gracious deference and consideration. This He teaches us. Thank Him for the lesson He gives us against this pride of ours, and pray that we may be always ready to obey. The spirit of one who says, "I'd like to see anyone who would try to show me I was not my own master," is not a Christian spirit. Let us all see how far we have the spirit of obedience.

THIRD. The charity that reigned in the Holy Family. There were no bickerings: all joys and sorrows were in common, each willing to bear his share of the burden. What sweeter than a hard life if shared by a loving heart? Charity is its own exceeding great reward. There should be no warding off, no shutting out others. We must watch and study the feelings of those around us, and go to relieve them. How much there is to be borne every day! What want of self-denial! How few ready to sacrifice themselves! We can't tolerate the thought that there was any want of love in the house at Nazareth. What a world of happiness we might create if only we had charity! The presence of one

really charitable soul in a family is the greatest boon God can give. Have you not rejoiced in a suffering because it has brought you some real kindness? How life would be sweetened if only we had this charity!

God's examination of us at the Day of Judgment will be different from our own. How have you behaved to those around you? Let us then arm ourselves with the virtues of charity and obedience, seeing Jesus in those around us to love, and in those above us to obey. May we study His hidden life, so that we may acquire these virtues.

Spiritual Reading, Fifth Day, *Imitation*, Book III., chaps. 56, 57.

CONSIDERATION.

FIFTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON CHARITY TO OUR NEIGHBOUR.

OUR conduct to others should never be passed over in our self-examinations at night, and before confession. What is the obligation of charity? That we love our neighbour as ourselves, because he is like to God and God commands it. Altruists give no reason for loving others. Outside revelation indeed there *is* no reason, and many a reason why we should not!

Jesus Christ gives the command and then the motive. "The measure you mete to others shall be

meted to you," and "A cup of cold water given to a disciple in My Name shall not lose its reward". Hence the world has seen with admiration the charity that abounds in the Church. In early days it was said, "See how these Christians love one another". The mere fact of having the same nature is not a sufficient motive for charity.

Consider some of the obstacles to charity—want of the motive, of the principle. We don't see that our neighbours represent Jesus to us. They may vex us; they withhold what is our right. Some hasty speech comes back to us. Or there are natural antipathies. Providentially every one is not drawn to the same person. There is something in the manner, voice, etc., that is suitable or unsuitable. Some are too tall to please us; others dislike very short people. There are some voices you can't bear, others that are music to listen to. Then the appearance—the puritanical face, or one that is always smiling: rapid, hurricane people always in a bustle—others creeping about like cats. Sometimes it is the shade of the hair we don't like. We have antipathies and sympathies we can't explain, which make the practice of charity very difficult.

How should we treat our neighbour? St. Thomas gives a good rule. We have all two sides—a good side and a bad side. There is no vanity in thinking you have a good side. St. Thomas says: "It is my will to fix my attention on the good side: if I turn away from the bad and look only at the good side of a person, I get in the end to like that person. I

concentrate my attention on what in him I can admire. So when you find you are more pleased *not* to see a person, study to discover the good qualities in that person: everyone has plenty if you look for them."

The second rule applies to ourselves. I may fix my attention on my bad qualities or on my good—on my musical talent or on my shocking temper. St. Thomas suggests that in such a case we should forget the voice and attend to the temper. If our minds are full of our own shortcomings we are in a much better disposition for treating with our enemies, we are much more indulgent to others. To be familiar with our own bad qualities has a wonderfully humanising effect.

How does our self-love show itself? Does it please us if people are always dwelling on our faults, pointing out what a bad temper we have? Whereas if anyone says, "It is not so bad after all," and tries to excuse and put the best construction on everything we do, are we not pleased? One class of people like to point out every fault, and such people have few friends. Others are always passing over faults, and how much good they do, and how many friends they win for themselves! Instead of cultivating blame, always extenuate.

Another rule. Suppose the same action performed by a friend or an enemy, how differently we regard it. Our friend is so warm-hearted, impulsive; see how many excuses we make for him. Why should we not have that disposition for everyone and be ready to

make excuses for all? Why should we have any enemies? It is paltry, mean, to run down people. I won't judge anyone. If I can stifle all desire for retaliation, what a victory over my human nature! What am I the better for lowering myself by back-biting? If I can go further and wish my enemy to be forgiven and do him a good, I will do it. No one has ever forgiven an enemy without getting a great grace from God. Remember the history of St. John Gaulbert.

I knew a man who received a most cruel injury, and who saw the duty of Christian forgiveness. He would not stir a finger to defend himself. God brought all his temporal affairs right, and gave him a most blessed death within a few minutes of his receiving Holy Communion.

Then again there is that terrible argument for charity: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us". I ask for that measure of forgiveness I ought to have for those that injure me. To repay evil with good is the triumph of Christianity. . . . Many of our faults would be avoided if we took a little pains about charity. When you make acts of love of God, go on to acts of love for your neighbour and for your enemies. Make acts of entire forgiveness. Sometimes we want a special grace. Nothing so touches God as a true act of forgiveness. Use that form of prayer and you will find it most efficacious.

FIFTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

ON PRAYER.

THE Syrophenician woman gives us a grand lesson in prayer—how to pray, and how to be constant in our prayer—to go on praying, though at first it may seem of no use. The story is related in St. Matt. xv. and in St. Mark vii.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine the Syrophenician woman, who falls down at the feet of our Blessed Lord and begs Him to free her daughter from the devil.

SECOND PRELUDE.—I will ask to understand the lesson taught me by Thee and this heathen woman of the reward of prayer, and will resolve to make more frequent and fervent use of this means of grace.

FIRST POINT. The earnestness of this woman. She had one object in her heart when she came and fell at the feet of Jesus. With all her strength she asked for the cure of her daughter. We are not sufficiently in earnest; we don't pray as though everything depended on the intensity of our prayer. If we went to our prayer with a *conviction* that it would be heard how differently we should act, and what should we not obtain! Our Lord entered into a house, and this woman, as soon as she heard of Him, came in and fell down at His feet, saying, "Have mercy on

me, O Lord, Thou Son of David : my daughter is grievously troubled". Simple words, but very earnest. And Jesus paid no attention to her at first, and His disciples came and besought Him, saying, "Send her away, for she crieth after us. And He answering said : I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel," as if to say, "You are not a Jewess, why do you make your prayer to me?" She is not repelled, "but came and adored Him, saying : Lord, help me". Then he answered her again, still with a repulse, "It is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs". But she still persists in her prayer ; she takes His words : "Treat me as a dog ; the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table. So I come, that I may eat."

What a lesson is this for us of the earnestness we ought to have in prayer ! We say, what is the good of praying when we receive no attention ? Some would not be encouraged by the words of the disciples. Jesus discourages this poor woman, but she goes on. She teaches us how we should bring to our prayer greater earnestness. We stand in need of God ; we can't get on without the light and strength that are to be got from prayer ; our duties overwhelm us ; we are constantly confronted by something that exceeds our strength. We don't pray, or if we do, it is without much earnestness. "He prayed with a mighty cry," a cry capable of moving God. We are not sufficiently in earnest ; we don't care to obtain what we ask for ; we don't believe in God's power. If we thought He had

kept back many blessings in order that we may pray for them, should we not be more assiduous in prayer? . . . Perhaps I have not understood that it was part of my work to pray. He holds back much in order that I may ask Him. We have not asked, we have not prayed. This woman wanted the cure of her daughter. She knows He is able to grant it, and she goes on till she gets it. We will learn to believe more in prayer. We must try to understand how it is part of God's Providence to leave a good deal to prayer. Pray, and pray earnestly, and then you will find there is a great deal in prayer. No one has prayed earnestly and been left without an answer.

SECOND. The constancy of this good woman. She went on asking. "She crieth after us," the disciples said. These men could not bear the woman crying. Our Lord did not mind trifles, and shows us how far better it is to bear them in a spirit of charity. She may be allowed to cry. If people annoy us, what does it signify? To bear with each other is not a small part of life.

First, then, this woman goes into the house where she knows Jesus is. She has a very big matter to take to Him, and she falls down and puts out her prayer. Then when He pays no attention to her she takes it quietly. She thinks as beggars do, "If I wait, I shall get it". We should be like beggars—always dependent, looking at His Hand. *She* does not provoke the disciples by answering them. She waits—"Lord! help me". He wanted to draw more out of

her, so He treats her with apparent contempt. She only asks to be treated as a dog. Like Jacob, "I will not let Thee go except Thou bless me". This word "importune" is adopted by Jesus when He gives the parable of the man who comes for the loaves. Homely figure but practical lesson that we should importune Him! She perseveres with all her ardour, bears rebuffs, everything only to get the cure of her daughter. Jesus Christ when He was in His agony "prayed the longer". What He wants is not a long prayer, but a cry from the heart sustained with constancy, with perseverance for days, weeks, years even. The works of God take a long time. How long we have taken to get to points of our spiritual life! We ask for a conversion. We begin on Monday, and we expect on Wednesday to get an answer. Our prayer must be prolonged. If we want to share in the works of God we must be disposed to pray long. Remember how David, when he had been told his child should be taken, fasts and prays, and prays as long as there was a moment of hope. Though God did not grant his prayer He was pleased with it.

THIRD. The reward. "O woman, great is thy faith." Faith comprehends hope as well here. "For this saying" (St. Mark says) "go thy way, the devil is gone out of thy daughter. Be it done to thee as thou wilt." Will He say to me, "Great is thy faith," or rather, "Weak is thy faith? Why didst thou hesitate? Why distrust Me? It shall not be done unto thee."

Here, then, is a lesson He gives us to pray and to

importune Him and have holy audacity, and learn that prayer is one of the great weapons to overcome enemies and remove obstacles.

FIFTH DAY.

[8-30 P.M.]

ON THREE OF THE BEATITUDES.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—For a Composition of Place imagine our Lord addressing the multitude, yourself one of those He is teaching.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will, that I may understand Thy doctrine, that I may accept it and make it a rule of my life.

FIRST POINT. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” The world’s idea is that mourning implies sadness, that it is filled with bitterness. It is different with the disciples of Jesus, and it is the comfort He gives which makes the blessedness. Why should we mourn? We ought all to be mourners for our sins. He says: Blessed are they who grieve for their sins, who grieve for the emptiness of the world and its folly. A vast number are taken up with pleasures and business as though there were no comfort in anything else. After this world comes a solid world where the just shall reign for ever. There they will have their comfort. Blessed are they who mourn over the loss of souls—so many souls Christ desired

to have, who preferred death to life, and for whom His Blood was shed in vain ; so many deaf to His love. His comfort is in those who try to serve him and who win others to the love of Him. The lesson we are to get from this point is, how we should take our place among the mourners, and not join the crowd of laughers and scorners ; that we should be amongst those to whom life is full of great issues, that we may deserve to be comforted.

SECOND. “Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.” The world hungers, but not after justice ; it hungers after riches, pleasures, and honours. Those who have most still want more. By justice we mean that course of conduct which renders us pleasing to God—keeping the commandments of God. Those are blessed who long after peace with God, who desire to fulfil the law of God, who have a constant craving—not a feeble desire but a craving—after holiness. What is there to compare with the craving for food or drink ? We know it is the most cruel torment. We ask, have we got this hunger and thirst after justice ? Have we more than a fitful desire ? Have we one that is abiding, one that gives not a moment’s rest ? Have we a continual craving for perfection ? How many motives have we to crave for this holiness ? If in the past our desire has been feeble, let us try now to make it stronger—let us make a great firm resolution to aim at holiness.

“They shall be filled.” When we have not got the objects of the world, we desire them, but when we have them, we despise them : we find how little they

can content us. It is different with spiritual things. Even in this life God so satisfies us that we have our fill. The more we come to know Him, the greater the desire to know Him better. “My heart was created for Thee, it can know no rest but in Thee.”

THIRD. “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Who are the merciful? Those who are kind and gentle in their words and thoughts, who banish all desire of retaliation, who cannot keep malice and ill-will, who are full of kindness and love and gentleness, and have a keen eye for those in sorrow, who go to them and sympathise in their griefs. “They shall find mercy,” and we all stand in need of mercy. Oh! how great the need of mercy! If we show mercy, God will have mercy on us. If we care for the sorrowful, He will care for us. Beg that these lessons may sink into your hearts. Ask that you may be really mourners, that you may indeed hunger and thirst after justice, that you may be full of mercy, that everything most like the Heart of Jesus may be in your hearts.

SIXTH DAY.

[9-30 A.M.]

THE TWO STANDARDS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine Jesus Christ on one hand invites all men to serve under His standard, on

the other Lucifer seduces them to leave Jesus Christ and serve under his banner.

SECOND PRELUDE.—I will ask to see the fraud, malice, and deceit of the enemy of Jesus Christ, and that my will may be inflamed ardently with the desire to follow Christ.

The object of St. Ignatius in this meditation is to describe the system of warfare adopted respectively by Christ our Lord and Lucifer his enemy. He addresses those who are earnestly striving to serve God. With regard to these people, the devil never leaves them alone, but persists in his design of effecting their destruction. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, never abandons a soul, inspiring it gently, persuading it to follow Him, leading it higher and higher. St. Ignatius wishes to explain how these two act, the line which the devil pursues, and the way in which Christ deals with a soul who wants to get near Him. We pray that we may see through the deceits of the devil.

FIRST POINT. The devil puts before us a reason, counting thus to surprise our credulity; he is a splendid logician, but a very deceitful one. What is the ordinary manner in which he attacks a soul? He tries to inspire it with an inordinate love of the comforts and conveniences of life, a liking for society, a desire to be admitted here and there: all these things in themselves are indifferent. It is not a sin to have houses and wealth, but it is dangerous, because we are apt to be too eager about such things, and that over-eagerness is apt to lead us away from God; and also

because nearness to God consists in poverty of spirit, and requires that we love no creature above the service of God. It is not at all an uncommon thing to see prosperity leading people away from God. I have known many such instances. Good Catholics, poor people, have begun to make money, and as they go on increasing their money a change comes over them. They get a little attached to their money. When the devil has got a very good person to like money he fills him with a desire of the esteem of others, makes him want to be respected, to get forward, to be made more of amongst men, to ambition little distinctions. When a man has been wishing to be Lord Mayor, and succeeds in obtaining his desire, it is delightful to him. This is not the last stage. He begins to be filled with the idea of his own importance ; he begins to believe in himself. That is pride, undue love of his own excellence, and then the devil will assault him with grievous temptations to dishonesty or to disbelief, and I have known such people gradually lose their faith, and want to go to the parish church as being more respectable. Does it matter much ? they ask ; and at last they become downright unbelievers. Observe the stages. First, love of wealth ; then the second is never wanting, an inordinate desire to be esteemed ; and lastly, the third, undue self-estimation, pride ; and until you come to that, the devil never suggests a bad sin. His strongest temptations are reserved to the time when pride takes possession of the heart. We are all the same ; the devil is always laying traps for us. Let us see whether we are influenced by love of riches

and the desire to be honoured ; whether we look down on others and are filled with self-esteem. We should examine very carefully. Instead of riches, it may be some talent we possess which is dangerous—a fine voice for singing, perhaps, to improve which I indulge myself inordinately—do not abstain, etc., wish to be admired for it, am jealous of others, think better of myself than of others. Notice whether you have an inordinate desire of the esteem of others, pride, and a sense of superiority. The devil promises you happiness here, and he is a liar. How few there are raised up by pride who are not humbled !

SECOND. With Jesus Christ, on the contrary, there is nothing fraudulent. He says : “I invite you to renounce all. Don't covet the things of the world. Do what you don't like. Give up what you love best. There is no delusion : you must lead a hard life of self-denial, and the reward is eternal glory.” What is His method ? He strives to strengthen in me poverty of spirit : if I have goods he bids me regard them as only lent by God, in order that I may use them as He wishes, in promoting His service, giving to the poor and the Church, stripping myself that I may have the more to give.

What are gifts of mind, etc., but talents confided to us ? Never say of anything, “It is mine” and “I may do what I like with my own”. No property is ours : it is but lent and entrusted to us by God, and we shall have to give an account of it—and we must be ready to have it taken from us. How many were reduced to poverty in the French and German war ! It does

happen that people are called on to part with their property, and we should always hold everything as though our possession of it were very uncertain.

THIRD. Then Christ our Lord leads us to great meekness—to patience under humiliation and contempt—not to be self-asserting—to bow down under the mighty hand of God—to accept crosses with patience, contentment, thanksgiving. Crosses are great graces ; many can trace their salvation to crosses meekly accepted. Thou art good and wonderful, O God, and hast permitted this trial. I rejoice that I am counted worthy to suffer. I know that suffering is a great grace and gift from Thee. If you were in that meek frame of mind you would be very near perfect humility—that is, dependence upon God for everything—an absolute, entire, joyous dependence on Him who disposes of us as he pleases—glad, willing, rejoicing to be dependent on Him with the perfect dependence of the creature on the Creator, of the soldier on his captain, of the disciple on his Master. Let us carry on dependence on God to dependence on Jesus Christ, loving what He loves, hating what He hates.

COLLOQUY. Offering ourselves to Him that we may understand His tactics and advance along His road of perfection.

CONSIDERATION.

SIXTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

RELIGIOUS VOCATION.

I HAVE chosen Religious Vocation as the subject of our conference this afternoon. It may seem not a very suitable one for many, but some are concerned in learning about it for themselves, and some may have to do so on account of others of whom they may have the charge. What are the principles to guide us? It is a gross delusion to suppose that one is a religious as one is a soldier or a doctor.

Are all Christians bound to perfection? They are bound to aim at it at least: we are bound to love God with all our hearts. "Be ye perfect as your Father is perfect." What is meant, then, by a *state* of perfection? Is there such a thing? There is; and it is so clearly taught by Christ I wonder that Protestants don't see it. It is taught in St. Matt. xix. and St. Mark x., in the story of the young man who came to Christ and asked what he must do to receive everlasting life, and our Lord told him he must keep the Commandments. And he answered that he had kept these from his youth. "And Jesus, looking on him, loved him, and said to him: One thing is wanting unto thee: go sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow Me. Who, being struck sad at that

saying, went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions."

Our Lord teaches beyond the possibility of denial that there are two states—that of keeping the Commandments in ordinary life in the world, and that of those who renounce the world and follow Jesus Christ. The two states are clearly marked : the second is called the state of the counsels, because no one is bound to embrace it. Did this youth commit a sin? No ; but he chose not to follow Christ in the way He offered at his own peril. He would not receive that abundance of grace which he would have received had he followed Him by renouncing all things. So with those who have had the call to religious life and have not obeyed it, there is no sin in not obeying it ; but what I have remarked is that they have had a punishment commonly in this life, and sometimes have put themselves in danger of losing their souls.

The religious state, the state of the counsels, is to take the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, to give up all and follow Christ. Persons in the world sometimes take a vow never to marry, or to observe chastity ; but that is not a stable state, though more perfect than life in the world without it. They take a vow of poverty in the world or of obedience, but that is not the same thing as being a religious. The religious state is stable : it is a state of separation from the world, with the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

May anyone become a religious? No one may, unless he is called. The calling is not *always* without

doubt. Then one must consider one's circumstances and capabilities. If dumb, one need not think of joining the Order of Preachers. Capabilities are to be taken into consideration. Matthew seated as a tax-collector was called: he left all and followed Jesus Christ. So did many others. "They left their nets," we read, or "They left their nets and their father". So to this young man it was said, "One thing is wanting: sell all that you have and follow Me". It is the following Jesus, and following Him in a stable state, that constitutes the religious life. To St. Aloysius our Lady appeared and told him to be a Jesuit. Many Saints have had clear calls. Many even now have clear calls from heaven. There are other calls much more ordinary. For instance, people sometimes get light by consolation and desolation. I am going to Holy Communion more frequently; in my thanksgiving I find I get consolation when I pray to follow Christ, and that when I am dark and in desolation I want always to give up the attempt. If sweetness and joy always come when I think of following Christ and having my head chopped off for Him, well—it's common sense to become a religious, and I may go forward safely.

There is a third way in which vocations come. God leaves us to our own reason and the ordinary means of grace. We don't have any notable sweetness. We are not either tempted or buoyed up. I ask, why should I leave the world? Well, the religious state is a higher state—do I feel drawn to it? I know many holy persons who have no drawing to it; but if, as I

think over life and its disappointments, and what a grand thing it is to give up the world and follow Jesus, and a desire to do it grows up in my mind—well! I am drawn. A little boy is brought up to be a priest, and feels at the end of his education he has a drawing to the priesthood and a religious life—that is a vocation. Why was I fixed on? The provincial looks at me and puts questions, and says I shall do. I feel no drawing to the world, and I want to follow Jesus Christ. This is very simple but satisfactory. There must be the calling—I must *wish* to be perfect.

A vocation may take a thousand shapes. There are a great number of signs you may leave to the person who has to settle it: like marriage, there are two parties to be consulted.

If you love your children never try to interfere with a vocation. You don't know what may come of it. I don't ask you to encourage a vocation, but to be prepared for the sacrifice if necessary. God has a right to call your child. For God's sake beware how you cross a vocation. Of course it is right to see that nothing is done rashly. I was taught, "If you want to be useful don't try and lead the Holy Ghost". No priest will take lightly the responsibility of putting a person into religion.

There are circumstances in which a vocation must wait. God sometimes gives people the vocation, but never lets them follow it. Such people are of great use. They are living in the world but not of it in these holy dispositions.

Sometimes parents shove their children into religion.

Spiritual Reading, Sixth Day, *Imitation*, Book III., chap. 54.

SIXTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

OUR SAVIOUR WASHING THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Let us imagine that we see our Blessed Lord washing the feet of His disciples.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O my God, enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend something of this mystery of Thy charity and Thy humility. In flame my will that I may ardently desire and resolve to imitate Thee. My Lord Jesus Christ, may I know myself, may I know Thee, that I may hate myself and love Thee.

FIRST POINT. St. John gives a very striking introduction to this act of our Lord, in washing the feet of His disciples: "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end. . . . Knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God and goeth to God." . . . This is an introduction to something most important—a work of charity and humility. *Because* He was God He performs this act, and He washes the feet of Judas. Imagine Him kneeling at

the feet of Judas. Meditate how He spoke to the heart of Judas, How He gave him inspirations that should have moved him. What a touching sight! It ought to have touched the heart of Judas, but the devil had got in there. Later Judas was moved to repentance; his eyes were opened, but his was not a real repentance. When our Lord knelt before him his heart resisted that loving influence, so that he did not see. Save me, O Lord, from a blinded mind, or from a blind and hardened *heart*. Save me from a hard heart that is so self-sufficient it can resist the grace of God. This is a state to which sinners often drift: in a priest's life such instances are not rare, and they are most appalling. It is one of the ways in which the power of the devil becomes palpable. Sometimes in the confessional one is witness of the struggle between the devil and the good Spirit. Save me, O Lord, from a heart hardened to evil, and grant me a meek, lowly, humble heart.

How did Judas come to that state of hardness that he could let Jesus wash his feet when he was going to take for Him the price of a worn-out slave? He must have come to it by neglecting some means of grace, by yielding to his passion of avarice. He kept the purse. He had charge of what our Lord received—not much, very little probably—and he was filled with the desire of gain. Hence his murmuring against Magdalene and the waste of the ointment, for which our Lord reproved him. He became the slave of his passion—so hardened that he crowns his hardness by a sacrilegious Communion. So let us tremble at the

sight of Judas' sin and pray earnestly to be preserved from obduracy, to be ever docile to the inspirations of grace, and to give up creatures we love unduly. He fell into certain temptations: we often have temptations and are equally negligent and become hard.

SECOND. From Judas let us turn to Peter. Observe the difference in Peter: he was full of pride and self-confidence and vaunted his courage: his dispositions are not perfect, but he loves Jesus. "Lord, dost *Thou* wash my feet?" He remembered perhaps how he had confessed, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," how Jesus Christ had walked on the waters and calmed the tempest, how glorious He had appeared in the Transfiguration, how He had manifested His power over the souls of men. "Lord, dost *Thou* wash my feet? Thou shalt never wash my feet." He is very determined. Our Lord answers, "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me". Then Peter says, "Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head," anything rather than to be separated from Thee. St. Peter shows us what dispositions we should have in coming to Communion. Lord, dost *Thou* visit me? Depart from me for I am sinful. Thou, the Lord of lords, the King of kings. dost *Thou* visit me and make my heart Thy throne? Thou shalt never wash my feet. We say, I am unworthy, I will never go to Holy Communion. "Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood you shall not have life in you." He tells me, "If thou wilt not come and eat this Bread of Life thou canst not remain with Me". Then I will

receive Thee, my Lord, as often as I can, every day if I may, if only I were less unworthy. We ought to come in great humility, thinking, "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come to me". And He answers, "Behold the Lamb of God. Behold Him who takes away the sins of the world." Not because you are worthy, not because your heart is a fitting abode for Him, but because you are sinful He descends to take away your sins.

See how the humility of Peter rested on some false self-love. We may have a counterfeit humility. We want to know that we are worthy. No one can be worthy. Even His Mother could never receive Him without acknowledging "*Non sum dignus*". And I, I am very lame and halt, come into my soul and heal it. Come and render it less displeasing unto Thee. Come that I may weep over my sins.

THIRD. "Know you what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that as I have done to you, so you do also." A lesson of charity again, a lesson that we should be always ready to render a service, always watchful to say a kind word. Oh, that we might have this large, broad, generous spirit of Christian charity, overflowing with kindness and goodwill, the spirit which takes delight in doing kind acts, which is never to be offended, which tries to make everyone around happy and to lessen the sorrows of all. Who is blessed but he who knows the secrets,

the devices of this charity, whose actions are ever guided and prompted by this spirit of love!

O Lord, soften our hearts, take away from us these stony hearts. Give us a heart of flesh, a heart influenced by kind human feelings, that we may understand this lesson of our Master and carry it out, by lessening the sorrow and adding to the peace of those around us.

SIXTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

IN meditating on the Passion I must always consider three things. 1. How much our Lord is suffering, exciting myself to grief, sorrow, and great compassion. 2. That He conceals His divinity. He does not destroy His enemies, but permits His Humanity to bear sufferings. 3. That whereas He suffers for me, I ought to suffer for love of Him.

The Agony in the Garden gives us great lessons in the use of prayer, and how we should behave in desolation.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Picture to yourself Jesus Christ prostrate on the ground.

SECOND PRELUDE.—“Enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend something of the mystery of

the Agony. In flame my will that I may feel a great contrition for my sins."

Read the history as given in St. Luke's Gospel.

FIRST POINT. What caused our Lord to be in this agony? The foreknowledge of His Passion and of every step in it, the outrages, the blows, the humiliation, the injustice. All that He was about to suffer was present before Him. What rendered that so terrible? Many Saints believe that from the first moment of His conception He had always this Passion before His mind, but only when the Agony began did He withdraw the check on His Passion. He allowed *now* His capacity for grief to have full sway. "My soul is sorrowful unto death." We know how much He suffered. We do not know all, but enough to make a fearful history. He saw it all and allowed sorrow full play on Him. His soul was deluged with grief. The sins of all mankind were before Him. To us this is impossible to comprehend, from our limited capacity and from the state of the soul in the body. Every human being and his sins present to His mind! Occasionally we get a glimpse of iniquity which appals us. We think of the iniquity in one great city, then of all the cities and of all the world. We can't bear to read of wickedness. Then there was His foreknowledge of the ingratitude of mankind—not from want of love on His part—He had done all He could to win love for Himself, and the hearts of men were so hard and cold. We must try to realise this picture, how it rises and rises like a deluge. Then try to sympathise. I compassionate Thee, my Lord, in that grief which came to Thee from

Thy foreknowledge of the ingratitude of mankind, Thy grief in beholding the sins which would be committed, the fruitlessness of Thy sufferings for so many. Make acts of contrition and resolutions. What shall I do and suffer for Him?

SECOND. What He did in suffering. He sought strength in prayer, saying the same words, always the same cry for relief, for escape, but a cry of submission. He continued to repeat the same prayer. How much He suffered in that prayer! Prayer is a great suffering at times, especially when one is in sorrow. Each time He prayed there was a fresh sword piercing His Heart: it was an agonising prayer. He was in a great agony. I must go on praying the same prayer in my anguish. Is there any offering I can take to Him?

THIRD. The disciples. Our Lord led the way. He bade them pray. "Pray, for the hour of temptation is nigh." But He found them sleeping for sorrow. They could not fail to see His sorrow. They allowed it to overcome them when they should have striven and prayed. Are we like the three disciples? Do we omit prayer when we should be strengthening ourselves against temptation? We talk of prayer often as if its great object were temporal things, losing sight that the grand field of prayer is our own soul, and that it is a battle with the spirit of darkness. What a weapon prayer is! We need not be afraid of asking God to help us in our warfare in the spiritual life. Learn to avoid that error of the Apostles, who, when they most needed prayer, slept. We should be *more* earnest when discouraged, prolong our prayer, and repeat it

till it is heard. We should ask especially for help in spiritual matters. We shall be surprised at finding how much God is ready to do for us.

SEVENTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

OUR LORD'S SUFFERINGS ON THE DAY OF HIS PASSION.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—I will imagine that I see our Lord led forth to the people by Pilate.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding that I may understand something of all Thy sufferings of Body and Soul during the Passion. In flame my will that I may feel great sympathy for Thee, that I may hate my sins which caused Thy sufferings, that I may know myself and know Thee.

FIRST POINT. We will consider the sufferings our Lord went through in Jerusalem during the day of His Passion, how He was falsely and wickedly accused, and how He remained silent: they charged Him with various crimes, and the witnesses contradicted each other. The High Priest adjured Him solemnly to say whether He was the Son of God. He said He was and that hereafter He should come to judge the world. They sentenced Him to die, and then they took Him to Pilate, bringing three charges against Him—first, that He was seditious; secondly, that He forbade them

to give tribute to Cæsar ; and thirdly, that He wanted to make Himself a king. All were lying charges. They would not charge Him with blasphemy before Pilate, because the Roman law did not recognise it. He had ever been very peaceable, He had paid tribute Himself, and He had fled when they wanted to make Him a king. Jesus remained silent. Pilate, to rid himself of the matter, sent Him to Herod. Herod, when he found Jesus would not speak or work any miracle, treated Him as an idiot, and sent Him back to Pilate as a harmless fool, and Pilate ordered Him to be scourged. Notice how all through He was falsely accused, and never said a word in self-defence. Once or twice when questioned by authority He answered. There was a word of expostulation for the brutal soldier who struck Him. To all the charges He remained silent. What a lesson ! What a grand lesson ! What a useful, necessary, difficult lesson ! Can I learn when I am spoken of unkindly, unjustly, to keep silence ? Duty may sometimes require me to speak, but when it does not, and I am burning with resentment and a desire to justify myself, can I bear patiently ? If it is only a matter of self-love, try to be silent. When duty leads us to defend ourselves let us do it with the greatest self-command, with meekness and mildness. My Lord and King and Captain was silent and submitted meekly when His character was taken away. And I !—how I long to retaliate ! Drive that lesson home, considering who He was, and what wrong was inflicted on Him in order that He might be crucified, got rid of by the most shameful, painful death. I don't

suffer the same injustice, for I am not spotless. I deserve to be blamed for other things if not for this—for my pride and self-assertion. Examine if you are too sensitive, too quick to resent an injury. We often work ourselves up, and then find things have been falsely stated. How have we been in the past? Let us pray that His conduct may not be lost upon us. Let us pray not to have an inordinate desire of the esteem of others. Nature says—What right have you to judge? The silence of Jesus, then, is the first lesson.

SECOND. Consider that our Lord from midnight suffered intense pains in His Body. See Him as Pilate presents Him to the people. “Behold the Man.” His Head crowned with sharp thorns, His countenance livid and bruised, His arms and neck bearing marks of the cords, no sound place in Him, the Man of Sorrows well acquainted with suffering; and so He had a very close acquaintance with suffering in the hands of the mob. The retainers of the High Priest dragged Him from one court to another: in the house of Caiaphas He was most cruelly treated. There was the terrible severity of His scourging. He was left to the mercy of the soldiers, and they invented that refinement of barbarity, the crown of thorns. There was the weight of the Cross on the way to Calvary. He suffered a great variety of pain, headache, thirst, hunger, prostration of nerves, pain in His Heart. I must learn not to be too indulgent to my body. Shame on a pampered member whose Head is crowned with thorns! We like rest and ease. When our Captain suffers so much pain we should give

up softness and effeminacy, we should get over a too great shrinking from pain, and learn to bear it with patience, not give way to pain but master it. Examine and see if there is in you too much care for the body. Are you inordinately attached to ease and comfort? O Lord, I renounce my great fear of pain, my inordinate desire of self-indulgence; I will overcome my body and make it obey reason and religion.

THIRD. He suffered the greatest humiliation and strengthened Himself by the thought of the glory that awaited Him. He despised the ignominy. The Cross was bitter, and He felt it in His Body; the humiliation was deep, and He resented in His Soul. "Having joy set before Him He endured the Cross, despising the shame." That He, the Son of God, the bearer of good tidings, should be put on trial; that He should be condemned to die as a breaker of the law who a few days before had been saluted by the crowd as a Prophet—as the Messiah; that He should be treated as a blasphemer, seditious, a companion of murderers, His teaching and good works forgotten, Himself nailed to the Cross, may teach us how we may strengthen ourselves by the thought of heaven when we are called to bear humiliations. He will reward us munificently. St. Paul says: "Think diligently upon Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself, that you be not wearied, fainting in your minds". Let us learn to be patient under deep humiliation.

1. Try, then, to work out and see how much He suffered up to the moment of His Crucifixion.

2. Consider that at any moment He might have summoned Angels and upset His enemies.

3. He suffered all this for me. What shall I do for Him?

Spiritual Reading, Seventh Day, *Imitation*, Book II., chap. 12.

CONSIDERATION.

SEVENTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON READING.

It is of great importance that we should consider what is good to read, what we ought to read. We are living in the midst of difficulties—difficulties peculiar to our time. Formerly a cheap press did not exist. Time was when much that is circulated now would not have been tolerated. We have to deal with indiscriminate literature. In some States of America the license in publication was so dreadful, laws have had to be made on the subject. Fortunately we have a law here.

The prevalent idea is that everything is right—that modesty is stuff, and is not to be tolerated now. I make this preliminary observation because you must bear it in mind.

1. I will begin by speaking about infidel literature—literature against revelation, against sacerdotalism,

against any faith in Christianity. What is your duty? To avoid it as much as possible; otherwise you run a risk of losing faith or getting to doubt it. You have no right to expose your soul to that danger. I am speaking of books directly against revelation.

Next come modern scientific books, which branch off into conclusions against revelation, and are very interesting. Well! there is no harm in the science, but you must not trust these men outside their own department, for they draw most absurd conclusions. Huxley, for example, in his lay sermons. Always guard against lay preachers. The *Life of Hume*, which endorses Hume's sophisms, is a book rabidly absurd: it amazes one to see the amount of want of power of reasoning that an eminent man can put in a volume. It will require a long series of professors to take the place of the Sermon on the Mount! We are apt to think if so clever a man takes this view there must be something in it. His conclusions are only worth his reasoning. On the Divinity of Jesus Christ let me have your *reasons*, and I will attend to them. These men make their investments as badly as others. You would not follow them in such matters; why, then, in religion, about which they equally know nothing? We commit sin when we read books which attack the supernatural. Instances are not wanting of priests losing their faith through familiarity with such books, and it is impossible for lay people to read them with impunity.

Periodicals like the *Nineteenth Century* and the *Fortnightly Review* have no principle. Anyone may

write in them, and you are certain to come on much writing you had better not see—writing which tends to make you lose the distinction between right and wrong. People have come to a state of mind when they think a thing can be true and false at the same time. Perfection of life is to see clearly what is right and what is wrong. This unsettling sort of literature which saps the foundation of everything is very common, very abundant, and we must not tamper with it. Faith is a very delicate matter.

2. So much for infidel literature. Now I come to obscene literature, as distinguished from mere nasty literature. Hundreds of the French novels much found in London are obscene. They represent sinful things in such a way as to stir up passions. I am speaking of books which in their *own nature* are calculated to excite the passions, and I say that no one has a right to read them—it is sinful to read them. No one who is not hardened, who has not lost the power of distinguishing between right and wrong, but feels it to be wrong. Anyone who has indulged in this sort of reading ought to confess it. Such books should be destroyed at once.

3. The next class is what I call unsavoury literature, such as articles that have lately appeared in a London journal. It can be read without sin, and some must read it to know that it is the duty of Government to step in and prevent such horrible crimes. But if one has *no reason* for reading it, it is far better to leave it unread. It has an effect on the mind. If we want to be tranquil, to be disposed to

prayer and union with God, we should avoid familiarising the mind with such things. Those who have to be amongst the poor, where the barriers of decency are broken down, must suffer. We are told of one holy man that he took off his shoes and stockings and stood on the cold stones when reading of these subjects for duty. The divorce cases now reported in the newspapers are simply abominable. They familiarise people with possibilities that ought to be out of sight, and are not fit to be made public. Sometimes things in the paper are so dreadful, you may make a provision of torment for yourself all your life with a set of images that are positive pain. Strange to say, there is an attraction in these nasty things which people feel in spite of themselves.

Every woman should cultivate good reading. Do not let yourself be told that your intellects are not as capable as men's. It's a lie. There is no reason why the time you may spend in improving your mind should not fit you for the best of reading. What splendid women there have been!—with what intellects!—with what capacity for judgment! There was a time when ladies could discuss with the best men in the country, and so may you if you keep up your education and study seriously. In competition at the university girls succeed better than boys. Perhaps they take more pains; boys don't kill themselves, as a rule, with study.

You don't know what you lose by not cultivating a taste for study. Don't waste hours over wretched novels in which, if there is not a grain of vice, there

is at least a bushel of folly. Such reading does not improve the mind. Half the time spent in reading with attention serves to form an intellect to give an opinion of its own, and not give an opinion second-hand. If you don't take to solid reading, you read silly things (or not at all), and stimulate the imagination to the detriment of your life. God never meant us to spend our lives in day dreams. Solid reading, which is food for the mind, raises and elevates it. The tendency of female education now in England is not for solid reading. In France there still remain traditions of good. Anything good in France is to be found in the religious women. They have taken a position in which they shame the men. In France men have left to women the serious part of life.

Not only those who have to deal with the education of others, but all should go on educating themselves to the last, trying to raise, elevate, and improve their intellect. The intellect requires to be cultivated. All this cultivation has to do with the spiritual life. If you are a person of mind you elevate your spiritual life; otherwise you are very much at the mercy of feeling. You want religion of the head. St. Ignatius said, Give me educated people. It is better to make one educated person a good Christian than ten stupid ones. We have seen how much one educated person can do. Many women in the world are doing an immense amount of good because they have got brains, have cultivated their intellect, and are filled with love of God and zeal for souls.

SEVENTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

OUR LORD ON THE CROSS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—I will imagine myself on Mount Calvary, kneeling at the foot of the Cross, and Jesus Christ hanging dead.

SECOND PRELUDE.—My God ! enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend the mystery of the Cross, the sufferings of Jesus Christ. In flame my will that I may sympathise with His sufferings, that I may sorrow for my sins, and ardently desire to suffer for and with him.

FIRST POINT. This evening we have to look at Jesus Christ hanging on the Cross. Think of the perfect life He had led, what blessings He had given, how He had healed the sick and caused the blind to see, how He had drawn souls to love Him, what a divine foundation He had laid for the kingdom of God, and this is His treatment : He is persecuted and hated, abandoned by His friends ; abandoned by His Father in a certain sense, He suffers inconceivable desolation. The more we ponder, the more terrible does the Cross grow in its ignominy and shame. We consider how much He suffers and that He suffers it at the end of such a life, and the lesson for us is that we are to do our duty, be forbearing and patient, give ourselves up to others, and not look for gratitude, not

be surprised at ingratitude. Parents ill-treated by children, who meet with undutifulness instead of love, may think how Jesus Christ received worse treatment when He had a better claim to affection and gratitude. *Quid retribuam?* What shall *I* give? A parent may think much has been sacrificed for a child, but what are his sacrifices compared to those of Jesus? I must not be amazed, shocked, disturbed in faith because I meet with ingratitude and an unkind return. I must accept and look for unkindness if I hope to resemble my Captain. At the end of such a life He was nailed to a Cross. O my Lord! I have been among those who have proved themselves ungrateful for Thy love. Thou hast given great proof of Thy love and I have not been moved. Grant that I may not rebel when I am the victim of ingratitude. I have deserved that men should pass over all my sacrifices and think little of them because I have been ungrateful. May I bear patiently if sometimes that is refused to me which I think my due.

SECOND. Our Lord on the Cross exhibits to us the extreme of suffering. I leave you to develop His bodily pains as He stiffens in death, the bruises, the wounds inflicted by the thorns and nails with blood clotted on them, all more ghastly as death takes possession of the Body of my King. What pictures pass before His mind—the coldness, the hatred of men! What an agony, what desolation of heart, what abandonment by God! All the lower part of His nature is left without any comfort. He has no protection from the wild hatred of His persecutors.

All this His Heart bore before it was stilled. Think of the depth of shame and poverty in which He died. It is difficult to realise a man crucified. Nothing comes near the shame of the Cross, and that at the end of such outrages. And what lesson are we to learn? *There* is the punishment of sin. He is the Victim of sin, and this Victim, this death, this shame, all falls short of the just punishment of sin. The punishment is in mercy, not in justice. If the Son of God made Man is allowed to be so persecuted and put to death, what punishment will there be when mercy is banished? We hear it asked, can it be eternal? Look up to the Cross, see Jesus Christ hanging there, read His Heart before He died, and tell me where shall end the punishment of deliberate rebellion against God?

O my God! open my eyes that I may understand the mystery of the Cross, the mystery of sin, the mystery of Thy love and of my ingratitude.

THIRD. Not only at the end of His blessed life was He put to death, but He was made to suffer from every description of person. Pilate the representative of the Roman power, Herod the king, Caiaphas and Annas the High Priests, the crowd, two or three millions gathered together, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, soldiers, centurions—all take part against Him. Young and old, and not improbably those who had been cured miraculously, some who owed their voice to a miracle, some to whose eyes He had given the light of day and whose arms He had endowed with motion, are amongst those who crucify Him.

We know what we have done ourselves, and we dare not say there were not those on Calvary capable of turning against Him the gifts He had given.

Who stood beside His Cross? His Blessed Mother, St. John representing innocence, Magdalene the penitent, a few others; and they sorrowed and wondered. How strange must have been their feelings as they witnessed the last breath of Him whom they thought to be the Son of God!

O Lord my King, allow me to come near that I may adore Thee, that I may acknowledge Thee to be my King, my Captain. Oh, that I may ever profess myself Thy follower, confess that Thou art my God. May I wear on my heart the Image of Thy Cross. O my Lord Jesus Christ crucified! May I love Thee with my whole heart.

SEVENTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE RESURRECTION.

WE pass from meditating on the Passion—which has taught us many lessons, encouraging us to follow our Lord and Captain, and to believe that He has won abundant graces for us—to the Resurrection, which is a sort of foretaste of the final triumph. The object in meditating on the Resurrection is to fill us with hope and encouragement.

Read the account in St. Mark xvi. 1-9.

FIRST PRELUDE. — Imagine the scene at the Sepulchre.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend something of this mystery. In flame my will that I may rejoice and be encouraged to follow Jesus.

FIRST POINT. The diligence of these devout women. How they started very early in the morning. If their devotion to our Lord's dead Body was so acceptable, how acceptable will be ours to the Blessed Sacrament! If we cultivate a great love to the Blessed Sacrament we shall get great graces. We may see how devotion to the Blessed Sacrament goes with early rising and being present at early Mass. He has remained in the Tabernacle through the night, and is pleased if we remember Him and come early.

SECOND. "Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" Many would say that sensible people would have hesitated to go on when they knew of the stone. Why did they not stop at home? Often when we begin a new life with new resolutions, we say, Who will roll the stone away? If we do as they did we shall do well. They go on and find the obstacle removed. We must learn not to be alarmed by obstacles, especially by our own fears.

THIRD. "Be not affrighted," the Angel said to them. A vision of Angels always frightens. It is a mercy that God conceals the supernatural world and makes us live by faith; only we must strengthen our faith and implore that we may have more faith. The faith of these holy women was not shaken by the Cruci-

fixion. They came to honour the Sacred Body of their Lord. The Angel said: "You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified". Would we could deserve the same praise from our Angel! I hope we do seek Him; but is it not imperfectly, in a faint-hearted, half-hearted way? "He is risen, He is not here, behold the place where they laid Him." He shows them the Sepulchre. There is the end of all the rage of His enemies. Rejoice with Jesus Christ in His glory. He retains still the marks of the wounds, but we behold Him before us glorified—all the disfigurement past. Let us adore our God and our King with acts of faith and hope and charity. We compassionated Him in His sorrow, let us rejoice with Him now. Then turn to our Blessed Lady and rejoice with her and the Apostles. Consider that whereas in His Passion He might have destroyed His enemies, but did not, now He reveals His Divinity, consoling His friends. Beg that He will come to you as a Consoler.

EIGHTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

HEAVEN.

It is good to raise our thoughts to heaven and meditate on the happiness prepared for us there. We don't know much about heaven. What the Apocalypse and the Saints tell us does not amount to much.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—I will imagine I am standing in the Presence of the Adorable Trinity, of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus Christ, of His Blessed Mother, of St. Joseph, and my holy patrons, with the virgins, etc., singing.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend in some degree the happiness of heaven. In flame my will that I may ardently desire this great happiness of beholding for ever Thy Blessed face.

FIRST POINT. We shall be delivered from all sin. There will be no longer any sin or guilt on our conscience, no turning away from our Creator, no danger of substituting an idol in His place. All the darkness of sin and shame will be taken away. We shall have no temptation to sin. Our will will be perfectly obedient. Anything that is against the Will of God will no longer appear desirable. Our body will be glorified and completely subject to our will. All evil desires will have been burnt out and destroyed. We shall not be harassed by thoughts against faith, nor oppressed by despondency. We shall be filled with charity, the perfect love of God above all things. We shall be free from all the penalties of sin, sickness, weakness, hunger, cold. Anxiety, dejection, weariness of mind—all will disappear. There will be a total absence of every annoyance which prevents us from being happy. We never find perfect rest in this world. However much we may try, we never succeed completely. We can't

be happy here. This world cannot satisfy us, so full is it of briars and thorns and fears. All this will cease. There will be an end of all that has caused us pain.

By our reason we arrive at this, because sin will be over. To see God is to drive away all that can lead to sin. The grace of God is incompatible with mortal sin. Nothing defiled can enter heaven, not even a soul with a liability to punishment. We must pay the last farthing before we can see God as He is.

LESSON. This ought to animate me to struggle with sin very valiantly; however violent the temptation we can always say, "I will remain faithful to God. I will not worship an idol." Our probation lasts only for a short time. I must win if only I am resolute, if only I deny myself and go against the instincts of my nature. I must be content to accept the conditions of a life of warfare from morning to night. May this impression not grow feeble! May I when I go back to my home after my retreat have the grace of enduring courage and patience under trial.

SECOND. In heaven we shall have every blessing we can dream of. How much happiness we have here in looking at something beautiful! What delight beauty of colour and form gives to our eyes! Then what a pleasure it is to meet a friend after years of separation! How precious are such moments of intercourse! But what is art, what is nature, what is the best friend compared to God? What a ravishing delight would it be if our Lady showed herself to us for one minute! What a joy! We have stayed long gazing at pictures and images of the Madonna, but what will the reality

be! What a joy to look at her! At the Transfiguration for one brief moment the disciples beheld Jesus glorified, and they could have stayed for ever in that contemplation. We could live in the sight of the Sacred Humanity of Jesus. What then will it be to see the Divine Nature in itself, to behold all that Ocean of Infinite Perfection? *In God* we shall see all things. We shall meet our friends in God. Our knowledge of the universe will then be very wonderful. All those laws which are so mysterious to us, which we only guess at now—light, electricity, matter, etc.—will be unfolded to us in God. Now, how very sweet it is when He gives us a moment of consolation. How we wish to prolong those blessed minutes after Communion! What will it be to be lost in God! What wonderful beings we shall become!—with glorified bodies the fitting instruments of our souls, resplendent, capable of traversing immense distances in a moment, something like the Body of Christ after the Resurrection. And our souls will be transformed. How we struggle here!—our memories, how weary!—our understandings, how feeble!—how they refuse to answer our curiosity! What inconstancy in our wills! We can't count upon ourselves here. Our love is so weak, our understanding so imperfect. Then the spirit will break through its trammels and soar up, and the understanding will have its capacity for truth satisfied. Then the will will fly to God without any hindrance. We should be good now were it not for obstacles. There will be no obstacles there. We shall be in the midst of objects suited to our nature. We shall

develop a capacity of sympathy with all. We shall know our friends, we shall know our patron Saints, we shall know those that wrote the books that have so interested us, we shall know all history : we shall see all that we have longed to see here. It will be a view of ravishing beauty and most perfect harmony. There will be joys for the soul and joys for the body. The body here weighs us down ; we can never get away from it. There it will no longer be a clog. It will have its joys and satisfactions : everything that it can crave it will have. Certainly the Blessed will say, " It is good for us to be here," and they will be ready to sing a perpetual *Gloria*. There will be a total banishment of all evil and presence of all good.

THIRD. And all this is for ever. There will be no feeling of insecurity, no fear that it will ever come to an end.

We may work out these points. The more we meditate, the more perfect does heaven appear to us. Yet what a poor copy of the original does our imagination at best present to us ! Heaven must be so much more wonderful.

Thank God that he has given us a trial through which we may attain this happiness, if only we can persevere and secure a happy death, and so a blessed eternity.

CONSIDERATION.

EIGHTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON PERSEVERANCE AND THE MEANS OF SECURING IT.

OUR consideration is to be on Perseverance, and the means we must take to secure it. And first, I must warn you not to be surprised if you break through your resolutions. At the same time, you must not lose courage and think it is hopeless to try. Acknowledge that you have failed ; humble yourself ; say, " It is no wonder. I confess my fault, and will try not to relapse." Endeavour to banish the memory of past faults *in detail*. It is very wholesome to make acts of sorrow, but hurtful to go into details. Worrying over details of the past comes from self-love and pride. In King David we have an example of how we should sorrow in general. Sometimes it would be good and more pleasing to God if we could forget the past and think more of the future—if we could say, like that old hermit of the desert who had fallen into a grievous sin and immediately repented, " I never did it," and stick to our rules and prayers in spite of the devil's suggestions that it's no good for such as we are to try.

To regulate a rule of life, we should map out our days, and always know what we have to do through the day.

First, we must settle about how often we can go to

Confession and Communion, quite independent of weather. Whether there is anything to be done to improve my preparation. I should give a few minutes to it over night. I won't allow any worldly business to interrupt my preparation. Then I must remember that the quarter of an hour after Communion is the most precious time in my life.

How often can I go to Mass? Mass is the greatest work of sacrifice we can offer to God. How can we begin our day better than by assisting at Mass? What is my method of assisting? Is there anything that can be improved in it?

Vocal prayers: morning and evening prayer. At night, thanksgiving and examination of conscience. It is not much time that is wanted. You thank God for all His blessings, ask light to see wherein you have offended Him, go over your duties, see what you have omitted—whether you have given way to temper, uncharitableness, etc. You have some definite thing to be sorry for: make a good act of contrition, which includes a purpose of amendment.

With regard to mental prayer and meditation, Bellarmine said he would answer for the salvation of anyone who made a quarter of an hour's meditation every day.

We must have a time set apart for the reading of Holy Scripture and good books. In reading, the mind is raised up to Almighty God.

Remember that we have to be judged for the way in which we spend the whole day. Anyone who takes pains and makes a rule will save time.

You must give a certain portion of time to your families. The evening generally must be spent in a social way, and it is the duty of everyone to help in making the time pass pleasantly. Some people at once take the newspaper and think not at all of others. You should try to contribute to the general mirth.

Attend to business ; your household, your accounts, let each have its time. Letter-writing is a duty you owe to your friends. It is a means of keeping up kindness and friendly terms. It is useful, too, to keep up accomplishments. Give *some time* to sensible reading. You may give a little time to light reading, not much though. In every well-regulated life there ought to be times of privacy. It is such a rest to the mind to know there is no one about you. Always give yourself some time at the end of the day to settle your prayer and meditation for the following morning. In religious Communities after recreation there comes in the evening what is called the greater silence, a silence that may not be broken without some very urgent necessity. This silence is the greatest boon. What a blessing it is to shut yourself up with God and your own soul.

Cultivate a spirit of kindness and forbearance, and a desire to make others happy. With a little forethought and care you may be able to give others many happy moments. I will conclude with recommending certain treasures of the spiritual life.

1. Not to lose sight of the immense rights the Creator has. Our dependence on Him is most absolute.

2. The very great evil of mortal sin, of deliberately renouncing friendship with God.

3. Terror of the punishment of being separated for ever from God.

4. The mercy of God and His readiness to forgive if only we say, "Father, I have sinned". God's anxiety to win our love and keep His love for us.

5. The deep conviction of our own nothingness, littleness, inconstancy to good, and our terrible capacity to evil.

Spiritual Reading, Eighth Day, *Imitation*, Book III., chaps. 47, 48.

EIGHTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

ST. IGNATIUS' CONTEMPLATION ON SPIRITUAL LOVE.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

ST. IGNATIUS says that love shows itself not in words only, but also in deeds. "Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" "If you love Me, keep My commandments." "And they loved Him with their lips, but their heart was far from Him."

And St. Ignatius makes a second observation—that love consists in giving to the object loved. Lovers share all things.

FIRST PRELUDE. I will imagine I am standing in

the court of heaven in the Presence of Jesus, who looks down on me interested in my salvation.

SECOND PRELUDE. Give me grace to understand and know Thy benefits ; inflame my will that I may give Thee back my love for Thine.

FIRST POINT. God loved us first, let us love Him in return. No motive is so powerful as the love of God. The grand power for good in the world has been the love of Jesus Christ. Fear, terror, hope of reward, the sense of right and wrong—all these are great powers. The sufferings of Jesus excite gratitude, but what is mightiest is the love of Jesus Christ. His followers live for Him, and are ready to die for Him.

In order to strengthen this affection, let us consider God's gifts to us individually. We come into the world tiny infants. We continue progressing from year to year. That form of life gives God an opportunity of showing how He loves us and cares for us. To take an infant and bring it up, what a work of providence ! Its preservation from so many dangers, its participation in so many blessings, the work of God's love. There is no life which, if written out faithfully, would not prove to be a romance of God's love. We look through our lives. They may seem very prosy, and yet they are a long tale of God's love. With what thought, with what care, with what devotedness, has He not loved us. Did ever lover serve his beloved with a thousandth part of God's love and carefulness. O my God, in my redemption, in the graces of Thy Church, Thou hast given me so much of thy Treasures. Thou hast given me gifts of

body and mind and soul, capacity for truth and goodness! True, we can sink very low, but to what a height we can rise! Mary, Joseph, the Baptist, Peter, Paul, John—think of some of your favourite Saints. What a participation of the Divine Nature! How much He has put within our reach! He has done so much for us. Everyone of us might have become so great had we corresponded with His grace. He loves me, indeed. He has shown me His love by the profusion of His gifts. What am I going to do in return? Obey Him, keep His commandments? Is that to be the whole of my life? Shall I give Him nothing more? Has my heart no response? I fall down before Him in love, in the consciousness of my inability to make any offering. “Here I am in my powerlessness, would that I could bring a worthier gift.” “Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty. Take my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I have, all that I am, is a gift I have received from Thy liberality. To Thee I restore it all. Give me but Thy grace and Thy love; with this I am rich enough.” Thou art content to accept this offering, poor as it is.

Work that out, all God has done for you, how He has placed you on the threshold of a happy eternity. Then what you should do in return.

SECOND. God might have placed me in some dreary spot without enjoyment or pleasure. He has made such kind provision for every want of my nature. Food He arranges that we should require two or three times a day, as though He loved to dole it out

and did not want to get rid of us. Everywhere God is present—in the earth, air, sun, universe with all its laws ; in the sea, rivers, clouds, hills, valleys, above, beneath, we are merged in the being of God. He wants us to find Him in every created object. Why all this diversity?—all these beasts, birds, trees, plants, shrubs? Why, but because of His love of me. He multiplies Himself on every side that I may meet Him everywhere. It is enjoyment to be with the person you love, to sit silent and enjoy his presence. God delights to be with me. What can I do for Him? In the first point I offered all I had. How can I show Him my love? I said, “Take myself. I have given all that I have. I can only repeat my old gift. I wish only to live for Thee. As Thou hast been pleased to make creation Thy dwelling, may I see Thee always.”

God is everywhere. I ought always to see Him. God is present in my own soul. I am His temple, holy by His Presence unless I drive Him from me. So I ought in all to see God present, and reverence my fellow-beings, and reverence myself. “Take and receive, O God, all my liberty,” etc.

THIRD. God is not only present everywhere, but present as one toiling unceasingly for the welfare of my body and soul. That I might have my breakfast how many have toiled! Who planted the tea, put it on board ship, brought it to this country? In procuring the sugar, salt, bread, milk, table, chairs, etc., many hundreds of people have been concerned, perhaps. He would compel us to remember His

benefits. The whole creation is working for us and God in all. I saw nothing outwardly. Sun, rain, breezes, were building up every atom of life in that plant which was to nourish me, and God concurring in all. If my food nourishes me, God nourishes me.

I have said nothing of the supernatural life—the Kingdom of Christ, Sacraments, Mass, prayers of the Saints—all that makes up our spiritual life, which is much more wonderful and precious than our natural life. I can only confess the love of God most vast, most incomprehensible. Reason, memory, ache in trying to describe what God has done.

Love consists in giving. My gift has been given : it was so small, but all I had—only myself with my poverty and wretchedness. “Take, O God, and receive all my liberty,” etc.

FOURTH. Is there more?—any other way in which God has shown His love? There is the grandest of all. This world is very beautiful, marvellous in its design and variety ; and yet how dead and dull would it be without human beings. For a short time it might rejoice me, but an uninhabited earth would soon pall. What gives it charm are human beings, and the first of all human beings, Jesus Christ, a Soul filled with truth, justice, valour, every attribute we esteem. The sympathy of one soul is worth all the rest of Creation. In the Kingdom of God there are thousands with whom we have sympathy. This is what redeems life ; this is what renders life bearable. And the divinity we see in our fellow-beings, what is it all but God, the reflection of God, and the Sacred

Humanity of Jesus? Blessed Mary, holy Joseph—I might stop at each Saint, each beautiful soul, and I might say of all that redeem for me the monotony of life, each is a mirror that flings back to me something of the Godhead that is reflected in it.

Out of love for me, to help me in my probation, I find God giving Himself in this new and marvellous manner. What shall I do? I find Him rendering my fellow-creatures so lovable. I will love them in and for Him, and never more than Him. I am bound to love them in and for Him and never otherwise. I will consecrate my affection by loving all for His sake. The deepest, mightiest, strongest affection is in that heart which is most like the Heart of Jesus.

EIGHTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE LOVE OF JESUS CHRIST SHOWN IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

We should thank God for all the graces He has given us in this retreat, and pray for each other in our general Communion that we may all carry out our resolutions.

FIRST PRELUDE.—We will picture to ourselves our Lord at the Last Supper, saying, “With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you”.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding

and inflame my will : enlighten me that I may comprehend a little of this excellent gift, that I may know myself ; inflame my will that I may have an ardent desire to receive Thee, to be united to Thee.

FIRST POINT. One who loves asks nothing better than to be with the person he loves. We know what a great satisfaction there is in the presence of one we love. What does Jesus Christ do in the Blessed Sacrament ? He is not there to create the world or to sustain the world. Nor is He there to redeem the world, for the Sacrifice of Calvary did that, and it depends on us to avail ourselves of the redemption. Why then is He present ? Is it to give grace ? He gives grace in Baptism, in Confirmation, in Penance, and He might have given grace through the elements of bread and wine without being Himself present in them. But in the Holy Eucharist He, the Source of all grace, chooses to be present, and the one necessity for this presence is His Love. " My delight is to be with the sons of men." That is the object of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. He loves us so well He would be as near to us as possible. His Presence in Holy Mass, in Communion, in the Tabernacle, shows how He wants to be with us. " I am with you all days." What are we to learn from this love ? Ought not we to wish to be with Him ?—ought not we to acknowledge the greatness of His gift and serve Him as He wishes to be served ? He wishes a different service at Mass, in the Tabernacle, in Holy Communion, when carried to our houses. He must be with us in this form—the only form possible perhaps—a form

wonderfully adapted to our necessities and to His dignity. We should delight to be with Him in Church and before the Tabernacle. The Church has children who give up their lives to preserve unbroken the adoration of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. If we visit Him for a quarter of an hour with acts of faith, adoration, etc., He is quite satisfied.

SECOND. The friend not only wishes to be in the presence of his friend, but wishes to please him. Friends are occupied with each other. Take this test and apply it to Him. Why is He there, truly present but like one dead? To all outward appearance He has deprived Himself of all manifestation of external life. He is there to be elevated, to be carried about, to be given to us. He is in the smallest particle that He may be at our service. He is under the form of bread that He may give us pleasure, that He may excite in our hearts love, that He may be our Food—the Food, the Bread of Life through which we live. There is such a distance between us and Him, and yet He feeds us with His whole Body and with all His Blood. He is not satisfied to be present merely but must be wholly taken up with us. What sentiments, what affections, should be awakened in us, what wonder, what love! What an appeal does He make to our hearts! What an invention of love!

For what are the consequences of this Sacramental existence? How has the Blessed Sacrament been treated? Jews have stabbed It; heretics have given It to dogs. And there has been the far worse profanation of those who make sacrilegious Communions. One of

the objections is—Is it possible He can so demean Himself? He foreknew the profanations, and yet He willed to be thus present with us from His love to us.

Acts of love, adoration, thanksgiving, etc.

THIRD. A friend shows His love by prodigality. Where there is great affection there is liberality. How much Jesus has given us! His life, His Kingdom, Himself to be our food. There is no gift greater than that. "He emptied Himself and took on Him the form of a servant." St. Paul gives that as the extreme of the humiliation. He is in the form of bread—something most ordinary. What so intimately united to us as food? He must be our bread, disappear in our breasts. His presence is most mysterious, such is His love. What madness of love, what so unreasonable, so marvellous, that He must give Himself to us under the form of bread! I must love Him exceedingly in the Blessed Sacrament and prove my love by devotion to Holy Communion, constant attendance at Mass, constant visits to Him really present on the altar, believing, hoping, loving, devoting myself to Him. I offer Him my purpose and ask Him to draw me very near to Him, and that I may be united to Him by the most intimate union. Say all that comes into your heart.

The three points, then, of this meditation are: 1. The lover delights in being in the presence of the object beloved. 2. Is pleased to be serving and occupied with that object. 3. Is accustomed to be most profuse and liberal of his gifts.

COR SANCTISSIMUM JESU !
 AMAS ! NON AMARIS ! UTINAM AMERIS !

MOST SACRED HEART OF JESUS !
 THOU LOVEST ! THOU ART NOT LOVED !
 WOULD THAT THOU WERT LOVED !

Heart of my Creator, lead me to perfection.
 Heart of my Redeemer, deliver me.
 Heart of my Judge, pardon me.
 Heart of my Father, guide me.
 Heart of my Spouse, love me.
 Heart of my Brother, tarry with me.
 Heart of my Teacher, instruct me.
 Heart of my King, be my Crown.
 Heart of my Benefactor, enrich me.
 Heart of my Pastor, guard me.
 Heart of my Friend, be my Shelter.
 Heart of the Infant JESUS, draw me.

Let us pray.

We beseech Thee, Lord, may Thy Holy Spirit set us on fire with that love which our Lord JESUS CHRIST cast out of the depths of His Heart into the world and greatly wished should be enkindled.

INDULGENCED PRAYERS.

BEFORE A PICTURE OF THE SACRED HEART.

1. My loving JESUS, out of the grateful love I bear Thee, and to make reparation for my unfaithfulness

to grace, I give Thee my heart, and I consecrate myself wholly to Thee ; and with Thy help I purpose never to sin again.

100 days, once a day.

2. May the Heart of Jesus in the most Blessed Sacrament be praised, adored, and loved with grateful affection, at every moment, in all the Tabernacles of the world, even to the end of time. Amen.

100 days, once a day.

3. May the Heart of Jesus be everywhere loved.

100 days, once a day.

4. Jesus, my God, I love Thee above all things.

50 days, once a day.

5. Sweet Heart of Jesus, may I love Thee more and more.

300 days, each time.

6. Jesus, meek and humble of Heart, make my heart like unto Thine.

300 days, once a day.

7. Sweet Jesus, be my Saviour, not my Judge.

50 days, once a day.

8. Jesus, mercy !

100 days, each time.

PROMISES OF OUR LORD TO THE CLIENTS OF THE
SACRED HEART.

1. I will give them the graces necessary for their state.
2. I will give them peace in their families.
3. I will give them comfort in their trials and afflictions.
4. I will be their secure Refuge in life and death.
5. I will bestow abundant blessings on all their undertakings.
6. Sinners shall find My Heart an ocean of mercy.
7. Tepid souls shall become fervent.
8. Fervent souls shall advance rapidly towards perfection.
9. I will bless every dwelling in which an image of My Heart shall be exposed and honoured.
10. I will give Priests a peculiar facility in converting the most hardened souls.
11. Those who spread this devotion shall have their names written in My Heart never to be effaced.
12. To those who go to Communion on the first Friday in nine consecutive months, I promise they shall die in the state of grace and receive the last Sacraments.

CONSECRATION TO THE SACRED HEART.

I give and consecrate to the Sacred Heart of our Lord JESUS CHRIST my person, my whole life, all my actions, my trials, and my sufferings ; devoting every

portion of my being to loving, honouring, and glorifying Him, to working for His love alone, renouncing with all my heart whatever may be displeasing to Him. I take Thee then, O Sacred Heart, for the one Object of my love, the Protector of my life, the Pledge of my salvation, the Remedy for my inconstancy, the Redeemer of all my faults, and my sure Refuge in the hour of death. O Heart of all goodness, be my justification before God the Father; shield me from the effects of His just anger. O Heart overflowing with love, I place all my confidence in Thee, for I dread my own weakness, while I hope everything from Thy bounty. Do Thou destroy in me whatever may displease Thee or resist Thy Will, and may the pure love of Thee be so deeply imprinted in my heart that I may never forget Thee, nor be separated from Thee, and I implore Thee by all Thy love, that my name may be graven upon Thee; may it be all my happiness to live and die as Thy slave. (*B. M. M. Alacoque.*)

NOTES OF RETREAT.

1886.

JULY THE FIFTH, 1886.

[8.45 P.M.]

THE REASONS WHY WE GO INTO RETREAT.

THE first exercise which is marked on your papers for to-morrow is meditation, to be made in private from 7 to 8, and I will propose some points for your consideration during that hour which will serve as an introduction to the work of the retreat.

You begin by placing yourself in the Divine Presence. Reflect that you are about to talk to Almighty God, and ask Him to speak to your soul. You are to beg to hold this conversation in great humility. Ask for grace and light that you may make a good meditation and be fervent.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—For your Composition of Place, imagine yourself kneeling by the side of Jesus Christ, speaking to Him, and He speaking to you. If distractions come, send them away by reverting to your Composition of Place, again imagining yourself by our Lord.

SECOND PRELUDE.—For grace. Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend and see very clearly the work before me in retreat; inflame my will that

I may have a great desire to do this work, to love it ardently, and perform it with fervour.

FIRST POINT. Why has God called me into retreat? In a general way, that I may do penance for my sins, that I may put right whatever is wrong in my life, anything contrary to the Commandments of God; and then, probably, we shall want to do something more. Is there nothing more I can do? No one should be satisfied with only keeping the Commandments. They should aim at something higher, at something more than they are bound to do. God may want more in many ways. He may want you to look after others, to do good to servants, dependents, friends, acquaintances outside the Church. What a field for those who still remain in the world! To some He may say, "Leave all, come, follow Me".

Some come to retreat, because they find they are going wrong, and they want to get right. No doubt, many go very wrong; even good persons are tempted to do so. Then there is another class who, without going entirely wrong, find themselves involved in some uncharitableness, some breach, perhaps, between husband and wife—a great evil they have to deal with.

Or, again, you may discover the world has carried you away. Once it bored you, and now it is no longer wearisome. I am not caring for my soul. I find myself falling away from Sacraments and from Mass. Where am I going? I risk my salvation if I pursue this road.

Are you concerned with any of these states of soul? I hope you will be able to say, "No". If so, thank God

and pray to Him to preserve you, and not let you be tempted to turn aside. It is the mercy of God that has preserved me. Lord, save me or I perish !

SECOND. There is such a thing as tepidity in God's service. I don't mean some loss of fervour, or negligence. I mean an entire disrelish for prayer, Mass, good books, etc., a great hankering after things of the world, a sickening for the things of God. In retreat I must shake off this fatal lethargy ; I must examine and see whether I am tepid, whether habitually I allow my thoughts to wander at Mass, and hurry over my night and morning prayer, and don't fly to God in trouble. This requires all my thought and care. If you find tepidity, there is matter for sorrow, humiliation, confusion, petition to God. "Lord, save me ! I perish." If you are not tepid, thank God again.

THIRD. Or there may be a little rustiness in your service of God. A watch gets dusty and stops : it wants oiling. It may be a good watch, but it needs renewing from time to time. Many who want to be good must be conscious they are rusty, less attentive in prayer than they used to be ; they have not the happiness they once had in their spiritual exercises. Look through your prayer, Mass, spiritual reading. See if anything wants repairing ; if you have the will to give your heart to God ; whether your conscience is as tender as it was ; whether you are as regular in observing your rule. Go into detail ; and if you find you have failed, make acts of sorrow and firm resolutions to do better.

FOURTH. I hope many of you will fly much higher and have a strong desire to do something for God. Ask Him to show you what He wants. Lord! tell me what I must do. Ask Him to point out how you can serve Him and help poor souls. You may do a great deal in the world for others.

FIRST DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE END OF MAN.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—I will imagine I hear our Lord speaking the parable of the Ten Virgins, and that I see Him looking at me with a look of warning.

SECOND PRELUDE.—I pray that I may be ready to meet Him whenever He shall call me.

This parable lends itself to the meditation on the end of man. Read the parable. The lesson given is pointed out in these words: "Watch ye, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour".

FIRST POINT. How the ten virgins prepared for the coming of the Bridegroom. This was their problem as it is ours. They were all good, they were all invited to meet the Bridegroom and the Bride, but our Lord divides them into two classes—the wise and the foolish. The folly of this last class consisted in not taking oil. They would not make preparation for

a probable contingency—that of there being delay. They said probably, The Bridegroom will come early and we shall be ready; or, We may run the chance and take our luck; or, If He should tarry we will ask our sensible friends for oil; or perhaps they never thought about it at all. This was their foolishness, that they did not foresee, and made no provision. They might have been much more foolish, because they might not have taken lamps at all or gone at all.

The wise virgins made preparations. They foresaw what was likely to happen. What lesson can I learn? Am I, in preparing to meet Jesus Christ, in the case of the foolish virgins, or have I endeavoured to prepare? Am I ready for His coming under any circumstances, or am I unready, not prepared? If He were to come this morning, should I be found ready? We don't mean without any ground for fear and humiliation, for we should all have reason to fear the coming of the Judge. However prepared, whatever provision has been made, that moment is always a terrible moment to human nature and to faith. But we mean now, are we ready?—are we making any provision at all? Or have we said that we will take our chance? Great folly!—greatest folly to leave to chance what is so important! Have we said we will get ready in illness? although that is most uncertain. Sickness is not the best time to prepare; preparation for death is better done in health.

If we are striving honestly to lead good lives, let us thank Almighty God, and pray that we may never part with our wise resolve, that we may have

perseverance and be found ready with some store of oil laid up. If we are not, let us examine and see what is the reason. We contrive to have a reason for our silliness generally. What is our reason? It can't be sound. We must look such a thing as eternity in the face: we must take the safest side, be ready for every contingency, use our forethought, prepare most carefully.

According to the state in which we find our souls we must make acts of the will. "I am not ready, O Lord. Give me time. Give me wisdom that I may see what I ought to do and have the resolution to do it. I accuse myself of my exceeding foolishness. I see and confess my folly. Rouse me, O Lord. Why does my reason seem paralysed and my will dead? Break the bonds in which I am held. Give me my liberty, that I may make a wise choice."

If we *are* trying, if we are ready to make the most of the time that remains, thank God: it is a great grace, it is true wisdom, and a sure preparation for meeting the Bridegroom in peace and happiness.

SECOND. "The Bridegroom tarrying, they all slumbered and slept." Tarrying is the law of our life for the most part. They got weary and slumbered, though perhaps they had told others to warn them. They threw away the opportunity and slept in false security. The wise virgins could slumber, for they had taken every precaution. Many omit suitable preparation and sleep and slumber, and give themselves no trouble. If we have imitated them in their foolishness and unpreparedness, perhaps we have also imitated them in

their sloth. Often those who begin to be negligent go on in negligence.

What is the lesson for me? Do I slumber when I ought to prepare? Do I let life slip away and pass from me without gathering anything? This sloth is an evil thing—a state we ought to dread: it makes us like Lazarus in the tomb, bound, and, as it were, dead. We should grieve over it and confess it to God. “Thy grace, O God, can awaken me. Thou seest how tied and constrained I am. Speak to my soul. Bid me arouse myself from this sleep of sloth. Waken me to a new, fresh life—a life of untiring devotion to Thee.”

And if I am not conscious of sloth, let me thank God, and pray that I may persevere in contending against the difficulties of life, its cares and pleasures; that I may persevere in fighting against temptations from without and from within—from evil spirits, from the world, from self, from this wretched body of mine. “Give me, O Lord, grace to continue a valiant fight against Thy enemies.”

THIRD. “And at midnight there was a cry made—Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.” How active they are now! There is no room for self-delusion, no time for idleness. There are very few who don't rouse themselves at the moment of death. But they have not learned to make the most of time: they must do the best they can. How could they appear before the Bridegroom without their lamps? They ask the

wise virgins for oil, but these answer that their oil might still fail—"Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go you rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves"; and now these idle virgins have to double their work and run to buy oil. The wise are secure: they had been in good time. The foolish hurry back—too late. One tithe of such running about before would have placed them in security.

"At last came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He, answering, said, Amen, I say to you, I know you not." You are no friends of Mine, you who could not take the trouble to get ready. You have not tried to prepare for Me. It was for you to show your love. You did no good, you made no sacrifice, you gave no proof of your love—your trial is ended, and I know you not.

What lesson am I to learn? That it will never do to lead a life of unpreparedness—a life without forethought. I have but one concern—to be ready for the coming of my Lord. May I know Thee now, O Lord. May I know Thee ever. May I persevere. May I be Thy wise and faithful servant, that when Thou comest, Thou mayest open the door and admit me. May I never hear, I know you not! If we had faith how we should fear to hear that word!

CONSIDERATION.

FIRST DAY.

[3 P.M.]

SELF-LOVE.

WHAT I have called self-love has a variety of names : self-preoccupation, self-consciousness, self-introspection, etc. Whatever we call it, it is a fact of spiritual life and of daily life that many persons are liable to this fault. It is not a healthy frame of mind : it shuts one out from good things.

One is not a little puzzled how to make a person see that she has self-love. You may know it is there, but it is not easy to lay your hand upon it. You must get to it by a roundabout way. Such people are always examining self—never being satisfied with their introspection, worrying over it. One of the most common forms is that of those who are always noticing what they *feel*, not what they *think*. God has given us reason for our guide. So long as we are reasoning we are in a good and healthy state ; but if, instead of judging, weighing, reflecting, etc., we go by feeling, it is wrong. “ I feel no devotion ; I feel very wooden,” and so on. Doubt your feelings. Don't regulate your conduct by them. There are persons who say, “ I don't *feel* to pray ; I don't *feel* to believe, to have a soul, to have anything spiritual at all ”. This, if carried out in action, makes them leave out their prayers and Communions, and is unwise and foolish in the extreme.

Yet those especially who are under the influence of self-love are guided by feelings. What would reason tell you about missing morning prayers?

One has made a rule to go to confession and Communion once a week. Then comes a period of blank in which no devotion is experienced. She gives up the Sacraments one week, then another week, and gradually she only receives them once or twice a year. One meets people who have gone back in this way—through self-love.

When you get to the region of reason you don't *feel*. To trust to feeling is a mistake. *Feeling* is in the lower part of the soul. Our religious life really belongs to reason and free-will, and is above the senses. Silence, recollection, will clear the way and allow us to have the feeling of devotion, but it is dangerous to be guided by feeling, and when you find yourselves noticing that you feel or don't feel, suspect it.

Another instance. One has been trying to meditate, and one makes a bad hand of it, and then one declares there is no use trying.

Or one has a hasty temper, makes resolutions against giving way to it, breaks them, and gives up trying.

Another form is vanity, speaking about myself, about my infirmities and weaknesses if I have nothing else to speak of. I hear a sermon, perhaps, against vanity, and resolve to fight against it; but I don't carry out my resolution, and give it up. I have sinned; there is no use trying; I won't try again.

This seems to these people humility, but it is really conceit and pride. Perhaps you will understand better how it comes from self-love if I put before you an example. I have made my resolution at Holy Communion, and at the end of breakfast I break it. The true thing to say is: "It's not to be wondered at, but it is a thing to be ashamed of; I am sorry, and I will try again. I won't give up trying." There is an instance of self-love, and the absence of it. Of ourselves, big resolutions and small performance.

Another instance, and not an imaginary one. A penitent comes to confession who formerly was in the habit of coming weekly, but now six weeks have elapsed. Why is this? "I couldn't prepare, I couldn't pray. I don't like spiritual books. What good do I get by going?" Why not say to God you are in a wretched state, that you wish to pray and make a good Communion? "I have told God that." But you didn't go to Communion? "No." One under the influence of self-love will say all that, but won't be humble enough to go to Holy Communion, and it is downright pride and self-love that keeps her away. Nothing could be a fuller proof of utter dependence on God than a Communion made at such a time, and it would bring very great graces. "O Lord! here I am. I can't say a word. You know what I want; say it for me."

The opposite to self-love is self-annihilation, to confess our littleness, our nothingness. As soon as we do anything of ourselves we commit some sin. We must aim at this self-annihilation if we want special

graces. Self-love shuts out the graces of God, obscures the light, retards the movements of the will.

Try and form an idea, then, of self-love, and its effects. Self-love consists in a tendency to analyse scruples, and persuade oneself one must be wrong. Some bad thought comes before the mind, and is a source of endless scruples; self-love keeps clinging to the idea that one did consent to it.

Self-love is the cause of discouragement and of giving up making efforts when we don't at once succeed. See if self-love has any place in you. Learn to trust in your reason as the guide of life, and as having been given to you by God to lead you to salvation.

FIRST DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

AFTER I have given you the points of the meditation, you should try to use the remainder of the hour in thinking of any thought that comes from them, such as a horror of sin, of the emptiness of the world, of the better fulfilling of duty, etc. You should end with a colloquy, in which you should sum up the thoughts and resolutions of the meditations, and pray for strength to live up to them.

In the reflection which is marked in your papers to come after the meditation, you should ask what thought, what light, have I got from this meditation? A new idea perhaps—more commonly an

old idea under a new light. What resolution have I come to? Recapitulate the reasons for the resolution; go over any considerations that struck you.

Having considered what you gained, ask, Did I make that meditation well? Did I prepare for it? Did I fix my mind on it? Did I give too much to the understanding or to the will? We make the best resolutions when our understanding is convinced we should make them. Resolutions backed by intellectual convictions become part of ourselves.

Give the whole hour to the meditation, and a quarter of an hour to the reflection.

THE USE OF CREATURES.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine our Lord Jesus Christ saying to you, “I have placed thee here to choose life”.

SECOND PRELUDE.—“Grant, O Lord, that I may know why I am here.”

FIRST POINT. Our meditation is to be on the use of creatures.

By creatures I understand everything that is not God and I. Some we must take; some we must leave; a great many are indifferent in themselves; all may be made to help us towards God. Consider these creatures in detail. My personality wrapt up in a certain individual soul and bodily life which is mine. I have to account for my natural gifts, my capacity for learning, for thought, good and evil; my

health, vigorous or infirm ; a short or long life, all part of the creature I. I have to take account of my surroundings—persons, country, climate, institutions, ideas, etc. ; my parents, those who are concerned with my spiritual education, bishops, priests, etc. Of these creatures I am to make the best I can. I must love God, advance in His knowledge, and in keeping His commandments ; my whole being must serve in one way through this trial. I am to abstain, use, suffer as God says to me.

First I am to abstain. I am not to look on happiness and avoiding trouble as the great end of life. Don't make pleasure your end, but duty. In doing this you must abstain from much that attracts you. How far do I abstain ? How far do I make pleasure subservient to the voice of duty ? Do I seek it out of measure ? It is pleasant to eat, drink, lie down, and sleep. We must put a limit to the extent in which we indulge in sleep, food, etc. Music, again, is pleasant, but our enjoyment of all such things must be kept within bounds. We sin if we are inordinately attached to these pleasures. Has God said to me, Abstain ? Certainly. Let no pleasure get a mastery over you and take the chief part of your time. How far have I learned that lesson ? Very many seek enjoyment too much : there are few who content themselves with limiting their enjoyment. The majority are *obliged* to work.

How am I ? Am I too keen in seeking pleasure ? Do I hate work ? It is irksome to nature ; but if I do it cheerfully with my mind and heart, taking pleasure

when pleasure comes, but putting work and duty first, then I may be grateful.

SECOND. We should use disagreeable creatures. Prayer, study, work, kindness to others, we should make use of, however hard. Thus you fulfil your end and learn self-denial, sacrifice, kindliness. Do I fly from all that gives trouble even when I know God wishes me to take trouble? Have I got this principle? Does duty take precedence with me?

THIRD. We have to suffer. Not a little of life is made up of crosses, disappointments, longings baulked, anticipations not realised, bodily sufferings—pains and sicknesses, creeping old age, lingering death—have we learned to bear these patiently? How do we take the crosses we receive at the hands of relations, friends, acquaintances, strangers? Don't complain of God, don't murmur; say, "It's a cross hard to bear, but with God's grace I will try to bear it". Then there are crosses in worldly affairs; how much suffering, hardship, privation, property depreciated! Some are made to taste the bitter dregs of poverty. Do I accept the Will of God? How am I?—have I learned not to murmur, not to complain?—to bow down before the Will of God and kiss the hand that strikes me? I have been guilty. How many reasons have I to be patient and accept these crosses which God sends to work in me resignation and detachment and love of Him! Not all the riches in the world can compare with these treasures of the Christian soul.

Conclude with thanking God and asking that you may serve him with fidelity, not only in sunshine but

when dark clouds lower over your existence, that you may be constant to Him in adversity as in prosperity.

FIRST DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE SIN OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—For a Composition of Place imagine our first parents taking their leave of Paradise, and stepping out into the world which was to be so sorrowful and to last so long.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend the malice of mortal sin; inflame my will that I may never cease to sorrow for sin and have a great horror of it.

If we have ever committed one grievous sin we should never cease to repent. We hear of St. Peter that his sorrow for having denied his Lord was lifelong. So we in this portion of our retreat, and in Lent and Advent especially, should renew our compunction for past sin. It is useful to say over and over again the Penitential Psalms, especially the *Miserere*, also Psalm cii.

FIRST POINT. The actual sin. Adam and Eve were the objects of God's profuse liberality. He created them lords of the universe, but He put them on trial. They must deserve eternal glory. He im-

posed on them a very slight test. They disobeyed His commandment. Eve ate the forbidden fruit and gave it to Adam, the head, the king of the human race, and all his posterity forfeited that kingdom which had been destined for them. So we came into this world, and no gifts are waiting for us, and we are born in sin.

What a punishment for Adam and Eve!—to be driven out of Paradise, to be parents of woe and misery, to undergo nine hundred years of bitter penance, witnessing the murder of Abel, innumerable misdeeds, ambition, avarice, selfishness, wars, pestilences, death—all that makes life such an enigma! We, children of sorrow and misery, trace all this back to the sin of Adam. What a dreadful evil is mortal sin! We don't realise all that is contained in the disobedience. *Non serviam.* I defy Thy authority. This comes from a creature whose existence hangs over the abyss of nothingness. One entirely dependent on God flies in the face of his Maker. What a fearful disproportion! The guilt lies in the rebellion of the creature against his Creator. If we with our stunted reason can realise that this is a great wrong, what must it look in the sight of God?

O my God! give me to understand the malice of mortal sin. I have sinned, perhaps, often, and for length of time. I have used my life as a weapon against Thee. Give me grace to be sorry for all the sins of my life. May I accept as reparation all the crosses, all the sufferings I meet with.

SECOND. We are here in the house of God, where

He is present, and we try to honour Him. What a crime it would appear if enemies were to rush in, dishonour the Blessed Sacrament, pull down the images, and write on the wall blasphemies against Jesus Christ! Compare such a profanation with the profanation of the soul. The soul, the temple of God, sets up on His throne some envy, jealousy, vanity, some wretched idol, and gives it honour; foregoing all hope of heaven to receive bonds, slavery, ignominy, endless misery. How I should repent that I have defiled this temple! How I should cry out, "My God, forgive me!"

THIRD. Suppose St. Peter, after the Ascension, notwithstanding all the graces that had been heaped upon him, had renounced Jesus Christ and denied Him again. One occupying such a place!—one who had been forgiven, one to whom so much had been given, one for whom the mercies of God had been emptied forth!—would it not seem dreadful? Compare this with your own sin—the grace that has been given you, the love that has been shown you, the intimacy with Jesus Christ you have been offered. What motives we have to thank God, to mourn over our own shortcomings, and to offer Him all that remains of life!

SECOND DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

PERSONAL SINS.

PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.

A RETREAT is never perfect without a meditation on personal sins.

FIRST PRELUDE.—For a Composition of Place, put yourself at the feet of Jesus Christ and hear Him saying to you, “Give an account of your stewardship”.

SECOND PRELUDE.—“Enlighten my understanding that I may know my sins : inflame my will that I may have the spirit of contrition and compunction.”

FIRST POINT. Look back on your past life, from the use of reason to the present time. We are to make a survey of what we have done and left undone, not as a preparation for confession, but in a general way. We may have been well brought up, and spent our early years well, making a fairly good use of time. Then we may have abused our liberty later, performed our duty to God carelessly, neglected the service of God and religion for one or more years. Then some great mercy—a misfortune or a retreat, perhaps—has been the beginning of a new life, and we began to serve God and do our duty and bear crosses in patience, How many years of negligence and indifference, how many years of fervour, have I passed? Or if I had to claim a reward for my good actions, what could I claim?

The principal point to consider is : Have I for any

considerable time lived away from God, even if not conscious of deliberate sins, serving God in the most imperfect way? How much time have I tried to spend well? How much has been a real preparation for judgment?

Any portion of life spent in sin away from God is a sheer loss. Perhaps I have thus lost forty years, and at last I cry out in contrition, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner". However sincere and earnest my contrition, all those forty years are a blank in my life for eternity as though they had never been. All that time is lost for eternity. If I have spent any portion away from God it is lost. I must weep over it. How foolish, how unwise have I been! I have made so little use of so much of my lifetime. I have not trafficked diligently. I have made very little of the graces so freely offered to me. If I could sum up all that has been wisely spent, how short it would be!

Let us hope all here may say, "A portion of my life I have tried to spend wisely". But how much better I ought to have spent it, with how much more zeal, humility, and dependence on God! How imperfectly I have prayed!—feeling myself weak, I did not pray for strength. So that we must say, "How much evil, how little good I have done! I have sinned exceedingly by commission, still more by omission. I have been unfaithful, ungenerous! I accuse myself; I pour out my confession before Thee, my Lord. Strengthen me to discharge my duties for the future, leaning on Thee, calling on Thee, bearing my cross with patience and resignation."

Go over the motives you have for humiliation, self-

abasement, compunction, etc. In this point there will be much matter for meditation.

SECOND. A leading idea throughout the spiritual Exercises is that every mortal sin is a perfect upset of all right order, that it lowers and degrades the soul to an endless degree; because every mortal sin, even without there being a commandment against it, is so against conscience and reason. It is, in fact, a complete upsetting of my reason and nature. It would take too long to follow out that idea, but we may choose one instance—Intemperance. What a miserable spectacle is the intemperate man, apart from the ten Commandments. What a degraded being! How unfit to associate with others! What a wreck of human dignity! Anger, again. What a spectacle is anyone carried away with anger, so angry as to be unable to speak articulately! Who that has seen it can think of it without horror?

Perhaps you have not met a very proud person, one who has a contempt for everyone else and an inordinate extolling of self. What a caricature is such an one! What a lesson of the loathsomeness and lie of all pride! So one may go on with any sin, and see how it is contrary to human nature. The triumph of the devil is to bring human nature down to his own level.

For a grievous sin we commit ourselves we have numberless excuses, but when we think of it in another we see what disorder it implies. The lesson I am to learn is, that reason should guide my will and give the law to the inferior part of my nature: the will should carry out the orders of reason. Many do not attain

that degree in the service of God for which they were intended, because they do not attend to reason and let it guide their will. They do not build themselves up to give to reason a surer and more unerring voice. Let us accustom ourselves to hear the voice of reason saying, "That is right or that is wrong". It is a great thing when conscience is taught to speak firmly. The misery is that people chop and change to and fro and have no firmness, and shrink from fearlessly rejecting what is wrong.

THIRD. Looking back on the past and finding it so bad, how are we to do for the future? "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all." We can't do better than look on the shortcomings of our past lives and repair for them by a faithful use of the future. We must cut off worldliness and folly and take life seriously; not only make up our minds that the future shall atone, but resolve to pray much to God that we may traffic very diligently with those gifts given to us by Him in His great love.

CONSIDERATION.

SECOND DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON A GOOD WAY OF ASSISTING AT MASS.

THERE are many ways of hearing Mass. Any method is a good method, but certain points should be

considered in every method. Reserve for yourself the time of Consecration, also that of the Priest's Communion. At that time, whenever you don't receive the Blessed Sacrament actually, you should always make a spiritual Communion. With regard to the Consecration, it is to be remembered that it contains the indispensable part of the Sacrifice, on account of the separate consecration of the bread and wine which represents the separation of the Body and Blood or the death of Jesus Christ.

How simply though mysteriously it puts before us the one great Sacrifice ! So whenever we assist at Mass we ought to think of the actual death of Jesus Christ, and ask for any grace of which we stand in need, through that mystical representation.

Use whatever sentiments and affections come into your head. You should before and after the Consecration be recollected and endeavour to offer God the homage of your assistance. In other parts of the Mass you may use whatever form you like. That form, for instance, in your Prayer-books in which you recall the four ends of Sacrifice—(1) *Adoration* of the Majesty of God ; (2) Propitiation or *Contrition* for sin ; (3) *Thanksgiving* ; and (4) Impetration or *Supplication* for all the graces you want. Or, again, you may go through the different stages of the Passion represented by the actions of the Priest, making suitable ejaculations according to another form found in many Prayer-books. Or you may place yourself on Calvary during the whole time. Or, again, you may say the Rosary or

prayers in honour of the Blessed Sacrament, or the little office of the Blessed Virgin. All these ways are very good. The essential point is to bear in mind how the Mass is a Sacrifice.

A Mass is not devoutly heard unless there are many petitions. "So long I have been with you and you have asked nothing of Me." God loves to be asked, to be importuned. How well He shows it in the parable of the man in bed whose friend had to importune Him, and in like manner God says we are to importune Him. I suspect neglect of petitions is one of the commonest faults in hearing Mass. Make a long litany of your wants and woes and ask God for help. As a rule the methods one uses more frequently suit most people best.

Even to be present at Mass kneeling at the Consecration and Communion is a devout assistance at Mass. As in the Old Law the Jews were required to unite themselves with the Priest, so in Catholic countries it is an ordinary arrangement for hundreds of soldiers to be in the piazza outside the cathedral, and at the sound of the bell to join with the Priest in adoration at the moment of the Consecration and Elevation.

People sometimes say, "I had distractions, therefore I have not satisfied the obligation of hearing Mass". The *obligation* has been satisfied by the fact of their being present, but they will derive more or less grace according to their attentiveness.

Simply to follow the prayers in the Missal is as good as any method. Sometimes two or three words may be dwelt on the whole time. *Deus amator animarum.*

Largitor indulgentiæ. Nobis quoque peccatoribus. How many thoughts and affections these may raise in our hearts! St. Teresa used to go into an ecstasy at the words, *Cujus regni non erit finis.*

SECOND DAY.

DEATH.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine you hear addressed to yourself these words, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee”.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding that I may know and comprehend the certainty and uncertainty of death. In flame my will that I may live in constant preparation for death.

FIRST POINT. With regard to preparation for death, the essential point is that death should find us in a state of grace. It is like Holy Communion. We should not dare to go and meet our Lord unless freed from mortal sin. What practical conclusion am I to draw from this? That I should always live free from mortal sin, that I should not be content with asking merely a very ordinary degree of Christian virtue, that I should live always in friendship with God and never deliberately provoke Him. We ought all to be in a manner confirmed against mortal sin. The Apostles and many canonised Saints and others were *confirmed* in grace. We can't have that security,

but we may aspire never deliberately to lose the friendship of God by committing mortal sin. This may seem hard, but let me take sins such as murder, stealing, etc. Many would fly up in the air sooner than perpetrate such a sin. Intemperance, gluttony—those ordinarily well brought up could not entertain the thought of such sins. Why should not this be brought to apply to any sin? People will think very little of yielding to their particular sin—avarice, neglect of Mass, etc. We should have such a horror of mortal sin and its consequences that a deliberate mortal sin should be, morally speaking, impossible. I believe that anyone who has like you time to pray and meditate should never fall into mortal sin. This should be the conclusion from the first point. I must bring myself to this degree. Have I arrived at it yet? If so, thank God, pray for perseverance, pray to be preserved from mortal sin for the rest of your life. It is not too much for anyone of us to hope for.

SECOND. If I were about to die, should I be perfectly satisfied with this? I think not. I should look back on my past life and remember that I should have to answer for opportunities neglected, very little good done—so much left undone. I am not prepared. I have been living almost as though I were never to die—and within a few hours I shall stand before God. Then I look back with regret. Certainly if I were now at the point of death I should wish mine had been a good life—not a worldly life. Think you anyone looks back with satisfaction to the world, to idle, foolish vanities, to the pursuit of pleasures? Who

would have the heart to come to a dying person and disturb her with an account of a ball or a garden-party or a novel? All that does so long as we are not in the presence of death. What would one give to recall that waste of time and energy when it is too late! It will be too late unless now we make our resolutions to prepare, and resolve in the midst of the duties and pleasures of our state of life never to lose sight of the end. How many go home tired out, *blasé*, with an aching void in their hearts! Why should not we, children of faith, make the same confession, that the world can't satisfy us, and give our hearts to God and the serious duties of life. The performance of our duties is a good preparation for death, and God won't chastise us because in our measure we have mixed in society. "Well done, good and faithful servant." You never forgot Me, and I will remember you.

Am I living as a rational being, as one who knows he must go through the gate of death into eternity? If hitherto you have been living with the world filling your heart, turn now to God and say, "I can't go on with this miserable life, I will have no more of it; my life must henceforth be filled with this great large care". Spend some time repeating your renunciation of the world. O God! disenchant me of the fascinations of the world. Open my eyes to see what my reason tells me is folly. Make me to see life seriously.

THIRD. What comfort we shall feel at the moment of death if we have tried to do a great deal of good, to be charitable to the poor, the sick, and the dying; if we have helped one soul to heaven and rescued it

from heresy or vice. How will it solace us to look back on our alms, our zeal to gain indulgences. What comfort if we can think, "With all my faults I have tried to love Jesus Christ and His Church, and to make use of the privileges that have been mine". Disappointments, sacrifices, sorrows—how little will they seem when all are over! How sweet to have borne patiently reverses of fortune, loss of friends, trials of inner life, bodily pain! If we have carried our cross bravely, how bright it will shine then!

What am I doing now? Am I looking out for corporal and spiritual works of mercy? Am I resolved not to be defrauded of any grace? I will try to fill my life with works that shall benefit others. Hereafter I will look on myself as specially blest if God calls on me to help others, to deny myself, and to gain a glorious crown in heaven.

Ask now for a prepared death, and that you may live now in view of death, and think of it also when you say the Hail Mary.

SECOND DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE SIN AND REPENTANCE OF ST. PETER.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

THIS is a subject from which we can all draw great instruction.

FIRST PRELUDE.—For a Composition of Place we look at St. Peter going out and weeping bitterly.

SECOND PRELUDE.—In the Second Prelude we pray: “Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may follow and comprehend the history of Peter’s fall, repentance, and forgiveness; inflame my will that, having sinned, I may imitate him in his penance”.

FIRST POINT. Consider St. Peter’s sin in denying His Master, His King, under a trivial temptation—having boasted that he would not deny Him—that he was willing to die for Him. What lessons am I to take and store up for the remainder of my life? I must learn that I am never in a position to say, I will not sin. I must get an intimate conviction of my crying need for grace to support me—weak, unreliable, prone to evil as I am. O God, come to my assistance. *Deus in adjutorium meum intende.* The Church has learnt the great need we have of God’s help. It ought to be the cry of every individual soul, “Leave me not to my own weakness”. So when we wonder at St. Peter’s fall let us be filled with terror lest we also fall—let us thank God for having given us this lesson. Peter through his fall learned mercy—to put a gentle hand on the bruised soul.

SECOND. The very splendid manner of St. Peter’s repentance. His sin was very bad, but Jesus looked on him. “And Peter remembered the word of the Lord as He had said, ‘Before the cock crow twice thou shalt deny Me thrice’. And going out he wept bitterly.” St. Peter did not remember before. It is

very noticeable that he had forgotten our Lord's words: everything disappeared except fear. When he remembered he fled at once and wept. Then he remembered his Master's miracles, discourses, and warnings, and tears flowed from his eyes. "I have sinned." His repentance was prompt, instant, flying from the occasion of sin. Here is a lesson for me. I must learn to avoid occasions of sin; there is no sincere repentance without this. If I find myself tampering with occasions of sin I have reason to doubt the sincerity of my repentance. Peter fled from danger: there was no temporising, no going to repair the scandal, no self-delusion. He did not think that his position required of him to go back. Would that we had that repentance!

THIRD. The way in which our Lord received him—how He appeared to him after the Resurrection and then again by the lake. Thrice He asked, "Lovest thou Me?" and the third time Peter with all humility answered, "Lord, Thou knowest all things. Thou knowest that I love Thee." The point for us to consider is how completely his sin was blotted out: no reproach was addressed to him, but only the question, "Lovest thou Me?"

If we have offended God, here is the model we must follow—weep over the past and hear Him saying, "Child! lovest thou Me?" This is the one answer to all our sin and ingratitude. We are safer, stronger, in the love of Jesus Christ than we can be in the fear of His judgments. The soul welcomed to His Sacred Heart finds its foretaste upon earth of heaven. It is

this love that has called so many from the world. Apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins,—all have followed that magic power and will be gathered round His throne for all eternity. Let us pray that this love may be the principle of our sorrow.

Colloquy with St. Peter, asking that you may imitate him in his sorrow and his love.

THIRD DAY.

[9-30 A.M.]

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine our Lord saying, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”.

SECOND PRELUDE.—May my understanding be enlightened that I may know Jesus Christ. May my will be inflamed that I may follow Him, the Way that leads to life eternal.

FIRST POINT.—St. Ignatius' meditation of the Kingdom of Christ is the fundamental meditation in which the idea of the life of Christ is laid up. Some people fall into the error of always limiting their thoughts to their sins and temptations. They don't travel far from the life of sin they want to part from. This is a mistake. It is a maxim of war, “Carry the war into the enemy's country”. If you want to triumph lead a holy life. Think more of Jesus Christ, of the love

and imitation of Him, of the virtues He would have you acquire, of the standard of holiness He sets before you : thus will you find yourself greatly helped to virtue. It makes all the difference in spiritual life which way you take it. If you think of Jesus Christ and doing good, you may leave all the rest to take care of itself. One grand object of the life of Jesus Christ was to give us a model. He came to redeem us—that was His first object—but he wanted to point out the way in which we must secure his redemption. The great principle He taught is that whereas even good people are led astray by things of the world, He would repudiate such things and be without what are naturally the objects of desire—honour, wealth, pleasure, etc. The danger of these things is that we come to love them inordinately. He despises everything that is most coveted by mankind. He chose poverty, a carpenter's trade, and ended His life in dishonour.

Am I, then, to fling away everything? Not unless He does me the honour to invite me. It is dangerous to embrace such a life uncalled. But there is an invitation open to all. All are to guard against inordinate love of the things of the world, and to be ready to sacrifice them if it pleases God. We must not love the things of the world so much that we cannot bear to be separated from them. All should be poor in spirit so far as not to be too strongly attached to worldly goods. I am not worthy of being the disciple of Jesus Christ unless I am detached from worldly goods, ready to give them up if He calls me to do so. What a difference to look up to such an

ideal instead of looking down on my own miseries and sins! I fling away my care for these, and think of Jesus Christ and the model He sets before me, and in my poor way I try to follow Him. O my Lord, give me the grace to love Thee. May I scorn less worthy objects of love. I have wasted part of my life. How much nearer heaven should I be had I raised my mind to Thee and followed in Thy steps! I believe in Thee, O Incarnate Word. Thou leadest the Way, Thou teachest me the Truth, Thou art the model of the true Life. Oh, give me grace ever to look up to Thee.

SECOND. Jesus Christ, though He sets us so perfect an example, does not compel our will. He wants only volunteers in His army, no unwilling soldiers. There are all manner of degrees in His service. How near will you follow? Graces are never wanting. They will be given in abundance to one who has a humble, loving, trusting desire to be near Jesus Christ. Such a soul shall be filled with profound humility, with an adoring love of Jesus Christ, a burning desire to come near to Him. It does not want rules. "I live, not I, but Christ liveth in me." St. Paul could think of nothing else: to him there was only one honour, one pleasure.

We come near to Christ in proportion as we detach ourselves entirely from worldly things. How much do you love the things of the world? Are you willing to give up the service of Christ for pleasure or honour? He wants volunteers, and only volunteers. I must test myself. How far do I love what He despised

and renounced? If I can say truly, "I am living in the world, but I trust I do it in obedience to God, and hope He has the first place in my heart, and anything else exists there only so far as is consistent with my love for Him," then I may thank Him and ask to persevere.

We may come to have a hatred of worldly things. What a happy disposition to have renounced everything, and to love nothing but in and for Jesus Christ! We may all reach this disposition. We ought all to aspire to it. What more wretched than the soul enslaved to the things of this world! What a parting when these must be renounced! Can they claim its affection after death? Not easily.

THIRD. What an encouragement that He has confronted far greater privations and renunciations than we shall be called to! If we give up all, He has given up all. He has borne the hardest part of the fight. Men were misled by the desire to be like to God. Here, He says, they may emulate Me, imitate Me, as far as they will. He has given us this loving incitement to be like to Him. Oh, if only I could renounce the world and have no thought or desire but the Sacred Heart of my King!

Beg for great generosity of soul, renouncing all that disputes the supremacy of His love.

CONSIDERATION.

THIRD DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON WORRYING.

So many people who want to be good defeat their design by worrying (*cura*)—a superfluous care about something, with a degree of unrest, anxiety, disturbance, the opposite to that recklessness and want of care we find in others who think little of the past, present, or future. *Incuria* (absence of all care) is certainly not desirable. God means us to take thought. Forethought is an excellent thing ; nothing is more rational and becoming than to foresee : it is the stamp and feature of a rational life.

But *worrying* is to many a great source of danger and a great impediment. Some worry about the past. Now the past is past and can't be helped. Perhaps it's a letter you have posted. "I wish it would never get to its destination ;" and though you may be certain it will get there, you go on worrying about it. With regard to things that are past, it is great philosophy to resign ourselves to the inevitable. Avoid worrying. Who is benefited by it ? It does not prepare or help you for what is coming. It only destroys your peace of mind and takes away your power of praying. The thing is done and it can't be helped : be sorry for it, but to be miserable about it is foolish.

Besides worrying about the past there is worrying

about to-day. Some persons will do everything themselves. They must have a hand, a word, in everything—too many cares. Whoever is at the head of others should know that the great art is to let everyone feel they have freedom, but are supervised. A “one-man” government is a wrong idea of government. If you are at the head of a house, see if you let those under you have their proper share of independence. The supervision must not be felt at every moment. In each department trust the person you have put in charge. One whom you can’t trust should not be there. Teach everyone that they have responsibility and power. A very common source of anxiety is that those in authority will do everything themselves. Then they want to do two days’ work in one; not content with Monday’s work, they want to do Tuesday’s as well on Monday. Don’t attempt to do too much. Don’t worry—not about what you are doing, but—about the next thing that you are not doing. To keep two or three balls going at a time is all very well for a conjuror, but not for an ordinary Christian. Don’t aim at impossibilities, as many do, and so never succeed in doing anything well.

Then there is worrying about the future. What mother does not feel anxiety as to the future of her children. What is to become of Tommy? Life becomes unbearable if we are always anxious. What am I to do? How am I to show my care for the future? By just doing your work for the day. We don’t trust God. He is the Author of Life. All that is to come is under His providence. We don’t make our-

selves better by always wondering and worrying. You are anxious about your child. Do what you can and don't worry. Don't lie awake thinking what Tommy will become: attend to the one day. Pray as much as you can for him and leave him to God. Some quarrel very much at human liberty: the trials of life are dignified by our human liberty. So, when God has given you children, He has not deprived *them* of liberty and given it to *you*. If *they* abuse it, it is no fault of yours if you have done what you could. If the soul were lost through your fault—ah! then it would be different. God will reward you for what you have done: don't make a boundless sea of misery by anticipating possible woes. You don't suppose that when Monica was trudging after Augustine she was answerable for his sins. She followed him, but she did not bore him. The Church says: "For his conversion she earnestly pleaded with God for years, with strong crying and tears". She followed him to Milan. She did not stay at home crying out her eyes. She took care of his creature comforts, but did not weary him. She brought him to Ambrose, a man of talent, and at last Augustine was converted through the efforts of his mother.

Lastly, there is worrying about temporal cares, money cares. There is a bill to be paid, what are we to do? Do what we can. The thought of that £50 keeps coming up in your meditation. Make a prayer for it. Don't bother over the trouble. If you can meet it, do: don't weary or worry, it unfits you for everything. Remember the three youths who were

told to worship the statue or be put in the furnace. God helped them. They did not know He would save them. Whether I am to get out of these difficulties God knows, but they *shall* lead me to Him. Pray about your difficulties. Turn to Him more than ever. Just when you stand in need of God, you go away from Him. Instead of importuning God for help, you ask Him less than you did before. Take a lesson from the holy women going to the sepulchre, when they thought, "Who will roll away the stone?" Some would have sat down and cried; others would have gone home.

Try and apply what I have said.

1. Beware of worrying; guard against it as a thing the devil makes use of.
2. We can never be too constant in strengthening our trust in God. "If He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."
3. When we are in difficulties we should increase our prayer, not shorten it.

THIRD DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE JOURNEY OF JOSEPH AND MARY FROM NAZARETH
TO BETHLEHEM AND THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Joseph and Mary journeying to Bethlehem. The cave where our Lord was born.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will : enlighten my understanding that I may know and comprehend what hardships Thou dost choose for Thyself and for Thy chosen servants ; inflame my will that I may accept with courage the trials Thou mayest send me.

FIRST POINT. When we read of our Lord saying to St. Matthew, "Follow Me," and St. Matthew at once leaving all and following Christ, and of others in the Gospel, and of Saints in the history of the Church to whom the same invitation was made and who showed the same trust, following our Lord, we ask what can have led so many at that simple call to leave everything they had and follow Him ? It was the power of the Divine Master and King, who appeals to what is noblest and best in our nature. His Word was quickly spoken, and the new life has commenced.

None of all the servants and followers of Jesus Christ followed Him with such entire devotedness and love as our Lady and, next to her, St. Joseph. These are the first in time, in rank, and also in the perfection of their dispositions. We are led to this reflection, considering the treatment He reserved for these chosen ones. We never doubt they were the dearest to Him. What are the marks and proofs of affection He gives ?

St. Joseph is busy in his carpenter's shop, Mary in simple household duties. They are wrapped up in each other and in God, the world shut out. They make the most of every day and moment, consecrating their lives to God. . . . And when the great moment of the Nativity was drawing near, an edict comes from

the Roman emperors which puts Joseph to great inconvenience, and is a heavy burden for Mary. It is no trifle to them to have to leave their home. They were to go at any cost : it was indeed a great hardship, a great tax on them. Why did God allow this at such a time ? They were too much united to God to ask. They had but to obey to accomplish the will of God. If the future was uncertain, no matter. They had but to do their duty.

What does this teach me ? These are the two souls dearest to God, and He lays upon them a heavy burden : therefore, a heavy burden is a proof of His good pleasure. If He sends me a trial in spiritual or temporal matters, I must not think He has abandoned me. It is rather a proof of His love. If I am certain of this, how much more endurable trials and crosses will be. I shall go to meet them with the greatest confidence. Trials and hardships are the lot of those who are dear to God. Surely I have sometimes made a mistake in my past life, thinking that trials showed that God had forsaken me. In future I will accept trials as gifts from which I may gain great grace. The most robust soul gets lowered in an easy, happy life. Life without comforts, with responsibilities and trials, is the school in which great souls are formed. At first sight it seems hard, but when we reflect a moment we see it is God's way of bringing us to perfection. So I will turn to Him and say : "O my God and my Father, I recognise that this is true, but it is hard to poor human nature. Do Thou give me the grace to shape my life upon it."

SECOND. Consider how the Holy Family, having accomplished that journey with all its inconveniences, and having reached Bethlehem, had to go about seeking shelter, and, finding no room, have at last to go to the stable. We might have thought the journey a sufficient trial; we might have thought that some one would have been raised up to receive Mary. But no; they were passed over and driven to the stable. That is the way in which the world receives Jesus Christ—there is no place for Him; for Barabbas, for unbelievers, there is plenty of room. “Let us oppress the just man.” This is another great principle. The world will not have holiness, and is animated with an instinct of deadly hostility against it, as we see in the lives of all the Saints and good people. What is the lesson for me? That, as I hope to be the soldier of Jesus Christ, I must not be surprised if I find ill-treatment from the world. In one form or another all good people must meet with opposition from the world. How foolish of me to stake my happiness on the opinion of the world! I must be in the world, but I must not belong to it; I must give my heart to Jesus Christ. I must *belong* to Him. I must be on my guard against the spirit of worldliness. I may be carried away through not combating the world. I must not run that risk; I can't give myself up to the life of the world. At any moment He may call me out of this dissipation, and I must keep my heart away from it.

The world is a great power. We only protect ourselves against it when we realise that between it and

Jesus Christ there never was any peace. And so I pray that my heart may be strengthened to despise the world, and see that the one great reality is Jesus Christ and His service.

THIRD. Jesus Christ was born in a stable, wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger, with no attendants, no homage but the deep silent homage of Mary and Joseph. They pour out their souls in adoration. We can do no more than imitate them. Better be on the cold rock of the stable than in the inn above, or the merry home, or the palace of Herod where the court thought nothing of those three in the stable. These were the only happy ones. The others were very miserable in their ignorance. When we see Him there we fall down, we confess Him to be our King, and offer Him our homage. We beg that we may not be tempted away from Him by the world and its lying promises, but strengthened for the courageous and patient endurance of any cross He may lay upon us.

THIRD DAY.

[8-30 P.M.]

THE ADORATION OF THE SHEPHERDS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE. Imagine the scene : our Lord an Infant in the manger, the ox and the ass, St. Joseph and Mary kneeling in prayer.

SECOND PRELUDE. Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may grow in the knowledge of my Lord; inflame my will that I may follow Him.

FIRST POINT. In the last meditation we considered the two grandest soldiers in Christ's army. Possibly we may think these so far removed above us that we cannot imitate them. Now we come to others, plain, honest fellows, leading laborious lives, watching their flocks, no duty more homely than this, and these are the first to whom the great fact of the birth of Jesus Christ is made known. Poor hard-working men, but good as we may suppose, and these are chosen in preference to Herod and his courtiers and the wise and learned.

LESSON. What it is God prizes: not wealth, learning, pride, but simple honesty, hard toil. If I live up to my duty, my life must be one of toil. No one has a right to lead an idle life. Idleness finds no favour with God.

PRACTICE. I must look on work as a positive duty. I must seek it and choose it if I have not enough naturally. Sometimes those that are highest in position and richest have the most to do. A young lady in her family ought to have plenty to do. In good old times she was taught how to administer the house—a most valuable education. Nothing is so calculated to dispel fancies and fads as healthy occupation. Accomplishments are not so valuable as house-management. Our education must last for ever if we would escape the penalties of frivolity, of wasted minds and hearts. To prevent our minds

from becoming blanks we ought to have work. Ladies are laughed at for taking up the violin, but this supposes a great deal of study and practice. Better be drawing notes out of a fiddle than building up castles idly. Anything is better than idleness. None can grow to be what they should be unless they have hard work. The diligent, healthy use of time fits people to receive great graces from God. Perhaps the reason why this age does not produce more saints may be that in former times young people were compelled to take healthier occupations.

SECOND. The revelation, and how it was made. First, they are dazzled with light and hear voices up on high. They are startled with this glorious effulgence and heavenly melody, and then they are told the reason and who they would find in Bethlehem. Glory to God first, and on earth peace to men of good will. Glory to Him who has devised this mystery, who in His lowliness exceeds our comprehension. If we have good will we have peace. If only we turn to Him with good will, we shall know peace both here and hereafter.

What is the lesson? First, that all creation exists for the glory of God. The Incarnation was for that end. I, in my littleness, must be for the same end. When we say, "Glory to God," we are no longer little—we become part of the great work of salvation. Have I good will? Am I in earnest? Do I honestly turn to Jesus Christ and strive to follow Him? I examine and see how far I am sincere in my following, and pray for a good will.

THIRD. The shepherds go to Bethlehem and find the Word wrapped in swaddling clothes. There is a tradition that they carried away the Holy Family to their house in the valley. We may unite ourselves to those simple shepherds. They did not raise difficulties but went at once and adored. So we. Let us see if we are entitled to receive Holy Communion, if we are simple, honest, laborious, ready to act on the inspiration of God. If only we can see Jesus and Mary as they did we shall make a very proper Communion.

Ask for a greater desire to love our Divine Lord and to follow Him more closely.

FOURTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE ADORATION OF THE KINGS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

THIS coming of the wise men as recorded by St. Matthew is a most wonderful story. Their seeing the star and following it, their proceedings at Jerusalem, the star re-appearing, their finding the Child. We must make a selection, and take three points for our consideration. From the wording of St. Matthew, we should suppose they had come from some distance.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine you see the wise men starting on their journey.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding

that I may comprehend the acts of these wise men. In flame my will that I may imitate them in their faith and courage.

FIRST POINT. The grand spirit of faith of these kings. The star appeared to others as well as to them. It was a striking star, quite a new one. "We have seen His star." Most probably there was a tradition which enabled them to say, "This is the star of the King of the Jews," a tradition known to all the population. Besides, they received a great grace, a drawing. We don't know whether others had the same grace, but we may conclude it was given to a great number. It is plain they had a very fair knowledge that this was the star of the promised Redeemer, and so they left their own land, their homes and friends, to follow it. Others had plenty of pretexts for not going. That they were laughed at we may suppose, and chaffed and scoffed at, but they were not made of weak material, so they left their laughing friends and started. It was a great thing to start; it showed a good firm faith and resolution, and their faith must have been tried still more as they went on. They had temptations like ourselves, the temptations which come to us. "If there is no Blessed Sacrament, if Jesus is not God, if there is no after life," like them we must learn to disregard "ifs". They had grace, they saw the star, and on they went. What is a star compared with the Life of Jesus Christ, and the Catholic Church teaching these two thousand years? There is the Church—that is reason enough. Disregard "ifs" and persevere in a life of faith.

Day by day they marched on. Doubtless the days seemed long in their anxiety. It was dry work—dusty, hot, troublesome—but they looked to the end and persevered. When they got near Jerusalem the star was gone. Did it come to them to think, “Perhaps we had better not have started?” We should not have condemned them much if they had turned and gone home quietly. But they said instead, “What can we do?” They inquired in Jerusalem, “Where is He?” No one knew. They go to Herod, a monster of cruelty as he was, but they did not fear. “Where is He that is born King of the Jews? We have seen His star.” To go and say this to Herod looked a most hopeless thing to do. Herod kept his wicked counsel. He knew that about this time the coming of the Redeemer was expected. So he called up the scribes, and they looked at the prophecies and found Bethlehem was the place where He should be born. And so the wise men went out, and then the star appeared again, and they rejoiced exceedingly, and it led them to the place where they found the Child with Mary.

They had started with the grace of God drawing them on. This is the history of their life of faith. They followed the star, and when it disappeared they had recourse to the authority God had appointed, and afterwards the star shone out brighter than ever to their great joy and consolation, and brought them to the end of their journey.

This life of faith we are all trying to lead. We are here for a time with duties to fulfil. If we believe in

the Church we must lead a life of faith. We must not doubt our supernatural guidance. We must banish doubt from our minds. We must never suppose there is one solid reason against the Divinity of Jesus Christ or the Divine origin of the Church. I must not tolerate doubt.

Secondly, I must not listen to difficulties. We know that there is a God by our reason. Reason tells us there is a First Cause, to whose power there is no limit, who is possessed of all possible perfection. Yet in the very attributes of God we find difficulties. If, because I can't solve difficulties, I were to give up faith, what a fool I should be! Everyone of the great Christian truths bristle with difficulties. I am not to listen to them in time of temptation. I may read, think over my difficulties, talk them over with some good and learned priest. The immense mass of our difficulties have a solution.

Thirdly, we must march on, lead a life of faith, not mind being wooden, weary, etc. Follow the star: it will surely lead you to the Child and His Mother. One of the trials of our day is that there are so many snares laid against faith. Therefore (1) we must not tolerate doubt, (2) in temptations we must not listen to difficulties, (3) the true answer is to lead the life of faith and you will have the reward of faith. Do the best you can. Do what the Church tells you. When the star is gone out still march on. How miserable Herod seemed in comparison with the star! The star might have been an Angel, but Herod it was who told the wise men to go to Bethlehem.

“And falling down, they adored and offered Him gifts.” You may join them and adore and make your offerings.

SECOND. The history of Herod is very instructive, We have been looking at soldiers of Jesus Christ, noble hearts full of courage and valour who excite our admiration. Now let us look at Herod. Herod, hearing of the star, was troubled. Nothing disturbs the world so much as manifestations from the other world. Jerusalem whom he so ill-treated was troubled, and why? Because there are three dusty travellers who said they had seen a star. However, Herod keeps his head and summons the scribes, and inquires, and they find the passage which foretold the birth of the Messiah and show it to him. He forms his plan; he will catch this young King and kill Him; he does not see the folly of measuring his strength with God. We sometimes wonder at great crimes. Clever people who serve the devil lose their reason often. How many people do we see, how many public men, fighting against the Church, measuring their strength with God! What folly! Herod set to work in his own way. He inquired “diligently” what time the star had appeared, and he told the kings when they had found the Child to return and tell him that he too might go and adore. As far as he went Herod did his own work—the work of a crafty, clever, foolish, wicked man. What a contrast between him and these three noble kings!

“Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him.” The people were troubled, the priests and scribes who

never thought of going to adore, the leaders in politics, in business, in fashion, those who were leading a worldly life,—they were troubled by the coming of these men who were leading a simple, honest life of faith. The world is ever “troubled” by the supernatural.

Faith tells us of things unseen, and it is that which makes it so trying. It tries our pride, it humbles us, and therefore it is difficult. Many say, “I wish I could believe”. The difficulty ought to be overcome by prayer. “I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.” Often pray for faith, often make acts of faith. Fall back sometimes on the grandest truth we can get at without faith, the Existence of God.

Again, if I give up the Divinity of Jesus Christ, I have a thousand more difficulties to get over. I see that the Church must be of Divine origin. What ruffians there have been, what avarice, what scandals in the Church! Yet it is God’s witness on earth, made up of men with passions, littlenesses, and ignorances, and here it is now with the same claims as in the days of the Apostles. If I reject the Divine origin of the Church, I have difficulties which I can’t answer.

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CONSIDERATION.

FOURTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON PATIENCE.

I DON'T know any virtue more useful in life than patience. We are in too great a hurry ; we can't bear waiting, contradiction, difficulties.

Patience is a moral virtue which disposes us to bear with equanimity anything that is unpleasant or disagreeable. Impatience is, *not* to bear such things with equanimity. When are we patient ? When we keep the balance interiorly and don't betray our agitation outwardly.

First, about being ruffled interiorly. Here many people make a mistake. Spiritual writers warn us to distinguish between *sensus* (feeling) and *consensus* (consenting to the feeling). If your friend treads on your corn you can't help *feeling*, and you want to look daggers at him, but you don't, and say instead, "Never mind". People in grief can't help weeping, but it does not follow there is impatience. Our Lord Himself wept : " See, how He loved him ". To weep is a natural, proper sign of grief, and does not imply that you murmur against the will of God. When a person is overtaken with a great grief Almighty God is very indulgent. You remember how gently St. Francis of Sales dealt with St. Jane de Chantal in her feelings about the man who had shot her husband. She was

not bound to speak to him. St. Francis did not force her, did not hurry her, but after a year we find her standing godmother to a child of this very man.

If anyone doubts of God's indulgence to those who are in sorrow let him take the book of Job. Job had enough to try his patience, but he said nothing foolish. You find people saying very strong things when afflicted: it does not follow that God is offended. What we have to guard against is letting the passion, resentment, want of resignation, etc., go ahead. So long as one is trying to keep back the word of bitter complaint and control one's expression of sorrow, and reason keeps passion in check, we may hope we don't offend God grievously.

Our duty is plainly to accept a trial and try to resign ourselves to it. "God gave and God has taken away." He allows us to be afflicted in temporal things. A great public revolution is going on affecting the position of people and reducing them to want. Rents are not paid; there is a threat to drive landlords out. Perhaps we see bishops and priests in Ireland taking a great part in this movement. One is naturally inclined to be very indignant at being robbed. It is a great trial. What am I to do? Am I justified in using my influence politically? Certainly. Am I justified in trying to get the best of my enemies? Certainly. But about priests and bishops? You are not bound to approve their conduct, but don't give up your religion because they do things you disapprove of, because you think one priest is lazy and another too active. Politically you may denounce them, but

keep up your religion. Don't say you won't go to Mass because the priest was at the National League. It is very possible in a case like this not to take the trial in a proper spirit. We are to bear our losses as well as we can : we may use all our rights as subjects, but not begin to neglect religion. I take that as an example because it is so trying, and I say it is right to fight your enemies but not right to offend God. If a person gives up doing what he used for religion on account of this he is making God pay the penalty. We know so little, God allows it.

Think of other calamities. I remember a storm in a certain part of Italy which in ten minutes had swept all the vine harvest clean away. Do what you can, you can't help such a trial as this. Again, the cholera—how many bread-winners has it taken ! God permits it. He will draw good out of it sooner or later.

Loss of health is to some a terrible trial. They are left half their lives cripples, dragging on a lingering death. How do people take it ? Some say, "God's will be done. He knows what is best for me." Others who, though without religion, have sense say, "I must take it and make the best of it". If reason can point out that it is best to accept the inevitable, what should *we* do ? I have known people to whom sickness has brought deep contentment, and who through sickness have been led to God. What is more horrible than to see a poor creature reviling God ? If it were anything else, but this neuralgia beats me. I can't bear it. The wisest course is to accept it and make the

best of it, acknowledging that God is our Creator and has a right to dispose of us as He chooses. We see fathers or mothers disabled for long years, knowing those who depend on them can't get the assistance they need. How many daughters are there whose whole life is set aside to nurse a parent? It is a trial to both, and if both are Christians they will do the best they can, and may find in long years endless treasures of wisdom and happiness. I have seen scenes hidden away from the world where Angels must have watched and wondered how God could bring so much good from so much suffering.

How are we to learn patience? Of course the great thing is the example of Jesus Christ, and in our sufferings we shall ever find the thought of Jesus Christ is a great help. In the crucifix is a lesson most calculated to sustain human nature. Then in suffering we satisfy for our sins of past life. It is not a little consolation to think, all these pains will be recorded and accepted by God in lieu of the penance due to sin.

We can't give God a greater proof of love than by accepting anything and everything from His hands. There is nothing more beautiful, nothing that ennobles us so much.

Lastly, when you have a cross, don't turn to creatures for comfort. How many take to drink, in order to drown their care! Creatures can't give comfort. You must turn to God, beseech and importune Him. Those who have most need of God turn from Him and neglect the one Source of strength. If we

accept trials with becoming submission, we shall come in the end to thank Him for the sorrow which once seemed so unbearable.

FOURTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The Holy Family flying into Egypt.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding that I may understand the lessons taught me in this mystery. Inflame my will that I may practise these lessons.

I hope you see how a point may be followed in meditation. Meditation is not difficult if you do not aspire to do too much. There is nothing very mysterious in it. If one gets into the way of meditating, it becomes a source of great comfort to the soul.

Read the history of the flight into Egypt.

FIRST POINT. Almighty God allowed Herod to seek the Child to destroy Him. He would not interfere, but let St. Joseph take ordinary means to escape. A long journey must have been very inconvenient to the Holy Family. God did not interfere to avoid all this vexation.

LESSON. Here are the greatest soldiers of God, and He treats them in this apparently unkind way. It was indeed a hard lot involving many privations, especially privations as to religion. They were to go into pagan Egypt and remain there as long as God might choose. We must therefore be content with any crosses God sends, any trial, sickness, pain, disappointment. We are not forbidden to try and escape from suffering, but to accept it when we have done all we can. I think of my past life, disappointment, sickness, poverty. It is impossible to escape the cross, and we have all had a share. How have we accepted it? Let me look at the past week or month. Have I been resigned or have I murmured and complained? When the cross pinches us we forget everything but that cross. That is human nature, but we should say with Job, "Have I not received good things from the Lord, and shall I not also receive evil things?" He leads the way, bearing not only His own cross but that of Joseph and Mary, and He wishes me to bear my cross. Give me some of the spirit of Thy army. Give me patience. I cannot do my duty without patience. Give me grace to bear my cross.

SECOND. "Who arose and took the Child and His Mother by night." A beautiful model of obedience. He did not wait for daylight. Mary obeys Joseph. Jesus lets Himself be carried to and fro without any repining.

LESSON. Obedience to lawful authority, which is a virtue not much understood now. All authority comes from God. (In the present day they say all

authority comes from those who obey—the governed.) All in their departments should be obeyed, and obedience should be willing and cheerful. Do I practise obedience? Everyone, with very few exceptions, has a superior. Do we carry out the wish of authority with intelligence and cheerfulness? We are not automatons but responsible agents, and should obey intelligently, with mind as well as with heart and arm. Obey with your heads. Here is great matter for self-examination. Do we submit without much palaver? If we do we have great reason to thank God, and we shall get great graces. Disobedient people want to be masters always. Think how pleasing obedience is to God in Jesus and Mary. Only by having the spirit of obedience can children be taught the principle of authority.

THIRD. “He was there until the death of Herod.”

LESSON. To leave ourselves in the hands of God. Not to try to get over a portion of our life, to live in to-day not thinking of the morrow. Joseph did not keep on wondering, “When am I to get out of Egypt?” He committed it all to the providence of God. Let us try and have that wisdom of the Saints, to leave ourselves in the hands of God; if He put us in a certain place, to submit as long as He shall leave us there. Thus shall we deserve to receive great protection and help.

FOURTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

ON PRAYER.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

THE subject of prayer is so important I propose a meditation on it. The history of the Syrophenician woman who asked for the cure of her child is a great instruction on the way in which God tries souls.

Read St. Luke xi. 1-10, which tells us how, when our Lord had been praying, one of His disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray"; and after our Lord had taught them the petitions beginning, "Father, hallowed be Thy name," etc., He told them the parable of the man whose friend came to him at night asking for three loaves, and ends by promising that all who ask shall receive, that those who seek shall find, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. The meaning is that we are to persevere and importune Almighty God. The parable shows us this. He does not shrink from the quaintness of it. *Ask, seek, knock.* Then He gives a further lesson: "Which of you, if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? . . . If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask Him?" God's readiness and eagerness to give is

the lesson here. Certainly, if we trust our parents, how much more may we trust God.

Then turn to St. Luke xviii. 1-14. "And He spoke also a parable to them that we ought always to pray and not to faint"—the parable of the Unjust Judge, which contains the same idea of the efficacy of importunate prayer. He wants us to be continually troubling and wearying Him, and to pray with great humility, as shown in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican. If you carry away from retreat an esteem for prayer you will have done a good deal.

FIRST PRELUDE.—So, in to-morrow morning's meditation, for a Composition of Place picture to yourself the humble attitude of a Publican striking his breast and crying, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner".

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend prayer, its power and necessity, and how I am to pray; inflame my will that I may advance in prayer, that I may have a great esteem for prayer.

FIRST POINT. Christ teaches that we are to pray without ceasing, that we are to weary and importune God in our prayers, from two parables—that of the man who went to his friend at night, and that of the unjust judge—both showing that we are to insist repeatedly and earnestly if we would obtain what we desire. Let us see how far our prayer has that character—whether we are soon tired of asking, whether we even begin. "Being in an agony, our Lord prayed the longer." Here we have matter for examination, and must make resolutions.

SECOND. God's readiness and desire to give us all we ask for, as shown by the argument from earthly parents. He will give "His Spirit". We sometimes misunderstand the object of prayer. We ask for a temporal blessing, and then, if we don't get it, we say, Where is the truth of this? What He promises is spiritual blessings, strength to persevere, to love God, the Holy Ghost, the Precious Blood, etc., and He will give temporal blessings when He sees they are for our good, and we ask in proper dispositions.

THIRD. The Publican teaches us that we should pray with a great sense of our unworthiness. "Be merciful to me a sinner." "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

Colloquy in union with our Lord's prayer on the mountain at night and in His agony at Gethsemani, asking Him to give us a grand unwearying spirit of prayer. Prayer is the great means to bring us near to God in this world.

FIFTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

OUR LORD'S WAY OF DEALING WITH SOULS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

(A USEFUL recommendation for prayer is sometimes to employ the time in the praises of God. You may say the *Benedicite*, calling on all creation to bless God.

Sometimes you are wearied in prayer. Make out a *Benedicite* of your own. That is a resource to fall back on, and by degrees some thoughts will come.)

FIRST PRELUDE. Our Lord surrounded by His disciples.

SECOND PRELUDE. Enlighten my understanding that I may know and comprehend the deceits of the devil. In flame my will that I may follow the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Our meditation is to be on the doctrine of Jesus Christ, or rather His mode of dealing with souls, and the devil's mode. I am speaking of souls who have turned away from sin and wish to lead holy lives. It is not enough to make a retreat and think it is all finished. It's not so. Perhaps all the more if we have done it well the devil won't leave us alone. Nor will our Lord. He will carry us on and make us better. There is no standing still in spiritual life. Therefore it is important to see how Christ will act on the soul. I am not talking of persons who take no care of themselves, but of those who are trying to be good : and of such we see sometimes very terrible falls. Many instances of falling away come before us. Their history is this : Such a soul has not responded to the influence of Jesus Christ.

We shall see better if we consider what perfection is. A soul is perfect when it is animated by perfect charity, tending to the perfect love of God. The greatest test is perfect dependence on Almighty God, a dependence that knows no exception and recognises

all round that we are God's creatures, that all comes from Him and nothing from ourselves.

What is opposed to this spirit of dependence? Independence, reliance on self, assertion of self. This comes so slowly sometimes that often it can't be perceived. This pride, this trusting in one's own strength and capacity of fighting and endurance, is very difficult to detect in oneself till the crash comes. As a rule, the devil never attacks a good person with a temptation to some gross sin: such a temptation would only disgust a good person; and whenever a good person commits a fall this pride and confidence in self has always gone before.

What are the stages that lead up to it? Ordinarily, before self-reliance, a soul has become the slave of human respect, has got to care for what others say, and to want worldly honour. An inordinate love of the goods of the world leads up to this human respect. The devil begins with a soul which has no inordinate attachment. Things are prosperous, wealth increases. The devil excites an affection to wealth; then it is natural to look out for the esteem of men. We see it all round, and even the world laughs at it. Over and over again do we see a good man who, on becoming prosperous by degrees, relaxes all his good practices, and at last comes to be a very bad Catholic. There is the danger we all have to fear, that spirit of self-reliance and independence: there is not so much danger with tiresome, distracting thoughts—the danger is when we lose humility. How are we to guard against this danger? Of course the grand way is to

practise humility. If we are constantly reminding ourselves of our propensity to sin, if we keep that vividly before our minds, if we receive humiliations from without patiently and make frequent acts of humility, the devil can't do anything.

How are we to keep ourselves in this state? We must try to lessen in ourselves the desire of honour; we must try to be glad when we are despised and contemned for attempting to be good; we must rejoice at being thought mean-spirited, tame, and weak-minded. Let it pass. What are you the worse for the thoughts of such persons? You are not the worse: you won't go about provoking people with your piety, but you won't give up going to Mass because you are laughed at. The longer you live the less you will care for what people may say. If God is pleased, it matters little. If we have no worldliness, we shan't care inordinately for money, success, superiority in learning, accomplishments, etc.

These are the ways in which the devil works. He excites us to pride in anything we have to do which may give us a little pre-eminence. Miss So-and-so has taken a good degree, and is much praised; her faith cools; she feels it an humiliation to worship on Sunday when there are no men of science or learning present. Another has attained great excellence in music, or nimbleness in dancing; there is scarcely anything on which we *can* pride ourselves which may not be the occasion of pride.

Jesus Christ is trying to work the other way. I have done this, taken this degree, but how little

after all do I know. This little brain of mine, the slightest injury will do away with it. We live to see people forget all they know, and yet we can think ourselves *something!*

We may recognise our talents—there is no harm in that—but let us see the truth all round. I know these rules of arithmetic, but that is not much; and I confess that I should lose everything unless God helped me. We must guard against the spirit and fashion of the world. We may do what others do within reasonable bounds, follow comical fashions—yes, but never be over-influenced. Reserve your heart against love of the world. It can't be done without a struggle; it is very difficult not to catch something of the spirit of the world.

There is what lies before a soul in this world which has consecrated itself to the service of God. Jesus Christ tries to strengthen such a soul in perfect dependence on Almighty God. It is what all the Saints have aimed at. We shall get nearer to it in proportion as we despise worldly honour. Honour must be fled from. We must shut our hearts against any inordinate affection for the good things of the world. If we have no care for the esteem of others, we shall cast ourselves down in dependence on God. If we are humble we shall be secure.

The devil, on the other hand, is always trying to create in us an inordinate desire for the good things of the world, and to be esteemed by others on account of them. Humility is our security.

This doctrine is very important for different parts of our life. A proposal for marriage should be thought of in reference to these principles. In deliberating on our vocation, on some important step, in all critical moments in your life, put yourself in the presence of this action of Jesus Christ in your soul, and that of the devil. This is forethought, availing ourselves of our reason. May we not then hope to be guided wisely?

In the colloquy pray that you may understand the deceits of the devil and avoid them, and shape your life according to the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

CONSIDERATION.

FIFTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON THE EXAMEN OF CONSCIENCE AND ORDINARY
CONFESSIONS.

WHAT am I to do for my examen? I look through the day and there is not much that seems wrong, and I make an act of contrition and am not much the wiser. One is bound to make an examen before confession, and it is right to make one at night and at mid-day. Some do so after every principal action of the day.

I will come to the night examen. A form is usually given in night prayers. You begin with

thanksgiving, and then ask light that you may know your faults, and then begin the examen, which need not take more than five minutes. Follow the day hour by hour, with a certain standard in your mind. Some find on rising the greatest difficulty in beginning to dress. Some can't keep an idea in their head while dressing; their minds keep wandering from one thing to another. One ought to know one's faults. What should be our thoughts when dressing? We should keep our minds near the subject of meditation or say leisurely some very familiar vocal prayer, breaking it up and resuming it again; or you may forecast your plans for the day. Prayers—you know your own difficulties. Some hardly kneel down, some scamper through them. I must have my standard of morning prayer. Mass—my faults in hearing Mass, whether any improvement? When I make my daily examen, if I find anything special, that goes over for confession, and as I have a standard so I ought to have certain faults I am on my guard against. Sloth, negligence, want of fervour in spiritual exercises, it's not enough to accuse oneself generally of that in confession; one ought to know one's weak points, whether want of preparation, etc. Some in the first ten minutes of their meditation always make a giro. Others will begin very well, get to the first point, and then take a trip. Others will spin away and exercise their understanding, and entertain themselves, and never make affections or resolutions. If I learn to know my particular danger so that I can say, "Now that is my same old fault, I have been as negligent as ever, I am

not improved at all, I will try and be more careful," the chances are I shall get the better of it. But if I say, "I have been negligent," in a general way, and mean in a general way to do better, it is not very profitable. Take a hasty temper. People with tempers are tried in a great many ways. Some are very quick and hasty in words. Sometimes they are irritated by one particular daughter. Sometimes it is the cook or the husband that is the red rag. Such an one should not be content with examining generally as to temper, but how did I behave to that daughter in particular? Am I better this week with that person who irritates me? Have I more self-control in her presence? Thank God I am better, but I must try more and more.

We should look into any habit of talking over our neighbour's faults. Some are very careful about this, but others are exposed to constant temptations. If they examine themselves they will know that if a certain person comes they will be exposed to the danger of talking about their neighbours, and therefore they must be on their guard. All this is very practical. There is no difficulty in self-examination if you take each action. Have a standard, and you will soon know where you have offended God. Don't examine "in general". If you say there is nothing particular, it shows you have not looked for anything. "The just man falls seven times a day." This means not merely seven but a great many times. In regard to dinner. St. Austin says, "Who does not eat too much or too little?" Depend upon it, the best are those who can

see most faults, and those who can't must be in a bad way . . . We should examine as to the causes of our daily faults. *Why* did I commit that sin against charity? *Why* did I abridge my prayer? It may be from want of recollection. Other causes are—

1. A certain languor of mind and tepidity.
2. Inconstancy on account of affairs of little importance—a very ordinary temptation in prayer.
3. Putting off from day to day what should be done at once.
4. A certain over-confidence, etc.
5. Defects of intention.
6. Want of resolution.
7. Imagination—want of control over it and reckless indulgence.
8. Hurry and disturbance, a restless disquietude. etc.
9. Want of thought and foresight.

It is a great thing in the spiritual life to have our attention awakened to the *causes* of our faults.

It is of the greatest consequence that we should give ten minutes to excite in ourselves a real desire to overcome our faults. We should work ourselves into such a wish and be much on our guard against saying, “It's no use trying, I have fallen again”. We are always to say, “It is just like me to have fallen, but I'll try again”. If we make an act of contrition we can't fail to get comfort from our confessions.

FIFTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

RELIGIOUS VOCATION.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

I THINK every parent ought to understand what a vocation is, and that parents ought not to force or to oppose vocations, but only guard against mistake. Therefore an instruction on this point may be of use to them. Then we have to consider those who may feel a drawing to religious life. They should understand about it, because if it is a great blessing should you be called to it, yet if you are not called and embrace it, it is dangerous. It is a great thing to know the truth, how the individual is with God.

Our Lord unmistakably points to two states. One consists in merely keeping the ten Commandments, the other in embracing the counsels of perfection. We see this in the history of the young man who came to our Lord and asked what he should do that he might have life everlasting. Our Lord told him he should keep the Commandments, and the young man said, "I have kept them ; is there anything more I can do ?" " And Jesus, looking on him, loved him," and gave a proof of his love by saying, " If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, *follow Me*". That is the state of the counsels. There is the first point we are to keep clearly in our minds.

Is it enough to *aspire* to be perfect in order to conclude that one has a vocation? It would seem not, for when our Lord was laying down His doctrine He said, "Which of you, having a mind to build a tower, doth not first sit down and reckon the charges that are necessary, whether he have wherewithal to finish it. Lest after he hath laid the foundation and is not able to finish it, all that see him begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'. Or what king, about to go to war against another king, doth not first sit down and think whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that with twenty thousand cometh against him? . . . So likewise everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be My disciple." No one should aspire to such a life without being called by God and fitted.

We read several instances of calls in the Gospels. The Apostles who obeyed the call—the young man who received a distinct vocation but had not the courage to respond to it. One said, "Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest". He was not asked. Our Lord replied, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His Head". We hear no more of that one. To another He said, "Follow Me," and he replied, "Suffer me first to go and bury my father". The Gospel does not say what he did, and whether he obeyed our Lord's command to go at once and preach the Kingdom of God. A third asked that he might go home to say good-bye before obeying the call to follow Jesus, and Jesus said to him, "No man putting his

hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the Kingdom of God ”.

Would it be a grievous sin not to follow such an invitation? Theologians say no, but one who declines a vocation cannot expect to have those more abundant graces which are necessary almost to salvation.

A second vocation not so distinct is that of people having apparitions. Our Lady appeared to one in doubt and asked him, “Are you willing to serve my Son till you are worn out?” He said “Yes,” generously. Then she said, “Go and join the Society of my Son”. He went and found B. Peter Favre, who had been also in the vision. There is not much difficulty about that.

But the great bulk of people—How are they to know they have a vocation? Well, sometimes an indescribable *drawing* to leave the world comes to them. All around is most happy and bright, and the call “Follow Me,” reaches the soul.

How are we to distinguish a true from a false vocation? You can't tell all at once. If on examination our conscience tells us the desire for religious life comes from a certain presumption or spiritual envy, a sort of ambition, we may answer ourselves that does not come from God.

We distinguish in this way. The soul is acted on by the good spirit and the devil. At certain times, as after Communion, God speaks and the devil assails. It takes time and watching, but if after Holy Communion in moments of recollection this thought, “Follow Me,” comes into our mind, and it goes on

coming and gives great consolation, we may say safely it is all right. On the other hand, I have known people have a sudden overmastering call, but as a rule it will take the other way, and we have to find it out by waiting and watching the action of God and of the devil respectively on the soul.

But then how many don't have these consolations, and are not conscious of the devil's attacks. They have reason to help them—reason and prayer. The soul will consider the advantages in following the call and the reasons against it : it must take time ; let it simmer in the mind. This exercise should be accompanied by prayer, holding oneself all the time ready to do God's will. Of course it is best to take counsel of some one with experience. Veillot made a thirty days' retreat, weighed well the reasons for and against his embracing the religious life, and came to the conclusion, " I should like to go to Paris and work for religion there ".

Seeing what the life is, its difficulties and helps, you may recognise all the marks of a calling, and then find it impossible. You may have, for instance, some physical incapacity. If a man having a great desire to join the Order of Preachers has a terrible stammer and no education, you don't want a revelation to know that man is not to be a Dominican. How often it happens that a person very delicate gets an attraction for the Carmelite Order. Everyone throws cold water on it ; at last she goes in, has no meat, but cabbages, and thrives on the fare. God there proves the vocation

by a miracle, but without that decided call it would be folly to attempt it.

When, then, you don't get signs you must consult common sense. A true vocation will have about it all the signs of the Spirit of God—humility, patience, etc. It becomes in the end a most obvious, plain thing.

I have spoken of vocations when God calls one directly, and again of influences on the soul, and then of one who uses reason; there is another ordinary vocation. A child comes here, goes through her school life, makes her retreat, and at last gets very serious. "What is life in the world?" she thinks; "I should like to do something for God and be a religious." She thinks over this, and after Holy Communion prays very earnestly, and goes on praying, and at last asks her confessor. It is not difficult to say, "That looks like a vocation. Go on and see." She perseveres, and gets leave from her parents to try. What looks more prosy? Yet how unmistakably God has brought her and formed her young heart for Him. How many, almost boys, have had grand vocations like St. Thomas of Aquin! The Church has been crowded with religious who have been taken from childhood and led up through their correspondence with grace.

To sum up what has been said, Jesus Christ plainly distinguishes between the two states—the ordinary state of the ten Commandments and that of the Evangelical Counsels. No one should enter the state of the Counsels without being called. He calls

sometimes miraculously, sometimes speaking to souls inwardly; sometimes by circumstances, sometimes by common sense; He uses now one way, now another.

I may finish by saying this invitation, "Follow Me," applies to every religious life whatever its object. The Sacred Heart Order is for teaching; the Little Sisters of the Poor take care of old people. There are others for nursing the sick, for bringing up orphans, for preaching, for praying, and other holy works. What a variety of objects! Do all these Orders follow Jesus Christ? Yes, every one. If we could put together all the different objects, should we not have the whole life of Jesus Christ? What corporal misery, what spiritual misery did He not relieve! His Heart embraced all, and the Church, with her priesthood, her monks and nuns, works out His life, and carries on what was His work on earth. He confides to her part of His work, and *that* is the following of Him.

Of course, parents are to have their say, but a religious vocation is not a matter for a parent to decide. The great practical instance for this in our Lord's own life is His remaining behind in the Temple for the service of His Father. The parent does not give the vocation. It is a matter between God and the soul. It was a terrible abuse when parents forced their children into religion.

Those who have a real calling are privileged by Jesus Christ. No wonder that many who listened to Him were filled with great enthusiasm. No wonder

they gave their service and life to Jesus Christ. What must be the feeling of the soul to whom He has given the call, "Live with Me and die with Me"?

FIFTH DAY.

[8.45 P.M.]

ON HOLY COMMUNION.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE. Imagine you are present at the Last Supper, a scene which should appeal to our hearts and move us to love our Lord.

SECOND PRELUDE. Ask that your understanding may be enlightened that you may comprehend this great mystery, that your will may be inflamed so that you may have a great love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

FIRST POINT. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day." The first and primary object our Lord had in instituting this Sacrament was to give us the spiritual food of immortality through which we should never die. It is the invention of the love of Jesus Christ to give Himself to be the Food of our souls, to become identified with us. What a wonderful idea was this to give Himself to us under the form of our most ordinary food! What a discovery of His love! Upon that consideration we

may exercise our will in *Acts of faith* in the Real Presence. *Acts of hope*: Trust that He will give us eternal life—"He that eateth My Flesh hath eternal life". *Acts of love*: How completely He becomes ours, how completely we ought to become His. How can I love Thee, Lord, for this Thy great love? How can I thank Thee? *Acts of humility*: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come under my roof". *Acts of desire*:—Who will give me to eat of this heavenly banquet? My heart desireth Thee, my flesh longeth after Thee.

SECOND. "He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood *abideth* in Me and I in him." There is therefore in Holy Communion a mutual indwelling. We should strip ourselves of self and put on Him. We should cease to live ourselves and live as other Christs. We should cast off all our weakness, sins, and imperfections, and put on all the beauty and strength of Jesus Christ. We should exchange our hideousness for His loveliness. All must be swallowed up in His life. We must banish sin and littleness and unworthiness, and we must prepare for Him a home purged of all that is worldly. We must adorn it after our poor fashion, that He may find there humility, unselfishness, the spirit of self-sacrifice, the love of the cross.

Dwell on affections of love, desire, etc., as in the first point.

THIRD. "As the living Father hath sent Me and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." It is very wonderful to think

of Jesus Christ giving Himself to us to be our Food, and still more wonderful that we are to be one with Him, but *this* is most wonderful. The living Father, the Author of all life, sent Him into the world and He lives by His dependence on the Father, His Sacred Humanity created by the Father, sustained by the Father, dwelling with, in, through the Father—one life with the Father—a very mysterious life, the more so when we consider the life of the Son prolonged in the Sacred Humanity, the Sacred Humanity taken up into the Word. And this is to be the model of our life. We are to become thus dependent, thus identified with Him. There ought to be no life in us that is not dependent on Jesus Christ, the life of the body and the soul alike subject to the influx of His life. What absence of sin, what renunciation of the world, what love of the Father, what nobleness, what generosity, what self-conquest, would He not infuse into us!

If we could receive Holy Communion in these sentiments, how precious would each Communion be!—how it would continue the work of divesting ourselves of ourselves! Our life should become stronger, purer, holier; our life, in one word, should become divine.

Conclude with praying that everything in us may be removed which is an obstacle in His living in us.

SIXTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

THOSE who are not determining a state of life, their state of life being already fixed, should make their resolutions as to amendment to-day.

THE PASSION.

We have now to meditate on the Passion, which sums up the lessons of our Lord's life.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Let us contemplate the dead Body of our Lord lying on the lap of His Mother.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask that we may understand and imitate the lessons taught us in this contemplation.

FIRST POINT. The great humiliation of the Cross and the death on the Cross. St. Paul, describing this in a vigorous sentence, says that He, "who thought it not robbery to be equal with God *emptied* Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man," "and humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross".

It was a stupendous humiliation that God should become Man and take on Himself all the trials of the life of man on earth. Suppose He had chosen to be a mighty monarch and spent a life of prosperity, still the Incarnation would have been an unfathomable humiliation: how much more when He chose to be a poor carpenter, looked on with contempt by those

with whom He lived ! Then His public life was full of dishonour. He was called a blasphemer, one possessed by a devil, the associate of sinners ; He underwent poverty, had not where to lay His head. All that was great in the world passed Him by. And then what humiliation awaited Him in His Passion He is accused before the council as a seditious man : He had been listened to willingly and reverently. This disappears now. No one who reverences Him comes near Him. There is no honour about the Passion, but ridicule and contempt. He is mocked as a king, made fun of as a prophet ; adoration is offered Him in jest, and Barabbas preferred before Him. He is put to death as an impostor, pulled down by the authority of the country. Here is the end of the Messiah—His sun has set in this profound humiliation. We think sometimes of St. Paul's death—that eloquent tongue silenced at the bidding of a Roman emperor : all His grand gifts trodden on, crushed by such a man—but what was St. Paul compared to Jesus Christ ? Paul was but a creature—Jesus Christ the Redeemer of all. And how much more humbling was the death of Jesus Christ than that of Paul whose head was struck off ! What lesson am I to learn ? That I must guard against pride—not dare to assert myself in my thoughts even. My proper share would be humiliation. I deserve it for my pride, my rebellion against God. I confess my pride in thought, word, and deed. Grant me grace to overcome my pride, to fling it out of my life. May I not rebel against any humiliation. May I think of

the dead Body of my Saviour on the lap of His Mother. O Lord, give me understanding that I may fathom the depth of Thy humiliation, and may I love humility and hate all that feeds pride, worldliness, pomp, preferring myself to others.

RESOLUTION. That in such and such circumstances I may repress my pride, keep it down with all the weight of the Cross.

SECOND. The terrible ingratitude our Lord met with. He had gone through the country doing good, showering down incalculable blessings, giving Himself up entirely to the service of others, and this is the end. Opposition, persecution, false accusations, ill-treatment, crucifixion. He had done no evil. Still He was hated and pursued, and persecution never ceased till He was put to death. The crowds that had sung Hosanna but a few days since, were with the rest, shouting "Crucify Him!" Perhaps among the lips that uttered this cry were those of the dumb He had healed. Perhaps among those who mocked Him on the cross were some to whose eyes He had given sight, or whose arms He had healed of the palsy. His disciples mostly fly. Judas passes over to His enemies, and sells Him. He leads the band of those who come to take Him, and offers Him the sign of friendship: finally he gives way to despair, and wounds the Heart of our Lord still more. That despair of Judas was the most cruel thrust to our Lord.

St. Peter denies Him. What a pang to the Sacred Heart! How much bitterness and disappointment!

What unspeakable anguish to find such insensibility, such ingratitude ! It broke His Heart.

Some few remained faithful. Blessed Mary, St. John, St. Mary Magdalene, atoned by their perfect love. What anguish to see His Mother, so resigned, trying to offer Him up as He offered Himself, wishing she could die for Him ! What a sad, suffering end !

LESSON. To sympathise with Him in this desolation of heart. O Lord, may I offer my sympathy in all Thy suffering from the ingratitude of those on whom Thou hadst such excellent claims. Accept my love. Make my sympathy deeper. We shall never understand, never fathom, all the suffering from the ingratitude which He suffered at the hands of men. I too have been ungrateful. Thou hadst granted me so much and I have remained unmoved. I confess I have sinned exceedingly. Take my heart and change it to at least a human feeling of gratitude, of loving acknowledgment of all Thou hast done for me. If only I could once understand the excess of my ingratitude ; if I could understand the excess of the love of Jesus Christ in that He would even remain my Food, and thus enable me to live a life which shall be His life in mine, how firm my resolution would become ; there would be no more calculating as to how much I should give ; I should give with the lavishness, the generosity, due to the dignity and royalty of the Sacred Heart of my Lord.

CONSIDERATION.

SIXTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON TEMPTATIONS AND THE REMEDIES AGAINST THEM.

IN order to ensure perseverance in our resolutions, we shall find it profitable to learn something about temptations and remedies against temptations.

In the providence of God we must expect temptations, and if we are for a long time without them we have reason to suspect our state. Yet when a temptation comes, people ask, What have I done? Is it a sign of God's displeasure? Temptations need not alarm us unless we see we have gone astray. They only hurt those who yield to them. They offer opportunities of acquiring great merit; the greatest benefits, the choicest graces, come with them. Temptations are very useful in driving us to God, in making us cry out, "Lord save me, I perish". Whenever we are forced to pray earnestly it is a good thing for us.

Again, we don't know ourselves till we are tempted. Temptations open our eyes to our weakness and teach us the resources we have in prayer and Sacraments. They work in us a very intimate conviction of our liability to fall and bring with them very great graces.

Whence do temptations come? A great many come from the devil, though he has not nearly as much power as he had before the Incarnation. One who watches can see a set of ideas coming from

without. Sometimes people are used by the devil to tempt us, but many temptations come from our own nature. The body has its own wants, the soul its own virtues: as the two are thrown together it often happens that they are in conflict. The spirit is obliged sometimes to undergo the mastery of the body. We have passions which lead us to desire what is good for the body, and, again, those which are irascible—anger, impatience, jealousy, etc. These temptations are so often fought out in imagination. We have this unlimited faculty of imagination. You remember my insisting that the guiding power is reason. Reason looks for the truth, imagination does not. Whatever imagination puts before us is false. We get a panic when under the influence of imagination: we mistake a bush for a man with a blunderbuss. So, many of our temptations come from the imagination, and many who want to lead a good life are under the influence of imagination. Thus they get temptations against faith, hope, purity, etc. I can't go into them, but what I say will apply to the manner of dealing with them all.

First, then, you are not to be surprised. It is not wonderful, if you don't wonder at it. This is my temptation. How am I to meet it? One grand disposition is that of hope and cheerfulness. You must not tolerate the idea that the devil *can* overcome you. He is like a chained-up dog who can't bite you if you take ordinary means to prevent him. Have courage and cheerfulness. Some, when temptation comes, throw up their hands and think it is all

over. There is no disposition which so much paves the way for the devil as despondency. He can't hurt you unless you consent to be hurt. Have great confidence, then, in God, and hopefulness that you are to triumph. If you do what you ought you will make great progress by reason of the temptation, and you'll notice how, if you resisted it, you gained great light.

SECOND. A second remedy against temptations is an active disposition which shuts out idleness. Idleness is the ground the devil likes best of all : it leaves us at his mercy. The imagination comes into play and the devil chimes in. Idleness is not a natural state. The more we accustom ourselves to bodily and mental labour the better. We must not indulge the body to excess at table or in sleep. We must not eat or sleep for the pleasure of eating or sleeping, but only in order that we may be refreshed and rested.

THIRD. Thirdly, we must avoid the occasions of sin. If one could read the history of many souls, it would be that of Eve, who ran into temptation, who voluntarily talked with the devil, and was led to entertain thoughts against God. How is it that persons with reason can expose themselves knowingly to danger? If we don't avoid occasions of sin we put ourselves at a disadvantage. One instance : persons who are troubled about faith can't help hearing unbelieving conversation. If they would fly to God and seek to strengthen themselves He would help them, but how often instead do they get hold of an article from an unbeliever. Is it a wonder that reading this, and

seeking no instruction, they doubt? To admit the doubt against Revelation is a sin.

The same with regard to purity. People will read the French novels which even unbelievers will condemn as beastly. Can those who read this sort of filthy literature keep their imaginations pure? It is a very bad sign if they are so hardened they are not the worse. The imagination is not long poisoned before one's affections and love of what is beautiful goes. Success in the world becomes the criterion, not right or wrong. See the effect of this literature on a population. What a miserable influence it has! The whole tone of the Parisian mind is debased. I observe with sorrow these nasty novels are to be had very cheap. It is a terrible sign. I mention this only as an illustration of avoiding the occasions of sin—a thing so essential, that all theologians agree, if our sorrow is real, we must be resolved to avoid proximate occasions of sin.

Temptations against faith are much drawn from history and science. It is a curious phase to seek arguments from Buddhism against Christianity. We find people who know nothing about Buddhism bringing it forward, the fact being that Buddhism does not even acknowledge a God or a soul. How can that be a religion? It is comical to find reasonable men looking for a light from Buddhism.

When science has come to some conclusion, then let us see about it. Evolution, of which we hear so much, is only a theory, there is not one single case that is established by proof; but from the way in

which it is spoken about you would think there was not the smallest doubt about it, and then one of these wise people builds up a theology on the principles of evolution. Your best course is to ask information, and as a rule to believe nothing unless you have it on the best authority.

There are few remedies against temptations so efficacious as an act of the love of Jesus Christ. It was an old Catholic devotion to say, "The Word was made flesh". A good ejaculation is, "Heart of Jesus, Thou lovest, Thou art not loved, would that Thou wert loved".

If you are not frightened and are not empty-minded and weak-minded, you will get over temptations. With a healthy, active life we shall not be overcome by temptations.

SIXTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE RESURRECTION.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Our Lord in His Glorified Body.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may comprehend the lessons Thou wouldst teach me in this mystery; inflame my will that I may be filled with great joy and confidence.

The Resurrection is a portion of our Lord's life on which we don't perhaps meditate sufficiently. It is a great spur to us in our upward road. There is a bright side to our life, the model of which is given to us in the Resurrection. In that history there are many beautiful lessons to encourage us. This outer life that we see is the sham; behind it is the life which is to be the preparation for Eternity. Therefore it is well to meditate on the Resurrection.

FIRST POINT. Take the apparition of Christ to His Mother. If we can't see that He must have appeared to her first we deserve the reproach—"Are you without understanding?" It is want of sense to believe He did not appear first to His Mother, because no one had shared so firmly and courageously in the bitterness and agony of the Passion.

"Stabat Mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrymosa,
Dum pendebat Filius."

What a length those three hours must have seemed! Then after His death she did not shrink from the contemplation of the havoc made in His Blessed Body, though every look was a repetition of that great cry with which He gave up His Spirit. What was her desolation when she saw Him laid in the tomb! She deserved before all to see her Son appearing in all the brightness and splendour of His Resurrection, the most beautiful of the Sons of men only retaining the marks of the five wounds. It was fitting that she who had spent all that time from sunset on Friday contem-

plating His death should see Him live once more in His Sacred Humanity, endowed with a higher life. So we may suppose her absorbed in this meditation on His Passion, her sorrow remaining unbroken until the moment when He united His Soul once more to His Body, and manifested His glory to her. What a change passed over her! The cross was gone, and He was freed from all the traces of the cross save only those wounds which were to confirm the faith of His disciples. From that deep meditation on the Passion she is transferred to meditate on the glory of Her Son. "*Regina Cæli lætare.*" Rejoice, as Thou alone canst rejoice, with the joy of Thy spotless holy soul, with the joy of a mother's love. We can picture to ourselves something of the joy. St. Theresa could never hear those words, "*Cujus regni non erit finis*" (of His triumph there shall be no end), without a thrill of joy to think she served Him. "*Magnificat anima mea Dominum.*" Mary said this, inspired by the Holy Ghost, before she had seen Him. With what joy and triumph must she have repeated it when she saw Him risen. The *Magnificat* was not improbably the form our Lady's thanksgiving took, and we may pray, "Let me join my voice, my prayer, to thine".

Then we may believe she turned her eyes on Him and took in all the joy His Presence gave her. How she spoke to Him in the words of Scripture, "Thou art the joy of Israel, the joy of the Gentiles". Because she had shared His Cross it was fitting she should share His joy and triumph. How He consoled her! How He made up to her for the anguish of

those three days ! We may linger on this point, now in one way, now in another. She was redeemed by Jesus Christ, and none so completely redeemed—none permitted so completely to share in the joy of the Resurrection.

SECOND. Another instance. Magdalene had sinned and repented and loved much, and she too stood beneath the Cross—her heart torn at this profanation. In her own way, in proportion to her love was her sorrow in beholding His suffering. When He was dead she stood there and saw Him laid in the tomb, and waited till the Sunday morning came to offer her spices. It was a royal funeral. Nothing was too good, nothing enough to satisfy for her sin, to testify her love. She, with the other women, arrives. The tomb is open—an angel seated there. Her companions fled in joy and amazement, but Magdalene lingered behind. “If you have taken Him away,” she says, “tell me where you have laid Him.” And then Jesus says but one word, and in that accent He reveals Himself. She falls at His feet—the place she loves best—but He bade her rise and not cling to Him. “Touch Me not, for I am not yet ascended to My Father.”

We see the simple wild grief of Magdalene, her grief that the Body of her King was gone. She expected no Resurrection, but to lavish all her devotion on the dead Body. He allows her to remain in her sorrow for a time and at last reveals Himself. What a consolation ! How she forgot those long hours when she found that He who had been crucified

and dead was again alive, once more triumphant—He, the King of her heart, the King of the universe. How she looked up to Him! It was to her that He gives one of the first apparitions. Well may we say He consoles His friends and cheers and animates them: the nails and thorns seem nothing in the glory and triumph of the Resurrection. And she will spend her life as He wills. We are told she went to France and lived in a cave, and every night angels bore her aloft. She lived a long life of penance and preparing to be lost in the love of Jesus Christ for all eternity. Rejoice with Him. Rejoice with Blessed Mary and with Magdalène. Renew your resolutions. Strengthen your purposes of amendment. If our faith in the Resurrection were more lively, how firm we should become!—how great would be our confidence!

SIXTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

CONTEMPLATION OF DIVINE LOVE.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

THE contemplation of Divine Love is a stamp that should be put on our retreat. St. Ignatius prefaces it with two remarks: 1. Love is shown in deeds rather than words. 2. True love shows itself in an interchange of good things.

For a Composition of Place imagine yourself stand-

ing in the court of heaven, all the Saints looking down on you.

PRAYER. O my God, grant that I may comprehend a little of Thy love for me. Grant that I may conceive a great love for Thee.

FIRST POINT. Go through your life and think how many blessings both in the natural and supernatural order you have received from God, the dangers you have escaped, the sickness from which you have been preserved. Your parents, education, the gift of redemption, being called to the true Church, the Sacraments, the Communion of Saints by which you are made one with the Saints in heaven, in purgatory, and on earth. Your personal spiritual history ; perhaps you have been converted to the faith ; perhaps you have left God for a time, and He in His great mercy has called you back to Him. We think of all the blessings we have received. We look over our lives, and what a string of mercies do we not find ! God has done so much for me, borne with me, whispered so many good thoughts into my mind, and out of His riches given me so much. I can never arrive at the true, complete idea of all I owe Him. I must prove my love by deeds. I must give, make a sacrifice. Considering who I am, what can I give ? What have I ? All is His, but He condescends to receive it from me. Can I reserve anything ? I am bound to give *all* that I have. "Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty ; take my memory, my understanding, and my whole will." I will give all not in words only. I am to deny myself, overcome myself.

SECOND. God is present in every portion of creation

—earth, light, storm, rain, lightning, seasons; in all that grows—trees, flowers; in every living thing. He is present in the sun, moon, and stars; there is no spot in all creation but I must confess He is present there. He is in my soul by His grace most of all, the seed of Divine life. He gives all to me: the universe is created for me; it is a gift to me. Not satisfied with all these marvellous gifts, He finds a new way. I am to meet Him at every turn. He is in my own soul enthroned, raising me up to Himself. What can I offer Him in return? I can but repeat my first gift: “Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty,” etc. May I see Thee and find Thee and recognise Thee in all creation, in every human being, in myself. May I ever remember that Thou art present, present in my own soul.

THIRD. God present, working for me, toiling, labouring, for my benefit and service. I am such a dependent creature. All the forces of earth are toiling and labouring to keep me alive: all creation is helping in this work. God is in all ministering to my wants. He toils for me in the air and down in the earth. Everywhere is He labouring for my subsistence. In every human soul, in all life, God lives, for my benefit, my service. I might have subsisted without this machinery, but He loves to serve me with such forethought, such constancy, such lavishness. When I am sleeping He continues His service. What am I to do? I can only come back to my first offering and repeat it: “Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty”. May I not toil for Thee? May I not guard against

idleness, loss of time and opportunity? May I avail myself of Thy service by industry and zeal. Shame on me if I am sluggish and slow and unwilling to toil. At least give me the grace of an active service of Thy Divine Majesty.

FOURTH. God gives Himself in a manner still more touching. What renders life bearable and even sweet? The qualities we find in our friends. We prize life because of those we live with who win our love by their grand qualities. Where do these qualities come from? They are a reflection of the Divine Attributes. God is there reflected as in a mirror, and it is because of these perfections that life is worth living. Free-will makes it worth living and the good which we find in others. What return can we make? We may say, "O my God and my Lord, I love all that is noble and generous in my fellow-beings. May I love them in Thee and Thee in them. May I never love anyone out of Thee."

And not only people but all that is beautiful is a reflection of God's attributes. All is to be made use of to teach us to love Him. Offer Him, then, your resolutions, your desire to serve Him—the graces of your retreat, and conclude with St. Ignatius' prayer: "Take, O Lord, and receive all my liberty. Take it, because it is Thine; receive it, because I would give it Thee if it were not Thine. Take my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I have and all that I am is a gift which I have received from Thy most pure liberality. To Thee I restore it all, resigning it entirely to Thy will and good pleasure.

Give me only Thy grace and Thy love, and I am rich enough and have nothing else to desire and ask of Thee."

AN EXERCISE OF HOPE.

THE Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?

The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? (Ps. xxvi. 1, 2.)

Though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I will fear no evils, for Thou art with me. (Ps. xxii. 4.)

In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded: deliver me in Thy justice. (Ps. xxx. 1.)

The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my cup. It is thou that wilt restore my inheritance to me. I set the Lord always in my sight, for He is at my right hand, that I be not moved. Therefore my heart has been glad, and my tongue has rejoiced; moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope. (Ps. xv. 5, 8, 9.)

Although He should kill me, I will trust in Him; but yet I will reprove my ways in His sight. (Job xiii. 15.)

The Lord is nigh to them that are of a contrite heart, and He will save the humble of spirit. (Ps. xxxiii. 18, 19.)

Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble me? Hope in God, for I will still give praise

to Him, the salvation of my countenance, and my God. (Ps. xli. 6, 7.)

God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son ; that whosoever believes in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him. (St. John iii. 16, 17.)

But if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Just : and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. (1 John ii. 1, 2.)

Amen, amen, I say to you, he that hears My Word, and believes Him that sent Me, has everlasting life, and comes not into judgment, but is passed from death to life. (St. John v. 24.)

All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and him that comes to Me I will not cast out. Amen, amen, I say to you : He that believes in Me has everlasting life. (St. John vi. 37, 47.)

I am the Resurrection and the Life ; he that believes in Me, although he be dead, shall live ; and everyone that lives and believes in Me shall not die for ever. (St. John xi. 25, 26.)

If God be for us, who is against us ? He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how has He not also with Him given us all things ? (Rom. viii. 32.)

The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. (St. Luke xix. 10.)

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all accepta-

tion, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. (1 Tim. i. 15.)

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive. (Is. lv. 7.)

Is it my will that a sinner should die, and not that he should be converted from his ways and live? Be converted and do penance for all your iniquities; and iniquity shall not be your ruin. For I desire not the death of him that dies, says the Lord God, return ye and live. (Ezech. xviii. 23, 30, 32.)

As I live, says the Lord God, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways. And why will you die, O house of Israel? (Ezech. xxxiii. 11.)

The Lord is compassionate and merciful, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy. As a father has compassion on his children, so has the Lord compassion on them that fear Him; for He knows our frame. (Ps. cii. 8, 13.)

The Lord is sweet to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works. The Lord lifts up all that fall, and sets up all that are cast down. (Ps. cxliv. 9, 14.)

Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you, and you shall find rest to your souls. (St. Matt. xi. 28.)

I am the good Shepherd, and I know My sheep and Mine know Me; as the Father knows Me, and I know the Father: and I lay down My life for my sheep.

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me: and I give them life everlasting; and no man shall pluck them out of My hand. (St. John x. 14, 15, 27, 28.)

But God commends His charity towards us, because when as yet we were sinners Christ died for us. Much more, therefore, being now justified by His Blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him. For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son; much more, being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life. (1 Rom. x. 9, 10.)

NOTES OF RETREAT.

1881.

JULY TWENTY-THIRD, 1881.

FIRST DAY.

[10.45 A.M.]

[*Begin by an act of faith in God's Presence and Preparatory Prayer—in every Meditation the same.*]

MEDITATION ON THE END OF MAN.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine yourself kneeling beside Jesus Christ, who is saying, “Thou shalt adore the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve”.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may know what is my last end; inflame my will that I may conform my life to it.

FIRST POINT. Consider what it is to have an end. Why am I here? What am I wanted to do? There are many apparently who have no end at all. They live by chance, not only as regards their salvation, but in the affairs of this world also. They go on from day to day, without foresight, with no order, or plan, or will in their lives.

Others have an end. They are living for pleasure, studying how best to amuse themselves. They are

up early and late, and lead a very severe life in order to enjoy a variety of pleasures.

Others are bent on amassing riches. They don't waste time in amusement, but are engrossed in business. Their aim is to make profitable investments, to make money. The object of another class is to become powerful in whatever sphere they may be : whether in a village, or a town, or the metropolis, whether in fashion or politics ; such deliberately set this end before them—to acquire influence and power. As to what is to come afterwards they don't know, they don't care.

So we see what it is to have an end. One man's end is, for instance, the accumulation of wealth, but does he renounce pleasure? No ; he only puts business before it. Though he enjoys amusement, he tears himself away without any effort. He enjoys his sleep and rest, but when a mail is going he will sit up and work late quite cheerfully. He puts his end before everything and makes other things secondary.

What is our end? Man was created to serve God. What does that mean? It means that we should obey the will of God as revealed to us in His commandments and through the circumstances of our life : that we should accept the position He has assigned to us, never go against God, never rebel against Him in any way. I must take myself in my position, and serve and obey Him and carry my cross. It is not that I am to lead a life unlike the rest, avoid society and the affairs of life. I must play my part, accept my position, but through and above all serve God. If He

require me to forego pleasure I must. I must accept any cross, be ready for any sacrifice, be willing to live in the country or town just as He pleases. I must be a creature, be in the disposition to give up all for the paramount duty of serving God. After this reflection I ask, "Has my end been the service of God? Have I practically been obeying Him? Or have I, like the fool, lived by chance, been guided by the people about me, sometimes good, sometimes frivolous, according to circumstances. Have I left God for a marriage, for position, for certain pleasures which led me to sin? Have I been inconstant, lukewarm, and indifferent in the service of God?" My God, Thou hast created me and I have lived without thought of Thee. Fool that I am! to have gone against my conscience, Thy warnings, Thy inspirations. In the past I have over-estimated riches, honour, pleasure, vanity. They have but brought me bitterness; I have never found satisfaction. When most successful there has always been a void, because my heart was made for Thee. Enlighten my understanding that I may understand once for all Thou hast made me for Thyself. This stream of mankind, who live as if they were to live here for ever, what folly! As they sweep past me I say: Fools! why love vanity and pursue lies? Were you created for this? Is it worthy of God to have armed us with such capacity for happiness and then to have balked us with this wretched life of London? Did He mean our life to be such an unmeaning, empty riddle?

But if we are serving God, if we are doing our duty,

let our life be past anywhere, let it be full of suffering, crosses, poverty, if only we look on it as the time of trial in which we are to prove ourselves worthy of God, it becomes full of meaning, it becomes a wonderful poem. The romance of an immortal soul on its trial, reaching its end to hear at last, "Well done, good and faithful servant," or "Go from Me for ever". Now life is seen to be worth living, everything to be of use—mysteries of childhood, pain, poverty, sickness, anxiety. Each life is precious to God and the Angels. Have I rightly esteemed this dignity? That I am on trial? Invited by God? Or have I repelled His invitation? Too often in a hurry I have forgotten it, but grant me now to think of it deeply, to have it always present to me, never to lose sight of it. May it be so present as to rule and determine my life. Make me resolve never to sin, to accept the duties, trials, and crosses that come to me so that even if I fail sometimes, in the main I may not lose sight of it. Let this be my prayer not once only, but continually and always. Give me grace to see and understand my last end: disabuse my heart of the love of pleasure. Let me see my last end: let me have it always before my mind. Grant that I may see—far more important than any bodily sight—that I may see so clearly I may never forget Thou hast made me for Thyself, and I cannot rest out of Thee.

SECOND. By what right God has called me out of nothing. Foolish people, who don't want to have been created, confess even thus that God is Almighty.

It pleases Him : it ought to please us to be capable of what we are capable of. His power and right as Creator give Him absolute power. We can't help it. We are what He made us. We have to live here as long as He pleases, in prosperity or adversity. He disposes of us as He will, as the potter with his clay. Every human being is in the hands of God. It is idleness and folly to think of resisting His will. It is wisdom to accept it. We are utterly dependent on God. He says, "Keep My commandments". I ought to say, "Whatever Thou wilt I will do. I am ready to suffer, only strengthen me, my Lord. Whether should I go away from Thee? However long my life, Thy will be done. In great matters as in small, in everything may Thy will be accomplished. I am Thy creature. I wish it to be an act of my will that I am Thy creature. I would beg of Thee to accept my service. Thou alone art worthy to fill this heart which Thou hast created. Come and take possession of my soul that I may be Thine wholly and entirely." This is what creation means for all, and for me, that I esteem it a privilege to be dependent, and because He gives me this tiny will I offer it to Him. If I could properly fathom this relationship, how every tendency to rebellion would be stamped out of me! How I should study the faintest indication of His will! At least let me accept the will of God as made known to me. When I look back on my life, and think He has borne with me through so long a period and so patiently, I am lost in amazement—amazement at the mystery of His patience, and my

obduracy. End with an act of contrition. Colloquy, etc.

Spiritual Reading, First Day, *Imitation*, Book III., chap . 2, 3.

CONSIDERATION.

FIRST DAY.

[3 P.M.]

THE SPIRIT OF INTERIOR PENANCE.

WE will consider one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost—the fear of God. This is a filial fear proceeding from love, infused into the soul, leading it to fear being separated in any way from the love of God. Scripture promises much to those who cultivate the fear of the Lord. “It shall be well in the hour of death with him who feareth God.” Some rather avoid the subject of fear as if it would bring sadness, which is not the case. It brings peace, joy, cheerfulness. If we try to build up our spiritual life without fear it will be unstable, and not secure against sin. Allied to this is the spirit of interior penance. The virtue of penance implies a horror of sin, and of ourselves because we have offended God, and is to be considered interiorly and exteriorly. To-day we will consider interior penance. Compunction for our sins consists in a certain pricking of conscience for having displeased Almighty God. As long as we are in His

favour we have such wonderful blessings. We are heirs of heaven, we have a claim on His protection. We sometimes talk of the state of grace. It means friendship with God. Grace is a quality which resides in the soul, which the Church calls a robe. By nature we are unclothed. Baptism puts on this robe, which renders us pleasing in the sight of God. When the soul consents to sin, the robe is lost. We are no longer dear to Him. We have no longer a right to heaven. We cease to be children of God and become slaves of the devil. The effect of compunction is to rouse us to anger and hatred against ourselves for having forfeited this right, to fill us with amazement and horror that we could have been guilty of such folly. What have men gained during their life to compensate for the loss of their soul? They embittered their own lives, and those of others, perhaps forfeited their future, their health, their honour. If we could look closely we should find this the history of almost all. What has their life been as compensation for the loss of heaven? When the soul goes on living in sin its life ceases. It can no longer acquire merit. All the years it lives in sin are simply blanks—there is nothing whatever to represent them in eternity. When we come to think of our short life here, we may surely be amazed to think anyone can throw away union with God. It is inexplicable by reason. It is the act of one who does not reason.

These considerations bring sorrow. "I have sinned, I have gone away from my Father to strangers, I have recklessly sought out want and misery." A soul

seeing the malice of sin in the light of faith is strongly moved to sorrow. I have sinned through my fault, through my most grievous fault. I wish I had not done it. Would that I had not incurred His displeasure! Then comes indignation, resentment against oneself. How could I so have treated Him—my Father? Fool! Ungrateful creature that I am! Thus we should be led to exterior acts of penance, of which we will speak hereafter. Now go on to grief for the sins of others—those who are dependent on us. We are all answerable for the souls of our neighbours, parents, servants, children. We can't fling away our responsibilities. We have all an obligation on us of preventing sin. We all see the obligation of a parent. We all know that a parent will have to give an account. But those who are less closely related have some claim—a claim to our help and guidance—a claim that we should provide them with opportunities for good. If we have real faith we can't be without compunction for all the sins around us. They ought to fill us with distress. We ought to pray God to stay His arm and not punish. Our relatives are perhaps openly violating His law. We ought to ask God to have pity on them. Ten just men would have saved Sodom. One just soul will often turn aside the wrath of God. We shall know at the judgment-day the secret invitations, the graces of repentance, the many warnings obtained by some quiet prayerful soul. We shall ask Him to have mercy on our relatives. No one can place himself as a victim to appease God's wrath without rising up holier. We ought to fear God, not with a servile fear,

but with a child's fear. If we have sinned we ought to have these feelings of amazement, indignation, horror, etc. "My sin is ever before me." I have offended God grievously. I should be sorry. I should resolve never again to lose His friendship. Then, acts of sorrow for the sins of others, seeing what sin is, what an insult to God our Father.

FIRST DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

WHAT PREVENTS US FROM BECOMING SAINTS.

CONSIDER how little and how much is required to make us Saints. Though we are not all to be canonised we are called to be Saints before God. I will assume there are now living in London not a few who are Saints before God. What is the difference between their lives and ours? They give so much time to sleep, so do we; they have their ordinary meals as we do; they hear Mass daily, so do we. They say their morning and their night prayers with attention, devotion, leisurely; they visit their friends, go into society, take part in amusements as far as their duty and position require. They go to the Sacraments twice a week perhaps, or once; to confession, much the same as we; they have their difficulties, distractions, and purposes of amendment. They go to Holy Communion once or twice a week according to circumstances. What is the difference between us

and them? In both there is a determination not to offend God by grievous sin, or deliberate venial sin, a struggle against human infirmity and being too engrossed with the cares or pleasures of daily life. There are some who lead that life and are not Saints. They stop short of being Saints for want of very little. What is that little? We look at ourselves and say, I can't be pleasing to God. That is a temptation. It is not true. We may please Him provided we struggle. It is not weakness which prevents our being Saints. If only I had a vivid faith: If I never had any doubts: if I could feel I was loving God! That is not sanctity. To have a lively, sensible faith is a gift, but it is not necessary, and not always the most profitable. We make greatest efforts to arrive at something we don't possess. Want of faith, despondency, etc., make us conscious how near we are to precipices and oblige us to pray. Peter never prayed better than in the water. We make the finest efforts when we are most cast down. Men are Saints when they can say, "There is nothing between me and God, not consolation, or success, or favour of men. There is no creature between God and my soul. God is put in the first, in the second, in every place, and every creature banished." This is wanting sometimes, not exactly that the will is absent, but from a slowness, an unfinished state of spiritual life, not facing the inquiry whether there is any creature inordinately prized, whether in the will, in ideas, in piety, there is anything of self which disputes the supremacy of God. If we bring ourselves to book, and consider

what place in our souls is occupied by our relations, friends, position, good name, power, etc.—if we can thus go through our souls and bring ourselves to say, God reigns supreme, nothing comes between me and Him—there is sanctity: there is the entire fulfilment of the first precept, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy strength and all thy soul. . . .” Perhaps my health is broken and I can’t fix my attention, but I pray as well as I can. In consolation prayer is so easy, but when desolation presses me all round, then to persevere, then to strive and struggle to raise up my mind to God, that is to love Him, and this is sanctity. The soul gives all to God. In whatever circumstances it may be, prosperous or adverse, it does all it can and gives the best it can.

How little keeps us from sanctity! Is it possible to love God more perfectly than in this supposition I have made? If we ask what stands between us and God, we often find it is an unreality, an imagination, a false conception of how God wants us to serve Him. We spend our life battling with delusions. If we would look simply on what God wants us to do, that consideration alone would place us on a level with sanctity. Nothing is so precious in the spiritual life as the simple, plain truth. And if we find we are prepared to give everything to God, to serve Him in prayer and charity, battling with temptations, then we may feel easy; or if we can’t discover anything in which we are not trying to serve God, then we may be hopeful. It is very practical to ask how much keeps me from God? Very often it is but a very little. A

mere wiping away of delusions is what is required. We say we love God above all things. Let us pray that it may be reality.

This first point ought to suggest to us a great desire of sanctity. May I realise in my life this perfect love ! Then follow petitions that I may know, that I may grieve, that I may see through the wiles of the devil and the deceits of my own imagination, that I may know and see the *Truth*, that I may understand the conditions of my life, the temptations and obstacles in my way, that they are not hindrances to sanctity. May I bear my difficulties patiently ! . . . And then ask pardon for having yielded to feelings of discouragement. Give me confidence that as Thou hast placed me here Thou wilt give me abundance of grace to attain high sanctity. There are hundreds who with very little more confidence could lead lives of union with God, who now are discouraged and hopeless.

SECOND. How much separates us from sanctity. We represent to ourselves that God requires so much. We think of the Saints and martyrs, the millions of martyrs, the violence and ill-treatment they met with, the peaceful martyrs in the desert, the religious who spend their time in a living martyrdom, of suffering borne heroically, and poverty carried with resignation. Then we say, how much is required to be a Saint, to be roasted, to have your limbs cut off. So we imagine we don't love God because we can't encounter this. When He calls us to martyrdom He will give us the strength. We see those who leave the world and are happy in a life of crucifixion. To whom He sends a

cross He gives a grace to bear it. If He should give us the crown of martyrdom He will give us abundant grace. But meantime He asks no such sacrifice. He does not ask you to leave all things. He asks you to keep the commandments, to be good to your neighbours ; He asks you to avoid all that would brutalise you, to make yourself all of which your nature is capable, to render death easy, to secure a crown for yourself in heaven. It is not much He asks of you, to be good, peaceful, etc. ; it is so reasonable, it satisfies every want of the human heart, shall we refuse what He asks?

We come back to the same conclusion. It is not too difficult. Those heroic deeds of saints and martyrs are not what He asks of me now, but to keep the commandments, to accept my lot in every respect, to love and serve Him in that condition in which I find myself, to do what the saints did before God gave the nobler call to bear the cross more in the likeness of Christ. And if we are privileged to shed our blood, then this preparation will fit us to receive the higher call, and enable us to appear worthily on this higher field. But the preparation must be made in these little ways. We must give practical proof of our love by patience in suffering injustice, infirmity, desolation, and the like. The most splendid act of homage is to take the hand that strikes us and kiss it, while we whisper, " Do with me what Thou wilt ".

Repeat the acts of the will of the first point.

FIRST DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

SIN OF THE ANGELS AND OF OUR FIRST PARENTS.

THE considerations of this meditation are very simple, but they suggest many acts of the will.

FIRST POINT. That the Angels were created free intellectual spirits, endowed with rare gifts of nature and grace, in order that they might promote the honour and glory of God, and merit an eternity of happiness. What their trial was we only gather. It would seem that the Incarnation was put before them in some way, that they were shown they would be called on to pay homage to their Creator in an inferior nature. A great number refused obedience. Lucifer led the way. Michael and his host remained true. With full knowledge the disobedient Angels made their choice to incur the eternal wrath of God. What followed? In one instant they were stripped of their supernatural gifts and lost the favour of God. Only blackened ruins remained—their fine intelligence, their vehement will. They were banished, not allowed time for repentance.

With your understanding say: Sin must be very hateful to God, or He could not punish one sin of thought with everlasting punishment. That a creature should stand up against its Creator and say, *Non serviam*, must be most detestable. How displeasing must I be who have offended by such a multitude of sins. Make acts of sorrow, shame, self-accusation, confession of sinfulness, act of faith in the hideousness

of sin, prayer for light to understand it. The Angels had no opportunity of repentance, because they sinned with such great lights. Their own act drove them for ever from the sight of God. Perhaps we have had great light and sinned with deliberation and knowledge. Ask time for repentance; make acts of reparation. You may repeat the seven Penitential Psalms.

SECOND. The sin of our first parents. It is important to go on to this, as being more near to us. They were created in justice, very dear to God. Free creatures, however, and put on their trial. Recall their rebellion. It was not so direct as that of the Angels because of the Tempter, something external prompting them to disobedience. Immediately they defy their Creator the robe of justice is torn from them, and they become His enemies. But they were given time of repentance, because they had sinned with less deliberation. Thank God for their repentance. We suffer in their sin, and share in their opportunity for repentance. Consequences of the sin: sickness, plagues, war, grace lost, miseries, death. How terrible sin must be in the sight of God, even when committed by such puny creatures! Renew sorrow, etc.—all the acts in the previous point. Colloquy to Jesus Christ on the Cross. That again tells you the evil of sin—His crucifixion brought about by my sin. Acts of detestation of sin.

Pray that no temptation may ever lead you to offend God again.

SECOND DAY.

[10.45 A.M.]

ON THE SINS OF PAST LIFE.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine yourself before your Judge.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, and inflame my will, that I may know my sins and have a great hatred and detestation of them.

I said, yesterday, contrition was the foundation of all spiritual life. It is an error to pass it over as being bitter. However bitter, it is a very useful recollection. If you aspire to greater union with God, strengthen yourself with sorrow for sin—acts of shame and self-accusation.

FIRST POINT. Rapid review of past life. Go through your childhood, youth, middle age ; think in each period the persons you have been amongst, your occupations, amusements, etc. Consider rapidly how often you have broken the Commandments. Then, beyond the flagrant sins, the hidden sins, the sins wilfully, lightly committed, that have passed from our recollection, but are still known to God. “ From my hidden sins cleanse my soul, O Lord.” You need not be afraid they are not forgiven. They are forgiven, but it is useful to confess, “ I have sinned,” again and again : “ free me from the punishment due to me ”. Then the sins of others : “ Forgive Thy servant the sins he has caused in others ”. For we are brought in contact with souls, and perhaps we

may have led some into sins, and we can't know the consequences of these sins, and how much lies at our door, whether by teaching evil, or by want of reverence for religion, or want of courage in living up to our convictions. Dwell especially on your sins of omission. Bury your past sins, go to their grave, put flowers on the tombstone, but don't take it up. This is the way to deal with distinct sins. But *dwell* on your sins of omission, neglect of grace, neglect of inspirations to break entirely with the world. There is a reckoning we must make for our omission of duties, disregard of grace, etc. God has been so good, and given so much light, and we have neglected so many opportunities, used them so tamely. "Thou hast heaped Thy graces on me, and I have misused them. I have leaves, but no fruit. I am like him who buried his talent to give it back without profit." We may often accuse ourselves of the negligences of our past life: "Give me yet a little time and I will strive not to be deaf to Thy voice. Have patience, and I will trade with the talent; only give me Thy love and Thy grace, I ask for nothing more. I confess my neglect of grace—my fault, my most grievous fault. How much of life I have wasted! If I had to pass sentence, what could I say? Have mercy on me. I will recount all the sins of my life in the bitterness of my soul. . . ." And so long as we find relish and satisfaction we may go on making acts of sorrow, etc., and resolutions to make good use of what remains of life. You say, "If only I could know I am in grace". We may know it, when we are

trying to love God. "Act now as you would act if you knew you were in grace."

What would be our first thought if an Angel told us we were in grace? Would it not be to protest we would never lose it? Act as if you were in the grace of God, and you will be. We want to be independent, to have our self-love gratified by a knowledge that would not be good for us. Conclude this point with acts of sorrow.

SECOND. Foundation of higher progress. Consider any grievous sin you have committed, and see how bad it is. We are made up of spirit and body. Spirit is the highest; it consists of reason, its object truth, and of will, whose object is the good. There are subordinate faculties which arise from the junction of soul and body—inferior appetites. These should be controlled by the will, and the will by reason. Reason enlightened by revelation is the full guide of our life on earth. Appetite for food is God's intention, but if we eat inordinately it is a perversion of God's order—the body becomes the master; the servant rides, the master walks; reason, which should guide, throws away the reins. Man becomes inferior and the animal rules supreme. In every sin there is this upsetting. If we could *see* the effects of sin it would be intolerable. If we penetrated our minds with the natural terror of sin it would be a great help to us; a surer foundation would be laid. If we bring ourselves into right order, and have principles of reason well in us, we make ourselves ready for God's higher gifts, we dispose ourselves to receive His greatest graces.

Grand exercise !—to come back to these truths ; to see our sins in all their vileness and loathsomeness as we see them in strangers or a friend—as if suddenly in a friend we found some hideous passion, or as if in a priest, or Saint, whose good works you had admired, you discovered hypocrisy. What a shock !—because unexpectedly you find sin where you did not expect it, and see it in its true proportions, as God sees it in us. If we could see the natural hideousness of sin we should be more anxious to banish it from our souls. Vanity, lying, sloth, ought to be most repugnant to us. We have a great deal too much consideration for ourselves. Let us pray that we may understand how sin is disorder—hateful to God, to Angels, to reason. Give me this knowledge to hate and despise it. Say the 102nd Psalm.

CONSIDERATION.

SECOND DAY.

[2.15 P.M.]

EXTERIOR PENANCE AND MORTIFICATION.

WE may consider to-day the second gift of the Holy Ghost—Piety, which enlightens the understanding and disposes the will to render God the homage of a dutiful child. God has promised special rewards of wisdom and assistance to those who have a filial affection to Him, and to our fellows because of Him.

Yesterday we considered interior penance. To-day we will take exterior penance and mortification. Penance is the disposition of a soul grieved for sin, disposed to offer reparation. Mortification inclines us to keep in order our passions and overcome our sensuality and love of ease. Any virtue that strengthens the power of the will over the lower appetites must be serviceable. If the order God wishes in the soul is firmly established our passions become weaker—our understanding becomes more capable of seeing truth and appreciating what may be called the problems of life. The will is more upright and becomes strengthened. Lastly, if we practise mortification there will be peace and tranquillity, and there is no blessing to be so prized as peace of soul. When and how are we to practise mortification ?

1. As regards exterior mortification, the senses are not to be allowed full swing : the eyes are to be under control. There are some things which are wrong to contemplate, and those of course must be avoided under pain of sin. There are others which are dangerous only, and these are proper objects for mortification. For instance, a sense of the beautiful may be indulged and carried to excess and idolatry, and become dangerous to salvation. I speak of the unrestrained enjoyment of the beautiful, with total absence of self-denial. Not that we are to stifle this enjoyment entirely, but we must not let it get the upper hand. If we want to exercise a true empire over our lower nature, we must sometimes forego enjoyments, music, operas, beautiful gardens, etc.

Love of ease is very characteristic of our century. Our lives tax us more—we seem to require more repose than our grandfathers did. We may overdo it. Some do nothing but rest. To use easy chairs sparingly is a good subject for mortification. Bodily penance must be regulated by each one for himself or with the help of his director—such things as fasting, watching, etc.

The first act of exterior mortification is to live by rule: to establish order you must have order. There are very few laws of the Church, because it is impossible to make laws for all. Reason gives me no light whether I should go to bed at ten or twelve, but if I have a law then there is reason, and by obeying it I strengthen the rule of reason. One must secure one's spiritual exercises. Some get through them early, and often it is the only way of securing them. In our British habits there is no privacy: we are expected to meet for breakfast and live the rest of the morning in public—a terrible habit! To have a rule is a beautiful thing. It enables you to decide—to know your own mind—and to do a great deal more. Accuse yourself in confession if you are unfaithful to your rule through your own fault.

2. A second series of acts of mortification is to restrain impetuosity. Everyone who aims to establish the law of God will not allow himself to be carried away. He will exercise control—not bounce into a room and say, "I came for something, and now I don't know what I came for". If you are reasonable you think first, then act. Impetuous people never go

long; they can't, they get out of breath. Calm people have a reserve they can call out when wanted. We must control our impulses and not be too eager. "Precipitation is the bane of all devotion." Impetuous people are in such a hurry to get on, they never pray well. Going by order is more valuable than bodily penance.

3. Never sacrifice the order of the day because you like a thing. Some get absorbed in an employment, and go on and on with it, never minding the rule. Impulse carries them on. Here is a want of mortification.

4. Deny yourself by doing acts of kindness to others, especially by paying little attentions to those who are unnoticed. Not a day passes but we may deny ourselves in this way, and make a good act of self-control which no one will observe but God. We might go into innumerable acts of mortification, all tending to strengthen the empire of the will. Many have not acquired the habit of strengthening the will. It involves true mortification. Let us ask light for our understanding that we may know the Sovereign Will of God, and fire for our will that our life may be regulated by it.

Examine how far your life is a life of order.

Spiritual Reading, Second Day, *Imitation*, Book I., chaps. 12, 13.

SECOND DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE EFFECTS OF SIN.

LET us go beyond our sins now to some of the effects of those sins. Occasionally we see the effects of sin lasting for a long time. A man wounds another or deprives him of sight. The effects of a momentary act last for a lifetime. We are often horrified that God can allow such lasting effects. But there is no act which has not with it almost eternal consequences. (Even in childhood and youth, which seem so unimportant, our habits are formed.) Apart from the loss of God's favour, there are effects from sin on our whole being. How much of my being has escaped the devastating power of sin?—my memory, my understanding, my will, all tainted by sin. Even after forgiveness, the effects of sin remain. The consequence of repeated acts of sin is that a strong habit is formed independent of the grace of God. When we consider the effects of sin on our memory, understanding, will, habits, propensities, etc., we shall find great matter for shame. *Memory*—I can't control my imagination; it wanders to what is unlawful; I have to fight against it. My *understanding* is dark and blinded; so slow to take in the truths of religious and spiritual life. I hear them; but they do not at once force their way into my understanding. I understand things of this life, but the supernatural is with difficulty impressed on my

mind. My *will*, how sluggishly it moves ! What a dead weight it is when I would rise to God ! So weak is it, so wounded by sin, it has not that strength it would have had if my past life had been better. My passions, what alacrity for evil ! Though for years I have been trying to serve God, it seems as if almost nothing separated me from evil. I fear that when we come to look at ourselves we must own to having been grievously wounded, to having scars which will cling to us unless we reform ourselves. We can't undo the past and begin our life anew. We can't now mould our memory and imagination as we like, we must reckon with the past. How are we to correct this ? Begin with a right good will. We *can* establish the supremacy of reason, the empire of the will. By prayer and discipline we may re-establish order, we may obtain that confirmation in grace which many Saints have received. The best means to merit it is to establish God's order in our soul, and thus we gradually recover the right use of reason and imagination, we get our understanding cleared, we obtain a rule over our passions, we are enabled to exercise our imagination on the scenes of our Lord's life.

Examine as to your understanding, memory, and will. Am I conscious of deadness, of sloth in spiritual things ? I am not as Thou didst intend that I should be. I see the consequences of my own sin. I have no right to complain of my tepidity ; deservedly do I suffer all this ; deservedly am I wounded ; though I am forgiven there remains much for me to do. If I could love spiritual things more faithfully, if my mind were clear,

and I could understand Thy truth, it seems that all crosses would be easy. If my whole being were but turned to Thy service! Strengthen me that I may undo the consequences of past sins. Thou hast created me to Thy Image; give me grace once more to restore Thy Image and that order Thou wishest in my soul.

Make here acts of self-accusation for past folly.

SECOND. Consider some effects of sin outside ourselves. The great effects we have to lament—loss of time, of merit, of glory. Every single good action obtains a corresponding degree of merit and glory. No action we perform—sleep, business, amusements—but may turn to good to those who are in the grace of God. The better we perform the action, the greater the merit. When viewed in the light of faith, what a beautiful thing is the life of a human soul! Every thought is a history of merit and of glory! When out of grace all our acts are dead, and there is a loss of glory for all eternity. What a sad effect of sin! Even when we repent and get back to grace, but lead a tepid life, our intentions are less pure. So, though we have merit and glory it is less and less, we hardly may earn any. If we don't make a battle we fall into a lower, debased spiritual life, so insignificant compared to what it might be. A Teresa and a tepid soul, what a difference! What a contrast between such lives! There should be a strong desire to make up for past lost time by fervour, penance, and mortification. We ought to try and redeem lost time. It ought to be on our conscience that we have forfeited

so much time. Try and shake off this lethargy. It is in our power to establish God's order, to fill our lives with merit, and so purchase unspeakable glory in the world to come. We ought to resolve not to lose a single degree of glory. It depends on ourselves what sort of a crown we wear in heaven, whether we are to be only on the outskirts of heaven or very near to Jesus Christ: we ought to desire the highest; we may obtain it if only we make the most of the time that remains.

The fruits of this meditation should be—

1. A desire to undo the havoc made by sin.
2. A strong desire to utilise the time that remains.

SECOND DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

ON THE DEATH OF A GOOD CHRISTIAN.

WE are apt to associate death with something terrible, but we have seen very consoling deaths. Many think when they come to die they will be full of terrors, and want to make a general confession. They conjure up all sorts of difficulties. I have observed that those who try to serve God and are troubled during life with despondency die very joyful, happy deaths. Scrupulous people lose their scruples. We have many imaginations about death which are not the fact. What a terrible thing it would be if we had to live for ever! Death comes as a friend, a welcome

visitor. Why should not we look forward to it as a time of release from temptation and anxiety, and from the emptiness and vanity of life? Why should we not long to be out of this world with its deceitfulness and cruelty? It is in our power to desire to be with Christ. Cherish, then, the thought of death. If death has terrors, if it is usually preceded by much physical suffering, still it has solid consolations.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Think of some holy deathbed you have assisted at.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask “to judge this world as you will judge it in the light of a well-prepared death—in the light of the blest candle then put into your hand”.

FIRST POINT. If we have seen a Christian die, we have seen him take leave of this world with great courage and resignation: he says good-bye to his dear ones with great hope and confidence: he is contented to leave the things of this world because they have never been inordinately loved: its amusements have been used with moderation; its affairs have never engrossed him and can be left without regret. There are no ties to the world which the good Christian does not resign joyfully. He feels great thankfulness at the prospect of release from danger and temptation. There is always matter for fear to a Christian in life, but when death comes the period of uncertainty closes. Very different is he from those who have lived in and for the world, with no faith, no hope, no life devoted to God. A Christian leaves nothing he cannot resign into the hands of God.

SECOND. With what confidence he looks forward to the next life. He has prepared for death. Every night he has accepted death as a homage due to his Sovereign Creator. He has made himself familiar with the thought and idea of it. He has read the prayers for the dying and made a spiritual death many times. He has spent all the time he could in prayer : has liked to hear of holy things. He has received all the Sacraments. Such a death is delightful and full of consolation and resignation, although great suffering may accompany it—suffering when borne cheerfully is such a beautiful spectacle ! We feel the dignity of our nature when we assist at such a death, and see how the spirit can triumph over corporeal suffering : indeed, it is not uncommon for the sufferer to ask for more pain. Death, when thus prepared for, becomes the triumph of Jesus Christ, and is very beautiful.

Conclude with prayers for a holy death—for the spirit of submission and resignation, and a desire to offer some satisfaction for sins.

THIRD DAY.

[10.45 A.M.]

ON THE JUDGMENT.

To many death is naturally welcome from mere weariness ; they look on it as a release. Death is not so terrible ; but to appear before an All-Holy Judge is terrible. It is terrible to reflect that this life, which

glides by so quickly, is to be gone over again very seriously and justly. Days, hours, minutes, thoughts, words, deeds—nothing to escape—each to be judged separately.

FIRST POINT. Every single thought, word, and deed will stand out before our eyes, all our sins of commission and omission, all the Sacraments we have received, with the graces they brought, the way in which we used those graces, all our efforts to resist sin and to serve God, every time when we yielded to temptation. To us it is incomprehensible how all should come back to us again with such vivid distinctness, but I have known instances of their whole life being spread out before people in a sort of instantaneous flash. . . . We shall know exactly what we have done, and our motives! This consideration should make us think much more seriously about our lives. How wise is it to look at our lives intelligently, not gloomily: to reflect seriously whether we are serving God or not! How we should brush away all that is idle and vain! We have not time to let the world come in and take the place of God. Our real life ought to be alone with God, and in earnest. For there is vanity in spiritual life, too—imagination, fancies, false standards. How often, half consciously, we delude ourselves and fancy that we can't pray, that we have no faith, that we have too many temptations and crosses: all this is vanity, and hinders us in the real service of God. We have no time for all this nonsense. We must look at our trials, and meet them calmly and seriously. Shall we play with God

as we play with ourselves, about want of consolation and difficulty in bearing crosses, etc.? Idleness and vanity keep us from going to God with singleness and generosity. I know God will judge every act. Life is to me full of importance. It can't be trifled with and frittered away. The one concern is to be judged favourably. I must resolve to be more in earnest—not looking stern, with knitted brows, but calm and cheerful—cherishing only the love of God. Has there been this calm earnestness? or have I lived without thought and consistency? How much folly there has been in my life! Much, perhaps, may have been well done, but still how very much unreality, pretence, and outside there has been. In future, there should be no unreality. If my mind and heart are fixed on God, my relations with others become very real. I shall have great seriousness about my salvation. I will pray that delusions may be cleared away, inordinate affections given up, and only God be loved. May I continue my life in a very earnest spirit.

Spend this day before the Blessed Sacrament, reading the *Dies Iræ* slowly, with pauses. Dwell on sentiments of contrition, prayers for mercy: "Remember not the sins of my youth". "Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to Thy great mercy." "Pierce my flesh with Thy fear." Some such ejaculations are in harmony with this meditation.

SECOND. What takes place in the judgment of a lost soul? It sees clearly its misdeeds, and that the sentence is unfavourable. The devil will claim this

soul. Thou hast created it to serve Thee. Thou didst grant it great benefits. Thou didst redeem it, and place it in the Church, provide it with Sacraments, Masses, many channels of grace, didst give it through a long life many invitations; Thou hast pursued it with long-suffering, and I, the enemy, have never conferred one favour on it. I have degraded it, put before it what could make it miserable. Yet this soul has preferred to join me. Now I demand justice and punishment to this soul, that I may chastise it through eternity, with the chastisement it has freely chosen. The soul chose the devil rather than God; its eternal destiny is but a continuation of its own act. The time for mercy and prayer is past. Once a little act of contrition would have sufficed. The soul must confess it is its own fault. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgments are just." Every soul that is lost, is lost by its own deliberate choice. It preferred evil to good, the devil to God. If we are lost, it will be because we have chosen it. How much wiser to toil in the service of God, and bear our crosses bravely; to make our choice wisely at once, not wait till the final judgment and see a whole life condemning us! What opportunities, what graces, what means left untried!

THIRD. How are we to be saved? By listening to inspirations, bearing the cross bravely, having great patience in trials, by a resolve to serve God and not trifle any more, making up our minds to go with great simpleness straight to God. If we do not love vanity and seek after folly, we shall correspond

rightly with those great graces we have received from God. How much love has not each one received! Let us prove our love by doing what God asks of us, giving Him an undivided affection, bearing with great patience our trials and crosses, sacrificing to Him our life if need be. End with a colloquy to our Judge.

CONSIDERATION.

THIRD DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON SINS OF THE TONGUE.

PERHAPS the most grievous sin of the tongue is calumny, and the next grievous detraction. With regard to calumny, it is so obviously wrong, it is not necessary to dwell much upon it here, only remark that the obligation of restitution is often neglected with regard to character. It is as imperative as restoring stolen money. As long as you leave an injury of character hanging over your neighbour you can have no peace with God.

With regard to detraction. If I make known the hidden mortal sin of my neighbour I am guilty of mortal sin, and if I make known his hidden venial sin I am guilty of a venial sin proportionate to the sin I have made known. This rests on the general principle that to inflict a grievous injury on my

neighbour is a grievous sin. Now when is a sin hidden? If it is known to twenty or thirty, is it hidden? Certainly not. Or, again, if it is mentioned in a paper it becomes public, therefore it is not a sin of detraction to speak of it. If two or three busy-bodies know it, it will soon cease to be private. It would not always follow you would be guilty of sin in mentioning a sin. For example: supposing in France people have had a duel. Though it is a mortal sin, you don't inflict an injury by mentioning it, because it is not thought injurious in France. So we must take into account whether it is a grievous injury we inflict by mentioning a venial sin. Were you to mention many a venial sin of a religious or a priest, if such a sin were hidden, you might be guilty of a mortal sin.

In the case of detraction, is there an obligation of restitution? Yes. You must try as much as you can to compensate. If I can't say the accusation was untrue, let me say what I can, not clumsily so as to injure my neighbour still more, but cordially and from the heart.

Am I never allowed to speak to anyone about the secret sin of another, if it is too much for me to keep it to myself? Well! theologians allow you may speak to certain prudent people. A wife may be allowed to speak to her husband, but prudent husbands would probably prefer not to be so confided in. If she begin and end with, "Only, John, remember you must not tell," it's no great comfort to John, and it's not one of the obligations of married life to become the depository of such secrets. If you tell a very prudent friend whom you can trust, it is not a sin of

detraction, nor is it if you consult your director. As a rule, never mention a third person, but if you can't have your director's opinion without mentioning names you are allowed to do so, because it is not publishing a sin, as you have a right to advice. Another case in which you may mention a sin is if by doing so you can prevent crime, or its consequences, or lead to the correction of the criminal. But these are the only instances in which it is safe to speak of the faults of another. We have very great matter here for the guidance of conscience. Those who want to save their souls must be very particular. It is a very good rule not to talk of others at all. Talk more about things than people. Prepare yourself more for conversation. Acquire a habit of putting in a good word for everyone: for everyone has a good side, if only we are clever enough to find it. Nothing is easier than to find fault. The difficulty is to seek out virtue.

Other sins of the tongue are bitterness, sarcastic, clever talking. Besides being a great sin against charity, to ride down any individual who can't answer is a cowardly thing to do. It is very easy wit. You have only to be a little reckless and uncharitable. A great deal of misery is caused by people with these sharp tongues. Then they complain they have no consolation in prayer. Is it likely God would console them? Want of charity effectually shuts out consolations from Almighty God. Nobody knows how much suffering a sharp word sometimes causes. You subject a person to days and nights of mental anguish, and don't you think that an injury?

A jesting tone, a want of seriousness about religion, ridicule, irreverence—these cause great pain to others. Who likes to find a relation the butt of jests? If we take to heart the interests of religion we don't like to hear it laughed at. Nothing is so fatal as ridicule, it is a most deadly weapon. You can't contend with it. What answer is there to a buffoon? None. Many lose fervour and faith through ridicule.

Cultivate the habit of saying kind words. If we direct attention to it, it's wonderful how often we may find an opportunity of soothing some one by saying some little nice things. The world is greatly ruled by kind words. You may do anything by kind words. You may do so much good and prevent so much misery and sin if you give yourself trouble to think how you may say kind words. You will make friends for yourself on all sides, and you will find yourself in the enjoyment of wonderful peace of mind.

Examine, then, about detraction and your habit of saying kind words.

Spiritual Reading, Third Day, *Imitation*, Book I., chap. 22.

THIRD DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

ON HELL.

It is related in the life of St. Macarius that as he was walking one day he pushed aside a skull which spoke to him. St. Macarius asked what sort of place hell

was. The skull replied, "A place of wonderful torments," and could give no further description. And this is all we know. Our path here is very plain, but about the future we know very little. Hell is described as a place of darkness, weeping, gnashing of teeth, no water to cool the tongues of its inhabitants. Jesus Christ was full of tenderness and mercy. He would not break the bruised reed. Yet the few hints He gives us about hell are very terrible—very unlike what some imagine when they persuade themselves that all will come right. So let us take two considerations from which to derive the fruit we ask in this meditation—namely, horror of mortal sin.

FIRST POINT. A soul that is lost will be obliged to confess, "I might so easily have been saved, and I am lost". Have not the means of salvation been placed before us in great abundance? How we have been led forward higher and higher! If any of us should be lost we must confess we have had ample means of being saved. That one reflection would be hell. No escaping from that thought—from the vexation against oneself. I might so easily have been saved, and I am lost. We know what anguish it is to fear for our salvation even here, as we are, in our present life. Nothing can satisfy us or take that fear from us. What, then, must the reality, the conviction be? The memory, understanding, will—the whole being concentrated in that thought! To have this one thought always hanging over us—never a glimpse of hope! If there were no other torment hell would be very terrible. What a motive for us to give ourselves

earnestly to Almighty God! How light all the crosses—how easy the most arduous duties compared to this! “Pierce my heart with Thy fear.” May I fear sin. May I dread the anger of God—not the anger of men. May I make every sacrifice to escape God’s anger. Sometimes I am weary—temptations seem insupportable—the yoke laid upon me heavy—but what are these compared to the bitterness of the lost? All sufferings of this life seem mere pleasure to this—an eternity of regret.

SECOND. St. Paul reigns in great glory. That throne on which he sits was destined for him. Suppose that instead of saying, “What wilt Thou have me to do?” he had gone on waging war against Christ, what then would have been his sentence? He ought to have glorified God as he has done; but had he not done so, is God to be robbed of His glory? Had he been a rebel he would have had to glorify God in His justice, as he does now in His mercy and love. What would have been his place in hell to correspond to his triumph in heaven? Where is there a depth low enough to measure the height of his glory in heaven? Do you understand that thought, so simple and so true? We are all creatures of God to glorify Him in this world and the next. If we say, “I will not serve,” and leave the world enemies of God, it is certain we must glorify Him as much by our anguish and bitterness as He intended us to glorify Him by our throne in heaven; and so it would be difficult to exaggerate the terrors of hell. We have each one been called to a particular degree of glory.

If we die among the rebels to God there is a corresponding depth into which we must be thrown ; and if the glory is so great and the intimacy with God and the Saints so close, the punishment which is a set-off to that glory must indeed be great. Make an act of faith that God has created us for His glory, that I may glorify His attributes—mercy, wisdom, justice. If I will not glorify Thy mercy I must glorify Thy holiness and justice. O God, give me a great fear of Thy punishment—everlasting absence from Thee. It is terrible to fall into the hands of the justice of God. Take counsel while there is time. Whatever the past may have been, for the future strive to love God above all things. I do resolve to love Thee, O my God, with my whole strength and soul. No creature shall ever dispute Thy supremacy. I will sacrifice everything rather than sacrifice Thy friendship, Thy favour, Thy grace. Better lose everything than run the risk of losing Thee. Enable my soul to protest that I hate sin. . . . Then make acts of thanksgiving that you are not in hell. Never conclude this meditation without acts of praise. Thou hast preserved me that I might be saved. Thou hast spared me, when so many not so bad as I have been are lost.

Love God above all things : that is salvation.

THIRD DAY.

[8.30 A.M.]

ON THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL.

THE fifteenth chapter of St. Luke's Gospel is made up of parables of God's mercy—all answers to the murmurs of the Pharisees. Imagine our Saviour as He spoke this parable of the Prodigal, and ask to have abundance of trust in His mercy. Jesus Christ is making up a little romance to convey to such minds as were about Him some idea of the mercy of God. It was spoken for each of us individually—spoken to my wants and circumstances. It is a true picture of His love for my soul, told me in order that I may never doubt of the mercy of God as though it could fail. In this story there are many improbable circumstances. It is quite out of all human experience in order to make tangible the mercy of God. Consider the wilfulness of the sin of this son, no word of taking leave : he only wanted his substance to get away. There came a "mighty famine," a void in his heart, he "cleaved to one of the citizens"—would have eaten the husks, but no one gave unto him. His repentance—not the highest motive—hunger, misery, prompted him to say : "Father, I have sinned, I am no longer worthy to be called thy child, make me as one of thy hired servants," very simple words but very sufficient, "rising" without any loss of time. When he was "a great way off, his father saw him," the first exaggeration as if this father were always look-

ing out. "Moved with compassion," he does not wait for his son. Forgetting his dignity, he runs to meet him, falls on his neck, and kisses him. This is a true representation of God's dealing, not of ours. He makes his confession, he leaves out what he had intended to say, "Make me as one of thy hired servants," the words die on his lips: how could he say them to such a forgiving father? There is no expostulation or harshness on the part of the father, nothing but wonderful tenderness: "Bring forth quickly the first robe," etc. My heart is overflowing with joy, let us eat, and make merry. What warmth and ardour! what perfect forgiveness! It is a wonderful picture, unlike all we ever dreamed of. . . . His elder son, hard at work, with little consolation, heard music, etc., "and he was angry," not the offended father, but the brother who ought to have taken his part. His father went out to "entreat him" that there should be no mar to their happiness; he didn't command or reason, but begged. But this other son, who had never transgressed his father's commands, complains that he had had no favour shown him, not even a kid to make merry with his friends. This is the reasoning of fairness against mercy. . . . "Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine." Though you have worked hard I am always with you; that should be your happiness.

You may consider the "robe" in this parable to represent grace, the "shoes" God's laws, the "ring" the bond of God with souls, the "feast" the Blessed Eucharist. Consider how perfectly God's dealings

with you correspond with this. What a fault we are guilty of when we yield to despondency! There is hardly anything that so lowers our spiritual life as yielding to despondency. This is the Father of whose mercy and love we allow ourselves to doubt. What desires we should kindle in our souls to do something for Him! Colloquy to the mercy of God—acts of self-accusation and contrition, for ever having doubted it for a moment.

FOURTH DAY.

[10.45 A.M.]

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

THE Prodigal Son told us of the mercy of God, of His readiness to help us. He will not be wanting to us, if we are not wanting to Him. If He bids us walk on the waters, let us step forward boldly. As long as we trust in Him, He will help us. In these future meditations make frequent acts of confidence.

I have spoken of God's order in our nature, reason guiding the will and keeping the lower nature in subjection; faith, the extension of reason, a lamp in a dark place. There is a light on our reason. Jesus Christ, in His human virtues, teaching, example, is the light, not feeble, but a blaze. He is the Light that came into the World. To all who would receive Him, He gave power to become the sons of God.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Jesus Christ as He speaks His

Sermon on the Mount, as He comes before us in His poverty, humility, patience, etc.

SECOND PRELUDE—Ask that we may know Him, love Him, and follow Him.

Let us make a general survey of our Lord's life, and try to bring Him before us. Man had rebelled, had gone astray, led by an inordinate love of the things of the world, riches, pleasures, honours. Whatever the natural heart covets falls under one of those heads. Man had destroyed the kingdom of God ; Jesus Christ had to build it up. This kingdom is to be constituted only of those who of their *free act* choose to be His followers. Each one is free to enrol himself as a follower. On what constitution is this kingdom built ? The world was gone astray through an inordinate love of riches, pleasures, and honours. Christ would despise them ; He would love and choose poverty, toil and suffering, contempt and humiliation, so that men might be induced to enter into His kingdom, and be led perhaps to tread in His steps. That is the constitution. War against our natural likings, to rescue us from captivity, and give us the liberty of the children of God. All who would be members of His kingdom must overcome any inordinate affection. Those who love riches, pleasures, and honours inordinately are outside. I have been invited to enter : it is not the kingdom of blessedness yet, but the kingdom of war, in which I must battle. The invitation has come. Can I be deaf ? What *have* I done in the past ? I have renounced His obedience to be the slave of the world. How I should blush to think I

have chosen the devil in preference to His Kingdom ! How blinded I have been ! What fascination held my will ! I am sorry from my heart. Most royal of all leaders, I have been a deserter. How little contentment do riches, pleasures, and honours give at the best ! What misery and disappointment do they not often give ! With corrupted desires I have craved for these things. I have wished for pleasures, and not had them, or for riches and honours, and for these have given up the love of Jesus Christ. Perhaps I shall be obliged to have them as a responsibility, and be as though I had them not. May I despise what Thou hast despised ! If only I could renounce the world !—if I could be true and constant, never separated from Thee !

Jesus Christ in His own Person chooses poverty, in order that we may arrive at that degree of poverty necessary to our salvation. He chose toil and humiliation. It was not necessary for Him. Riches and honours would not have turned His reason or disturbed His will. He would show how blessed are the poor in spirit, and still more blessed those who are poor in effect as well as spirit. Blessed those who are called to pass their life in mourning, whose privilege it is to be contemned by the world, humiliated and mocked at. Those who stand close to Him are the elect, the privileged of Jesus Christ, who have received His choicest gifts. Far more precious than visions or miracles is it to follow the call of Jesus Christ, to renounce all pleasure, and share with Him who was poor, despised, and

forgotten. Few are called to this ; but all are called to forego inordinate love and natural preference for riches, pleasures, honours, etc. Our motive the exceeding loveliness of Jesus Christ. We should fly to Him to fight by His side. Nothing shall separate me from the love of Jesus Christ. St. Paul had seen His face, and through His life he never lost remembrance of the sight. There was a mighty force in that sight to carry Him through everything. Nothing should tempt us for an instant. Thou alone, O Jesus, art worthy of our love.

Let us look on this picture of Jesus. Why He came? To found a kingdom. How? By waging war, by inviting all to make their choice. They become His soldiers by waging war against those things in the state of life in which He has placed them, which are contrary to His spirit, and being ready if He calls them to forsake everything. Let us pray that we may listen to His invitation, that we may love Him above all, and others only for His sake.

CONSIDERATION.

FOURTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON MEDITATION.

FOR most people meditation is always a difficult matter. One can hardly speak too strongly of the

benefit that is to be derived from meditation. Belarmine says that whoever spends an hour in meditation every day is certain of salvation. It is a splendid homage to God. Many suppose it is beyond them, but this is not true. Mental prayer at least is very simple. Take your points, and on each point exercise your mind and will; any thought, if *dwell* on, will prompt some act of thanksgiving or humility. Go on making acts—that is mental prayer.

But now, formal meditation, what does it mean for me? I draw a conclusion, for example, that I must not despond about the mercy of God. But this is what I am always doing. God says, "Ask and you shall receive". I work out my conclusion *why* I should not doubt of mercy. Then I see *how* I have doubted it. I resolve not to do so any more. I make acts of confidence. Then I see *what I want* and I ask for it. I pray for mercy, unbounded trust in God's love. It is not necessary to go through all the points prepared if you find one point sufficient. Anyone of average intelligence can meditate in this way—make acts of virtue. Sometimes of a morning one is stupid. Begin then a list of petitions: one ought to have a string as long as one's arm. Some want long life, a certain virtue, the conversion of relations and friends, etc. If at a loss, begin with such petitions. Make for yourself a litany of Saints, those you feel most devotion to, or of martyrs if you like. Say to each one, "Pray for me, pray for me". After a quarter of an hour of vocal prayer, you begin to be able to use your

mind. Vocal prayer serves a good turn. Look down the long litany and see what comes after invoking the Saints. "Deliver us, O Lord:" we have a list of all sorts of evil we beg to be delivered from. Then come the graces we want. "We beseech Thee, hear us," over and over again. "Lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy." Repeat it thirty times. Good, holy people spend an hour sometimes in these petitions. Break out into praises sometimes: say the song of the Three Children, for instance, or invent a Psalm of your own. Praise is a department of prayer. There are many hymns of praise in the Psalter: don't rattle through them, but if a good idea comes, stop on it. I suppose it would be too angelic to do nothing but praise all one's life.

If you are not equal to formal meditation, try St. Ignatius' second method of prayer. You want love of God. Take the "*Anima Christi*". "Soul," turn it over, consider what it means, think about it as long as you can get anything out of it. Make affections of the will, faith, sorrow, humility, etc.; dwell on any affection that moves and touches you, for half-an-hour if you like. Some of the greatest strides the Saints have made have been by something coming home to them and they dwelling on it. . . . Or take your Gospel. The Prodigal Son for instance. "Father," Thou hast been a Father to me, and I have offended Thee. Teach me to be dutiful. I confess I have wished to have my substance away from home, etc. It is useful occasionally to go through some parable, in this way raising the mind and heart to God. Many

who find meditation difficult would do well to spend always half the time in this sort of irregular prayer. In periods of desolation have recourse to this by way of a change. God is pleased if we importune Him. Do the best you can and God will be satisfied. If you spend the hour working out your litany, it is the best you can do, though not much, whereas many good people go on grinding away at their meditation hopelessly. When you can't do the best thing, try to do the next best. Be a little ingenious in finding contrivances in the service of God: begin talking to Him aloud if there is no one near. "But we have nothing to say." If only you would get into the habit of talking to Him about your miseries and difficulties, you would find you had plenty to say.

Yesterday, in the consideration on evil speaking, I omitted to say, though a sin may be public, we may sin against charity if we speak of it through malice, and with intention to do harm to our neighbour.

By the gift of Knowledge we come to know what we are to believe, and what is to be the rule of our life. We get by it an insight into faith.

The gift of Fortitude enables us to encounter difficulties in the service of God, to rejoice in bearing and suffering for the love of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Reading, Fourth Day, *Imitation*, Book III., chap. 5.

FOURTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

ON THE VISITATION.

CONTEMPLATION consists in looking at people, hearing their words, watching their actions, and gathering some lesson for ourselves. In this mystery of the Visitation we have before us our Lady and St. Elizabeth. Who are they? Very insignificant in the eyes of the world. But how beautiful in the sight of God was the soul of Mary, never for one instant the enemy of Almighty God, His well-beloved, His chosen one! How much more important before God than the great people of the world! Contrast this meeting in the hill country, so simple, charitable, and affectionate, with the court of Herod and the noise of Jerusalem. O Mary, I believe that thou art conceived free from sin, dear and beloved in the sight of God. I believe firmly no shadow of sin ever crossed thee, that thou art the object of infinite complacency to the Holy Trinity, because thou art the beginning of the new order, and the reign of grace and justice. With Mary began the kingdom of hope, the declaration of war against the enemies of God! O second Eve! look down with pity on me thy child, that I may break the power of sin in my soul and join the camp of Jesus Christ.

Contemplate Zachary and Elizabeth, just before God, walking in all the commandments of the law, blameless, unknown to the world, notwithstanding their justice, their life spent in disappointment. At last when hope

seems to be past God gives the answer to their prayers, and bestows on them this child of benediction. "I rejoice with thee, O servant of God, for the reward He has given thee at last, and that Mary should come to thee. . . ." Many other thoughts may come. Dwell on them as long as they please you.

Consider the dispositions of our Lady. The Angel had expounded to her the mystery of the Incarnation, and waited for her consent which she had given. Then she rose up in haste and went into the hill country of Judea. It was a difficult journey, and she undertook it in order to remain with Elizabeth and relieve her: a great work of charity, forgetting herself, eager to give the pleasure of her company and assistance. What a beautiful inspiration of the Incarnation! And we—are we kindly and hospitable to our relations? See if you are wanting in a spirit of self-sacrifice. O Mary, pray for me that I may have charity to my relations and neighbours, and assist them in their temporal and spiritual wants. Acts of remorse that we are slow to perform acts of charity. Blessed are we when we can forget ourselves and think of others.

"And the Word was made Flesh." It was an old Catholic usage to make the sign of the Cross in danger and say, "The Word was made Flesh". "Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God." Recall the last meditation. My Lord and my King, Thou art entering upon Thy war for the establishment of Thy Father's Kingdom, willingly choosing this obscure, ignominious position. What a reproach to my love of honour, ease, etc.! I have no business

to seek these things. Let them have no place in my heart. May I triumph over them as Thou hast triumphed. What was the world to Mary with this Treasure in her heart—this intimate union with her God, her Child? Blessed art thou amongst women!

Then think of St. John. How, a few minutes before, he was still under original sin, subjected to the penalty of Adam's rebellion. Blessed Mary appears, and throws herself into the arms of Elizabeth, and Jesus will sanctify him in his mother's womb, and, as is believed, gave him the use of reason. "I believe that in this meeting Jesus Christ freed John from original sin. Blessed art thou, O John, in this thy extraordinary privilege of being set free from the captivity of sin, becoming the brother of Jesus Christ. I rejoice with thee in this thy privilege, in the great measure of grace given thee then. I rejoice that thou hast been called to a life of austerity, taken out of the world, that thou hast been privileged to renounce pleasures," etc.

Mary "saluted" Elizabeth. Her piety was kindly, genial, not overlooking the usages of life. Don't omit such usages! Be exact in fulfilling the civilities of life. Such little things as leaving a card may become meritorious. Here we see two loving souls glad to meet each other. How Elizabeth continues the address of the Angel! The Church has taken it up, and will continue it to the end of time. "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." I wish to repeat it in union with all those holy souls who have said it daily throughout these past centuries. May I always repeat it better and better.

There have been wonderful women in the world, but bring them all together, what an interval between them and blessed Mary! That a simple Jewish maiden believes on the word of an Angel that she shall become the Mother of God is the greatest act of faith in the world. "Blessed art thou, O Mary, for thy faith, blessed for thy hope, thy charity, thy hatred of sin. Do thou give glory to God, because we are not worthy to glorify Him."

"Whence is this to me?" What is there in me? Elizabeth was blameless, but she said, "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" Glorious Saint! God has singled you out to be the mother of the Precursor, of His pure mercy and bounty. Not the Mother, but my Lord Himself comes to me in a most wondrous union so long as I place no obstacle. I am not just. I am not blameless. Be merciful to me. Depart from me. Whence is this to me that He should enter into my heart? "I have walked in crooked ways." "Whence is this to me?" May I be filled with wonder! Elizabeth confesses the miracle, the presence of her God, because she was inspired by the Holy Ghost. "Blessed art thou that hast believed"—believed that this her Child was to redeem the world, that she had been chosen to be the Mother of the Saviour.

Great was the faith of the thief on the cross—more wonderful is the faith of Mary. O woman, great is thy faith! Never was faith like thine in all the world. O faithful Virgin, pray for me! Pray that my weak, wavering faith may be strengthened—that I may

shake off all doubt and temptation and cling to Jesus Christ. Oh, that I may have the grace of a mighty faith, that I may believe without any doubt all the mysteries of Holy Religion, that I may trust in Thy Divine Son made Man to redeem me, and who invites me to love Him with my whole heart.

FOURTH DAY.

[8.45 P.M.]

ON THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

FIRST POINT. How God tries His chosen servants. These three were dearer to Him than anyone else, and they were condemned to fly. It would have been easy for God to have diverted from them the anger of Herod. But instead, He assigns them a painful absence from home, an uncertain abode in Egypt. That we have to undergo sufferings, persecutions, a hard lot, is not a sign that God is displeased with us, but quite the contrary. I may turn such things into a grand occasion of merit. Thank God for trials in the past.

SECOND. Consider the admirable resignation of the three. They make no murmurs or complaints, but accept the Providence of God and make the best of it. They rise in the night with scanty provision, in perfect contentment, casting care for the future on God. How little we trust for the future. Think of the responsibility of Joseph. He leaves all to God. He has perfect reliance on God and distrust of

himself. He knew and accepted his entire powerlessness, and trusted perfectly to Providence. Here is a great subject for resolutions. There should be no limit to our trust.

THIRD. Their perfect obedience. The Mother might have remonstrated and expressed curiosity—how are we to live? how are we to bear the trials of such a journey? Not a word. The Angel comes to Joseph in sleep. It is a privilege to have your sleep broken and to be sent on difficult errands. It would not have been wonderful if Joseph had remonstrated, for he must have felt it most keenly. He gives us a model of perfect obedience under a bitter trial. “Who arose and took the Child and His Mother *by night*.” Have we got the virtue of obedience? Some are called to practise it often, and under very trying circumstances.

If you have any time over, you may go on to the Massacre of the Innocents.

FIFTH DAY.

[10.45 A.M.]

ON THE PRESENTATION IN THE TEMPLE.

FIRST POINT. We may draw instruction for ourselves from the exact observance of all the precepts of the law which we find in the Holy Family. Who are they who comply so faithfully with the law? The Son of God, our Light; our Example, the All-holy; Mary,

holy with a holiness we cannot take in : we offer her the worship of hyperdulia, so great is her sanctity, so far transcending the sanctity of any Saint ; but the holiness of Jesus is as much above hers as hers is above that of all the Saints, His Human Soul being as nearly divine as a created soul can be—something that baffles our thought. St. Joseph was thought worthy to be the Guardian of Jesus and Mary. As God fits everyone for their task on earth, so He fitted and adorned the soul of Joseph with incredible graces. Yet these three comply with the prescriptions of the law. We think it hard to go some distance to Mass on Sundays, but think of the journey to Jerusalem every year. I am full of infirmity, I have great need of support, yet am I so faithful in the observance of God's law ? You make a little law for yourself. How easily you give it up ! You give up your Communion because you are not worthy. You omit your meditation or perform it carelessly. Have I that regard for rule I see in the Holy Family ? It is not much God asks of me. If I keep my rule for a month, what calm it brings, how easily difficulties appear ! Perhaps I even arrive at thanking God for a trial and asking for more. If I break my rule I have no peace. I am a trouble to everybody, and everybody is a trouble to me. Ought I not to regret my inconstancy ? for it is sheer inconstancy and fickleness of heart : so I beg pardon. " I am full of sin and weakness. With all Thy grace I break away. I am sorry. Give me fortitude that I may overcome obstacles. Thou hast given me a great model of fidelity, give me grace to be faithful to my

rule." Make a resolution accordingly to be faithful and generous in keeping your rule. "Save me from feebleness of will. Virgin most faithful, pray for me. St. Joseph so exact, pray that I may be exact. . . ." Reflect on the advantages of a rule.

SECOND. "And Simeon *blessed* them" (St. Luke received these things from our Lady), "and said to *Mary His Mother,*" to whom alone the Child belonged—what? What was the accompaniment of the blessing? What words? Must not her happiness at that moment have been complete? In the bright sunshine of the Presentation she hears, "Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce." We may believe God did not at that moment explain these words. The mere knowledge of this grief to come was a sword which was to pierce deeper and deeper. Those who are loved by God never have a quiet, easy, pleasant time. There are scarcely any who have not crosses, but the greatest crosses, those which wound the soul most deeply, are borne by His chosen servants. "This Child is set . . . for a sign which shall be contradicted." The world ought to have been full of joy. What a boon, "the Word made Flesh"! One would expect all would wish to receive this heavenly gift. Nothing of the kind: "His own received Him not". From the beginning to the end He is "a sign to be contradicted". He has been and will be ever "set for the fall and for the resurrection of souls": resurrection for the three Magi, ruin

for those who saw the star but went about their affairs unheeding it ; resurrection for Simeon and Anna, ruin for Herod and His priests who never moved a foot to discover Him ; resurrection for those who left all to follow Him, ruin for those who would not follow Him when He vouchsafed to call them ; resurrection for the eleven Apostles who persevered, ruin for Judas, who fell, notwithstanding such great graces. And almost more terrible, ruin for the impenitent thief brought into such close relation with the Passion, resurrection for the other thief who believed in Him and confessed his faith. He is set for the fall of many who receive graces and neglect them. You never attend at Holy Mass, but the Sacrifice is for the resurrection of some and the fall of others. A retreat the same. " O Child of grace ! grant Thou mayest be set up for my resurrection. Jesus, Son of David ! have mercy. Save me or I perish. Be my resurrection and not my fall." Acts of holy fear at the wilfulness of man in rejecting God's mercy and love. What a mystery is our wickedness and His mercy ! Pray with earnestness for salvation.

And so began the life of sorrow of Blessed Mary. I compassionate with thee, and sympathise in thy excessive sorrow at these words of Simeon. What the sword was, whence it would come, she knew not, only that it would reach her through Him and His sufferings. What a shadow on her young life ! I have but a poor conception of the bitterness of thy sorrow, because I know so little of thy love. Grant that I may grow in the love of Jesus myself, that I may

better understand thy love, and sympathise with thy sorrow. Can I, such as I, complain if crosses are laid on me, and I am made companion in the sufferings of thy Divine Son? A life of suffering could never atone for my heedlessness. May I have patience to bear all in union with His Agony, to turn at once to Jesus my Redeemer, and then to Mary His sorrowing Mother, away from self, to fly to the foot of the Cross, and seek thy example to carry me through the trials God may have in store.

THIRD. One of the most difficult lessons we have to learn is to *wait* with patience. Simeon, just and devout, spent his whole life waiting for the fulfilment of his one desire. He lived almost for a century before He saw the Christ, yet he did not murmur nor give up. Day after day he persevered in the service of God in patience and hope. God does so often make us wait in order to try our faith and hope and love. We seldom please Him more than when we wait, faithfully discharging our duties. In the end we *shall* have our desire if it be for God's glory, and if not, better we should never have it. . . . This old man had gone into the Temple according to his wont. He sees a little group, and the Holy Ghost tells him there is the Messiah. The simplicity of that little group does not shock him : there is the Christ of the Lord. "Now dost Thou dismiss thy servant." He had longed to go to God for how many years—but "*now* Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace. Because mine eyes have seen Thy salvation"—the Redeemer of all

mankind—"a Light for the illumination of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." How he must have pressed that Child to his heart, and with what contentment and joy must he not have gone home and laid himself down to die!

Here is a grand lesson of patience and contentment with God. His creatures humbly waiting His bidding! You long for the conversion of one you love. You want it done at once—your way. Pray and hope: hope and pray. Wait, wait. In the end, as far as God is concerned, our prayer will be heard. We may all say, *Nunc dimittis*, if only we will learn to wait.

CONSIDERATION.

FIFTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON THE SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL PROGRESS.

(THE gift of counsel—a light of the Holy Ghost guiding us to do the right thing in each difficulty which arises. "Do not hold counsel with a fool, for he only approves what pleases him. Take counsel with the Holy Ghost.")

I suppose all who are trying to serve God are troubled with the idea that they are not getting on. It is no vanity to recognise that we are getting on—a great deal, or a little. Perhaps examination shows we have not advanced. How can we know? Let us

mark the stages in virtue. The first step is, to have broken with deliberate mortal sin and to live habitually free from grievous sin. If I have been free from mortal sin, have I any affection to past sin? Am I weakening that affection? I can say Yes or No. Anyone ought to be able to do this.

The next stage is to do the same with any deliberate venial sin. You must draw a distinction between what is deliberate and what is only semi-deliberate. I am making a meditation and distractions come. I don't make a vigorous resistance: this is partially deliberate. If I have a fine figure, sometimes I shall draw myself up and admire myself: this is only semi-deliberate. But there is some book which I know I ought not to read and I do read it: that is deliberate; or I say something against an acquaintance knowing I ought not, or I don't recognise some one against whom I have a spite: these are deliberate faults. Any deliberate uncharitableness or disobedience is displeasing to God. Masters of the spiritual life say that persons who *cherish affection* to venial sin ought not to go to daily Communion. This does not mean if you commit a venial sin but if you have *affection* to one. When there is *affection*, it is more a turning away from the Creator. It is a distinct step in progress when one has no affection for venial sin.

The third step is when we diminish very much our venial sins of infirmity (be glad when our corns are trodden on instead of being angry!). If we watch and pray, we do diminish their number and their malice: There is less will in them: they come only from

weakness. If we train ourselves we can lessen them very much.

In the fourth place ask, How do I bear crosses big or little? The weather, for instance, if it is too cold or too hot, do I complain? Do I make a fuss when the wind is in the east? The changes in the weather are trying, no doubt. Are they borne patiently? When there is an east wind do I remember that I have to mind my temper, or do I give way to it right and left? Then the people we live with, everyone different. It's a great blessing this variety, but, though it may make life bearable, it also makes it unbearable at times. Some like to have dogs about; others can't imagine how baptised Christians can stand the barking of such animals. Some like pork! Or breakfast is at a time we don't like. Peculiarities of taste are trials. If we attend to these things as matters of perfection we may get great benefit. Then there are big crosses—sicknesses, loss of friends, and, bigger still, one's own trials of mind, which no one knows of, terrible temptations to despair or against faith. Are we all fictions? Such questions and temptations come to many people so forcibly it is very difficult to shake them off. Holy people are sometimes assailed with the vilest temptations; everything is a temptation. How much patience have we with our crosses? It is well to ask this, because many people go on well, but are never quite resigned and patient under their crosses, instead of taking them as means of drawing them nearer to God. A Protestant child, what a trial to live with! Do we accept it, pray, try to be content,

and wait God's good time? So one of the questions by which we may measure our advancement is, How about patience? How am I bearing my crosses? Do I receive them in a resigned spirit, crushed flat down before God, knowing that I am in His hands?

With what intention do I perform my actions? Is my intention to please God? If one had a right intention that would be perfect sanctity. We need not renew our intention continually, so as to muddle our actions—refrain from doing a thing because we are not sure of our intention. The first thing is to shut out wrong intentions: "I wish to have no intention that will shut out my love of Thee: I wish to do this in Thee, for Thee, and with Thee". Do I allow other motives to come in? I don't think I do things for vanity, but if no one were present should I do them as well? I omit making my visit to the Blessed Sacrament longer because some one would criticise me. I have to shut out intentions that are imperfect, and must take pains about directing my intention rightly.

Look and see how far you leave sin behind, how far you have advanced in patience, and whether your motives are pure.

(Some persons who have no vanity are yet troubled with silly thoughts—how they look, what people will say, etc.—not voluntary thoughts. We don't adopt them, and we need not attend to them.)

Spiritual Reading, Fifth Day, *Imitation*, Book II., chap. 2.

FIFTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

ON THE FINDING OF OUR LORD IN THE TEMPLE.

I HAVE chosen the mystery of our Lord remaining for three days in the Temple with a view of explaining the doctrine of Christ with regard to religious life, a doctrine which everyone ought to know and understand. Never put an obstacle in the way of a religious vocation.

The doctrine of religious vocation is the true key to the history of our Lord separating Himself from His parents and remaining behind in the temple. First read the passage of the young man who declined the religious vocation when it was offered him by Jesus Christ. He had kept the Commandments, fulfilled the conditions of salvation—was there anything beyond? “If thou wilt be perfect, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me.” Jesus Christ offered this young man the same vocation He gave to Peter—the life of the counsels, to be poor and wandering, to have no relations, to go with Him. In the mystery of the Temple Jesus sets the example. He had now completed His twelfth year and was bound to go up to the Temple. By the Jewish law He had become master of Himself: at that age boys became men legally. So He goes up to the first Pasch that occurs after He becomes responsible to God.

When Mary and Joseph joined the caravan on

leaving Jerusalem He remained behind, knowing they did not know that He did so, disregarding the suffering it would cause them. They look for Him, but cannot find Him till after three days they come into the Temple where He is in the midst of the doctors. Evidently He had stayed behind to question them. Mary and Joseph wondered, and when Mary said, "Wherefore hast Thou so dealt with us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing," His reply was, "How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" My Father's business detains Me in Jerusalem. This — was the first act of the Man Jesus—to renounce father and mother, to cause them those days of keenest anguish because He must serve His Father. Having done this—having sacrificed Mary and Joseph and professed Himself a religious (if I may say so), "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them". At that time they understood not, but we see the reason of His conduct. He did not act by chance. He did it all with an intimate knowledge of their suffering. What had this Boy to live on? He must have slept out on the Mount of Olives or in the porch of the Temple. We can't be surprised that they understood not. If they had understood He was making His religious profession, they would have been glad. Religious life has never ceased from the day He said to Matthew and to Peter, "Follow Me". The same word is heard by all sorts of people—sometimes by people living in sin. That voice is ringing, and legions have obeyed and followed Him

till death, to follow Him in glory. Renew your esteem for law and rule. Pray that His exactness may not be lost on you.

Mary and Joseph, when they first discover He is not there, are without much anxiety; then they begin to be very anxious, and their consciences perhaps reproach them, as the consciences of holy people will. We sometimes fear we are out of grace, and are miserable till we have done our best to get it again. To lose God bodily—what must it have been! For the first time He is away from them. He had received all their devotion ever since His birth, and now He has no one to watch Him and care for Him. Had there been any negligence? Probably they did not rest that night. How they went on suffering, hoping, praying, till the morning broke! O Mary, I compassionate thee in this excessive sorrow. I grieve with thee, O great St. Joseph, in thy anguish, in thinking this precious charge has been lost through thy want of care. Compassionate the Divine Child Himself, sleeping, or lifting His little hands. Wherever He is, He is suffering for Mary and Joseph, and suffering more keenly than they. I sympathise with Thee because Thou hast felt their anguish to a greater degree than they. Thou art the Light: in all Thy lessons Thou hast shed a wonderful light to teach us to despise riches, but more especially in giving us this example of trampling on what is lawful and holy, when necessary, and for the service of God. Thou hast left father and mother and home, to give me a lesson of absolute poverty, dependence on Provi-

dence, consecration to God. Oh, that I may understand this lesson, my King and my Leader! Oh, that I may see how Thou wilt have me renounce entirely all the world most values and prizes! Fill me with shame and confusion, that I have been so backward in following Thee. Strengthen me that I may wage war with and conquer the inordinate love of all the world most loves. When I look on Thee here alone, my heart is filled with love, and I think how worthy Thou art of love and service. No captain was ever more capable of filling the hearts of his followers with determination to follow him in sacrifice. There have been noble sacrifices, sorrowful partings, bitter tears, but never such suffering as He and Mary and Joseph underwent in this commencement of religious life.

“ Jesus, the only thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast,
But sweeter far Thy Face to see,
And on Thy beauty feast.”

Dwell on those verses of St. Bernard, so full of love and loyalty. Renew in them the consecration of your heart.

They had lost Him and could not explain the loss. Did they sit down and give way to grief, or pray complainingly to God? They lost no time, retraced their steps, and sought Him until they found Him. When we lose Jesus, through no fault of ours, let us suffer, pray, weep if you will, but *seek Him*. You know where to find Him, in the Blessed Sacrament or in your own heart. Often we give ourselves to idle grief

without seeking Him. He is only too willing to give Himself again. I don't speak of losing Him by sin, for then we must confess.

“Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” that is the way He describes what He was doing in the Temple. It was the custom to discuss there points of the law. “His Father's business.” We should have zeal for it. Whatever our position, we may help on the business of God in the souls of others. There are thousands of ways in which we may promote the business of God. Are we zealous His kingdom should be established gloriously in our hearts and in those of others? In England the interest in religion is immense, in classes where you would not expect it; it is a phenomenon of our age, which gives an opportunity of doing immense good. Some have a particular talent of winning souls to God and consoling the afflicted. A kind word opens the heart. It is not necessary to argue or to imagine the work of conversion can be done in a minute. It takes a long time to catch and land a soul. Often it is a matter of years. You never know when the seed that has been sown will bear fruit. It is a time of immense grace while people are so much interested in religion. Go about your work of zeal for souls very patiently, praying a great deal.

FIFTH DAY.

[8.45 P.M.]

ON THE HIDDEN LIFE.

FIRST POINT. We come now to consider the mystery of our Lord being content to live in obscurity till He was thirty years of age, as a carpenter's son. The lessons which these long years were intended to convey to us must be very important. We learn to be satisfied with obscurity if it fall to our lot. Many are tempted to ask why they were created. We are all doing the part God assigned to us. Some fill great posts, wield power, and influence others; but the great majority fill no posts. The whole world is to a great extent occupied in providing breakfast, dinner, and supper. To provide food and protect it seems the great business in life of many. Police, doctors, lawyers, etc., what they do in itself is not much. Some apparently do nothing. The crossing sweeper, was he created to scrape the mud? There must be mud, so there must be immortal souls to sweep it away. How many live unmarried, seeming to exist for nothing but to wait on some aged parent or relative. It does look hard, but as there must be old people, there must be some to nurse them; we can't kill them. Nothing is unimportant to God. All these unimportant occupations, as we deem them, are part of the providence of God. Some one must be doing what I am doing. Some have no occupation. Well! there must be some

waifs and strays. Each must say: This is what I have got to do, and if I feel discouraged I look at Nazareth. There must be carpenters, and it pleased God His Son should be a carpenter, working humbly, not making speeches about His divine mission. Infinite Wisdom takes the part assigned by Providence. If He is content to do this, may we not be content with our post if nothing is to come of it but the salvation of our soul? God does not put the best people in the best places; in the lowest ranks there is a great deal of talent and originality. If we would cheerfully accept the post given us, and do the best we can for the service of God and to fulfil our part, the world would go on better. People will clamour and fight to get something better. It is a hard lesson to be contented with our lot. Then we have that desire for change, that impatience of monotony, which renders us easily discontented with our lot if it involves work and does not flatter our pride. There was not much glory, pleasure, or honour in the carpenter's life at Nazareth, but He led it for our instruction. Without His example we could hardly have believed our life was not too obscure and useless. Make acts of self-accusation, acts of love and of thanksgiving, that He has taught us such a lesson; resolve to imitate Him.

SECOND. He was obedient, also a necessary lesson for us. How difficult is obedience! The great motto of the present day is that each is as good as another. There is a throwing off of authority, an impatience of the authority of God. Every true Christian will be

on the side of authority, and take the part of the policeman. How perfectly, how long our Blessed Lord practised obedience! What a lesson to our pride! He was content to spread the table, prepare the meals, obey Joseph as a carpenter, and obedience was much greater in that country than we have any idea of. His example is a great reproach to us. We think obedience degrades us. Nothing of the kind. Obedience ennobles everyone. The person who lowers himself is one who obeys like a slave; but one who in all authority considers God is ennobled by obedience. Jesus Christ bowed down before the representative of God, to do His will. We show reverence and deference to God when we show reverence to our superiors. Here is a great subject for examen. Blessed they who have to obey, and have not the responsibility of commanding. The obedient person can accomplish the will of God in all important matters.

THIRD. He laboured and toiled from morning to night, at real hard work such as a poor carpenter would have to perform in order to secure a livelihood. Idleness is the mother of all evil. We are all better, wiser, and happier if we are well employed. Work of obligation takes the first place, but if you have no work make some. Let us have order and constancy in our work. Let us correct sluggishness. Let us see that we provide for the occupation of our time. There is an advantage in mechanical occupation.

FOURTH. He grew in grace. We must try to grow in grace with those with whom we live. I spoke of

gentleness and kind words the other day. Those virtues we owe to our Lord. We may study the lesson, and try to advance in favour with those around us : never allow ourselves to have any enemies, insist on being at peace with all.

SIXTH DAY.

[10.45 A.M.]

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

FIRST POINT. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Who are the poor in spirit? Not those exclusively who are poor in fact, but those who have no riches in their hearts, who do not prize riches unduly or inordinately, who use the things of the world as though they used them not, who are willing, if God require it, to forfeit all. Those who leave all things for him are "poor in spirit". They are happy and to be envied, for they have paid the price of the kingdom of heaven. We may see how these are free from one great obstacle—the inordinate desire of riches. Many are poor who have no poverty of spirit. It is a great thing to have the spirit of poverty. It is often said there are no cares like money cares, no cares that tie the soul down so irresistibly, and there are no more effectual obstacles to prayer, union with God, zeal for the salvation of souls. Money is so absorbing. Avarice is idolatry, the Scripture says. If one is free from the love of riches, how light-hearted one is ! The poor,

for example, how much more patiently they meet the trials of life, sickness, death, etc.! How much more charitable they are as a rule! What willingness they show to divide with their sick neighbours! This is a reflection of the spirit that comes from poverty of spirit. Poverty, if one can take it rightly, is a great blessing. It is a blessed thing to have nothing. Money is only an anxiety. Make an act of faith in the blessedness of poverty in spirit. Pray that you may strip yourself of all affection for riches. If God send you actual riches, pray for strength not to be attached to them. If we are fearful about losing riches, and unwilling to give, we have no true poverty of spirit. Do we like to give when we know an object is deserving, or do we hold to money. Have we compassion for the poor? Are we thankful to assist them? The poor have a claim like children. Pray to be freed from the love of riches, to have reverence and respect for poverty. How bountiful art Thou, my God, to give so splendid a recompense for the little we give up to Thee! What a princely Leader is our Divine Saviour! How royal and grand in all His thoughts and rewards! I love Thee because of Thy noble liberality, my Master in the school of poverty. How grandly hast Thou realised for me in Thy example the blessing of poverty—poverty in Thy birth, poverty in Thy life, utter poverty in Thy death! May I be Thy docile child.

SECOND. "Blessed are the meek." Who are the meek? Those who bear suffering and neglect patiently, who don't put themselves forward. The

world despises the meek, and thinks much of the fierce and proud, who are capable of looking after themselves. On the Lips of Jesus there is no blessing for such as these. The world thinks the aggressive and fierce possess the land. They have their hour, but commonly they meet one stronger than themselves—some humiliation and they are crushed. The meek in the end possess the land. It is the meek who prevail. They have a deep, unutterable peace in this world. "The Lord is my portion." They shall possess Him even in this world—their goods, their friends, they possess. The world finds that which is difficult to human nature quite unintelligible. It is difficult not to retaliate, to have no wish for revenge when wronged. O my Lord, though it is hard to nature, still I believe firmly, "Blessed are the meek". Strengthen my faith—make it practical. May I learn to be meek. Make my heart like Thine. Teach me to bear injustice patiently, to receive injuries with resignation. Admire the wonderful meekness of Jesus, especially in the Passion. "If I have spoken evil bear witness of the evil." O my Lord, I admire Thy superhuman meekness, unlike any I can think of. This meekness is Thy gift to the world. May I renounce my pride, my desire to prevail over others. May I possess the land in peace, happiness, tranquillity of conscience.

THIRD. "Blessed are they who mourn." Who are they that mourn? Those who have contrition for their sins, and are filled with shame and confusion—who live in the world, knowing its vanity, and wishing to be free and with Christ. Those who are saddened

that God is so offended and meets with such ingratitude. Those who never give themselves up to amusements because life is too serious. One in union with God can never yield entirely to the current of dissipation in the world. Those who give themselves to amusement unrestrainedly are foolish—dancing on the brink of a precipice. We are to be always cheerful. Christ was fond of children : they gathered round Him ; but we cannot imagine holy persons utterly given up to enjoyment. Life is serious to them : they are all in a sense mourners : they join in the pleasure when it's a duty. But if you love God you will feel in your heart a mourner. Blessed are they who mourn and make the experiment of happiness in mourning. No penitent ever unlocked a sinful heart without tasting calm—a calm that is never found in the intoxicating joys of the world. They are comforted—worldlings never can be comforted. There is no comfort in the possession of pleasure—none so wretched as those who are *blasé*. But he who only takes pleasure as a duty shall be comforted. He who is full of the mysteries of eternity shall have peace and joy, a merriment even, such as worldlings never experience. O Lord, I believe that blessed are they that mourn over their sins, over the seriousness of life. They are not blessed who fly from mourning. Strengthen my faith. Awaken in my heart a spirit of mourning. Thou wert a mourner—may I follow in Thy steps. I am not afraid to cast myself into Thy arms, and leave it to Thee to give me that measure of comfort which Thou seest is for Thy glory.

CONSIDERATION.

SIXTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

“UNDERSTANDING” is a gift of the Holy Ghost, enabling us to take in and penetrate more deeply the mysteries of our religion. It is a good thing to pray for this and for more knowledge of our Lord’s dealings.

ON ORDINARY CONFESSIONS.

Our ordinary confessions are sometimes a source of great trouble. They are a great means of sanctification, not always appreciated. I am going to speak of ordinary confessions, regular and frequent confessions, made once or twice a week. Some think if there is no mortal sin to be confessed there is no use in coming to confession. But confession is meant to be a great blessing for the good also. They look on it as a Sacrament enabling them to get rid of the burden of their faults. True it is for the remission of sin, but in every Sacrament there is a grace conveyed to the soul. The sacramental grace given enables us to avoid sin and discharge our duties. Every time I make my confession I am stronger to resist sin. If I have a temptation to despondency I receive grace to resist it.

Others have a curious fear of sacrilege, and look on confession as a sort of trap in which God will catch them. The idea of there being a sacrilege in

ordinary confessions! There is no danger of sacrilege if you take ordinary care. But there are a number of people who can't be satisfied to believe all is right; who go on wondering whether they made an act of contrition, whether they mentioned this or that, and are always in a muddle. One may make a good confession and have very little to say. We cast ourselves at the foot of our Lord on His Cross to have His Precious Blood to strengthen us to serve Him better.

As regards preparation.—1. Examination—What am I to examine? How long am I to take in examining? Almost in a moment, at a cursory glance, we may know what we have got to say. It is not necessary to mention everything. We need not fidget. Mention one venial sin, or two. One likes to confess negligences in prayer. I have been negligent in resisting distractions one morning, because of having been at a party the night before. On temper, most have something to say, especially if shown outwardly by impatient words. Sins of the tongue—Some will have much to accuse themselves of here; others have learnt to be careful. Temptations to blasphemy or against faith—Was there negligence in putting them away? If you are tempted against faith, and you have wilfully sought out a friend who is witty against religion, you should mention it, because it is an occasion of temptation. Doubts come as to the Real Presence. I don't at once take my thoughts away. I think, how can it be? I begin reasoning with my temptations instead of deliberately putting them away. Imaginations when they present themselves, if not put away, are

very dangerous. If there has been any negligence I accuse myself. Some are not satisfied in confession unless they have a real long story. Temptation is not a sin. All you have to say is whether you have consented or not. A wife comes to confession, and it's always what John has done, not what she has done herself. Some people can't say plainly, "I did this or that," but must make a long story and muddle their confession. Some will mix up troubles with sin. They should keep those clear of confession. They have reason to suspect their cook ; it may be proper to consult your confessor, but don't mix it up with the confession ; do it afterwards. There are some people who never can discover any sins, but those are not people who are leading very good lives, and going to confession frequently. Those who have nothing to confess may consult their friends, who will furnish them with a list of faults.

2. "I have no contrition ; at least, I don't feel it." Why should you *feel* it? You may have the will, but no feeling about it. Do you wish you had not done what is wrong? Even very slight things, we can wish we had not done. It's not wonderful that you can't weep for half-an-hour. You say, "I am not sure I wish I had not done it". But are you glad you did it?

3. Amendment. "I know I shall do it again." That is not the question. Do you want to do better? That we more commonly feel. If you go to confession twice a week and make your meditation every day, it follows naturally that you want to be better. Those

who make frequent confessions should not worry themselves about the particular sins for which they make contrition, but try to avoid *all* occasions of sin, and *mean* to do better next time. God is so good to me. This is a very strong motive for contrition. How can I be better? Think of our Lord on the Cross and our obligation to do something for Him, or Holy Communion, or Purgatory. There are plenty of motives for contrition and purposes of amendment. If you make this simple confession, sins are forgiven, difficulties overcome, and grace obtained to get better.

I have almost said all that is necessary as to the manner of making confession. About thanksgiving afterwards—when you have a short penance it is good to say the *Miserere* and Psalm cii., and some prayers of preparation for Holy Communion. It sobers you, brings you before our Lord. Don't make your confession a torment; on the contrary, it should be a great consolation. Those who make their confessions well will find they get the grace of peace of mind—a grace the value of which it is certainly impossible to exaggerate. Their minds are more accessible to holy thoughts; they follow the grace of God more easily—an essential condition of increase in virtue.

Make a Communion of reparation to-morrow (Friday) for all the sins committed against the Blessed Sacrament, especially by ourselves.

SIXTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

OUR LORD WASHING THE FEET OF HIS DISCIPLES.

FIRST POINT. Very solemn is the way in which this act of our Lord is introduced: "Knowing that the Father had given Him all things into His hands, and that He came from God, and goeth to God". You wonder what is to follow after this magnificent introduction. What is the meaning of this? What is the lesson? Is it important? It is one of humility, one of charity. He washes their feet and asks them if they understand what He has done, and tells them, "If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet". If Christ renders that lowly service of charity, we ought to be prepared to render services to one another. This is the way in which we ought to approach Holy Communion: if we approach filled with pride and bitterness, we are not in proper dispositions. When superiors imitate this act of putting themselves at the feet of their inferiors, they make themselves inferior for the moment. This shows the humility we ought to bring to Holy Communion. We should have the disposition of the publican, "O God, be merciful to me a sinner". Our humility must take the form of not preferring ourselves to others, thinking we are better than others, seeing the faults in others, imputing motives to them, hypocrisy, etc. We often shrink from proclaiming our superiority, but we don't mind putting others below

us. We must put no one beneath us, not condemn any, be ingenious to discover excuses. There must be a reference to our neighbour in our acts of humility. Hence the Saints loved to put themselves at the feet of others. If you have a feeling against another, put yourself mentally at the feet of that one and say, "You are better before God than I am". St. Francis Borgia put himself under the feet of Judas. If one does this honestly it makes one a little humble. A very good matter for examination this—Do we cultivate that humility which is the right preparation for Holy Communion? Do we try to excuse our neighbours? It is almost always possible to find something which excuses them. Be very slow to find fault or condemn, to think evil and to impute bad motives. Have we this disposition? or do we condemn others with little reason? and suspect them? Accuse yourself: "I thank Thee for this precious lesson. I am full of pride, and Thou dost teach me to humble myself. May I always be eager to excuse others. Thou knowest the hearts of all, and Thou dost cast Thyself at the feet of all. There is none I have a right to prefer myself to. My place should be to be trampled under foot. Forgive me for my pride. Grant me to know my sins. How worthless I am in the sight of God! How inferior to others! What a blow Thou givest to the inordinate love of honour! Give me a hatred of the falsehood of pride."

SECOND. Think of our Lord at the feet of Judas, carefully, tenderly trying to win him from his evil way

—calling him from his avarice. What fierce, unbending pride is there in this treacherous Apostle! What a sad state his mind was in!—no sympathy, no tenderness in his heart. St. Francis Borgia, after praying with very great intensity for a dying man, received this answer from our Lord: “I have spoken to him from the crucifix. I cannot take away his free will.” Not all the love of Jesus can change a perverse will. We may well be terrified thinking of Judas and reading his history. Grant that I may not be hardened and blinded. May I never surrender my soul to any passion. As Judas died, thousands have died since. It is not a bad prayer often to pray to be delivered from a blinded mind and hardened heart. How intimate Judas had been with his Master! When called, he was probably simple like the rest and loved Jesus. What a change! How terrible to lose the grace of God, and become hardened in sin!

THIRD. Consider the example of Peter. It is always encouraging to meditate on Peter—so human, full of impetuosity and impulse, no pride in him. The look of Jesus softens him. “Dost Thou wash my feet? Dost Thou come to me, a sinful man? I once prayed Thee to depart, and now dost Thou come to wash my feet?” Our Lord answered, “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter”. Peter did not know how He held to this example of humility: the weighty lesson was to be explained hereafter. Peter went on—from a right sentiment—but one must not make contracts with Almighty God. It was not right for Peter to say, “Thou shalt never

wash my feet". We must never set a limit to what God is to ask from us. Peter was rash—marking a limit which does not do between the creature and the Creator. "Unless I wash thee, thou shalt have no part with Me." The disobedience Jesus reproveth was enough to deprive Peter of his part. The washing, symbolical of the cleansing of the soul from venial sin: "If I cleanse thee not thou hast no part in Me," not because venial sin deprives the soul of a part in Christ, but because his disobedience would expose him to the loss of Christ's grace. Let me have part with Thee in Thy suffering. Let me have a share of Thy cross—in the bearing of all Thy trials. May I be with Thee on Calvary as on Thabor. . . . "Not only my feet, but also my hands and my head." His impetuosity carries him the other way now. Again Jesus corrects him. Sometimes we are fussy—we want something out of the way. We are not satisfied with the limits marked for us. When our Lord marks out for us a certain rule, certain trials, we should like what He likes, put ourselves into His hands in perfect submission to His will. It is a great error to presume beyond what He marks out for us. Our circumstances are a plain revelation of the will of God. "He that is washed"—from mortal sin—"needeth not but to wash his feet."

Charity goes with humility. What we ought to have in Holy Communion is universal charity—charity towards our relations, friends, and enemies especially. Pray that we may receive this twofold spirit.

SIXTH DAY.

[8.45 P.M.]

ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Our Lord as He institutes the Holy Eucharist.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will, that I may understand the infinite mystery of Thy love, that I may eat and be strengthened.

Begin by reading the text from St. Matthew and make affections. This is a meditation more for affections than anything else.

1. Fall down in adoration and make an act of faith. Thou hast spoken, and, though my senses tell me nothing, I firmly believe that Thy Body and Thy Blood, Thy Soul and Thy Divinity are here. This is a hard saying, but with Thy grace we believe it. "To whom shall we go?—Thou hast the words of eternal life. We have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God." Join your acts with the acts of faith made by the Apostles, and by Mary and by the Saints of all ages all over the world, all through the Church.

2. Wonder. I am lost in amazement. In Thy life Thou hast performed many wonderful acts. Thy hidden life, Thy public life, were all mystery, but this transcends all. This is even more than the Incarnation. Most of all in this dost Thou show mercy, wisdom, love, and power. Who could have dreamt of

God giving Himself to be the food of man? It so far exceeds imagination we at times find it difficult to believe. That this bread and this wine should be changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, the more I think the more I wonder. I fall down in wonder before this bold fancy and flight of the love of Jesus Christ. Never hast Thou revealed Thy power, and wisdom, and love as Thou dost here.

3. Thanksgiving. From my heart I give Thee thanks for this invention of Thy love, in which Thou dost so condescend to this my weak nature that Thou dost enter my mouth and breast. Would that every moment of my life were a thanksgiving! Thou askest for my heart. Take it and change it: make it human. Unite it to Thy Heart that it may be less unworthy of Thy presence.

4. Sense of unworthiness. The Church insists on this. *Domine non sum dignus.* To what a Home do we bring Him! We are pained when we think of the poverty of some of the exterior houses in which the Holy Sacrifice is offered and the Blessed Sacrament dwells, or of the hovels of the poor to which He goes in Viaticum; but more poor and more insignificant are our souls. With our proneness to sin, our slackness in good, what a mass of misery they are! I am not worthy on account of my past sins, of my present dispositions. Thy presence must make me less unworthy. "Lamb of God"—meek and unresisting is the Victim that unites us to God—"Lamb of God, that hast washed away our sins in Thy Blood, have mercy on us."

5. Ardent desire. Do Thou come though I am so unworthy. I long for this food which gives me strength to contend against my enemies, strength to make my wearisome journey.

6. Acts of love to God—to our neighbour. Thou hast commanded me to love my neighbour for Thy sake. I love all my brothers, my enemies, those who have been kind to me, all I know. Do not deal with me as I have dealt to others. Make me forgiving; make me loving.

7. Hope. Can I doubt Thy willingness to give me everything? What a pledge of Thy goodness! May I never wrong Thy love by doubting Thy promises! Offer up your Holy Communion in reparation for all the injuries offered to It from the day of Its institution; from the Communion of Judas until now. "Love of Jesus, Thou lovest, Thou art not loved."* May we never forget Thy love in the Blessed Sacrament. "Would that Thou wert loved." On this little prayer we may make a good preparation.

SEVENTH DAY.

[10.45 P.M.]

ON THE PASSION.

THE Passion is the favourite subject of meditation with most of the Saints. It combines the advantage of putting before us Jesus Christ and His glorious example, and our sins which brought Him to the

Cross. Some make their Friday meditation always on the Passion.

FIRST POINT. Think of our Lord nailed to the cross, the soldiers and crowd surrounding Him. This is all that remains of Him at the end of His wonderful life of holiness and beneficence. Through His hands and feet the sharp nails are driven, His limbs are quivering with pain, His head droops, His eyes can only find objects of hatred and terror, the sounds that reach His ears are sounds of blasphemy. This is the work of man—the havoc man has wrought in Him. “O my God, strengthen my faith! Thou art the Christ; under all Thy wounds, I confess Thou art my Creator. Thou lovedst us so much. Thou wouldst keep nothing for Thyself. I confess Thy wondrous love for man—for me, notwithstanding my offences. Thou hast given Thy life for Thy enemies. May I strive to spare Thee the pain of deliberate venial sin. Because my heart is with difficulty moved, do Thou touch it. Strengthen my love, have mercy on me. Truly this was a just Man, and He should not have suffered. We have incurred the wrath of God: take away our sins. May Thy Blood wash away all my sins, my lukewarmness, my pride, my sluggishness. Make me give Thee some return of love.” Go on with affections of the will.

SECOND. We know what a tender Heart was that of Jesus Christ, how It spent Itself in love. His was a Heart most easily wounded by forgetfulness and treachery, that felt most keenly the anguish of being hated even when undeserved. How wounded is this

loving Heart! The Sunday before, the crowd had gone out to meet Him with palms. Friday, all is forgotten as if it had not been. "If He be the Son of God, let Him come down from the Cross." Perhaps amongst those who turned against Him were some who had received special mercies. Tradition says Malchus was the man who struck our Lord. How deeply was He wounded by the treachery of Judas, and by his unrepentant acknowledgment of his sin flinging himself out of this world. Where are His friends? Followers have become persecutors. What a wound for the Heart of Jesus! Thy Heart so wasted Itself in love, and Thou art so afflicted in Thy loneliness and desolation. Thy Heart is broken by the ingratitude, and cruelty, and savagery of Thy enemies and friends. May I ever love Thee, and never forget Thy love.

He gives us a lesson. We sometimes suffer from the neglect of old friends—we find their friendship changed into dislike or indifference, and ourselves put on one side. We are no longer as young as we were, and are not able to play a leading part. We find a difficulty now in winning affection, and this is a trial. We sometimes meet with ingratitude—a very great trial to a loving heart. Look up at the Cross of Jesus—what is the trial for us compared with His? He is waging battle against love of esteem and friendship—against an inordinate desire of being cared for and sympathised with—against the "pride of life" in all its forms. For there is no satisfaction greater than having the love of others, and knowing they confide

in you. Friendship is a great treasure—it is so difficult to have it in moderation. Jesus Christ has His Heart torn. What a lesson for us that we are to triumph over this love of friendship—not make it an object! We are not, for the love of creatures, to sacrifice our Creator. All love should be hallowed and sanctified by the love of Jesus Christ—all must be sacrificed at His bidding. It must be in God, and for God, and never in opposition to Him. It will grow stronger and deeper if planted in the love of Jesus Christ. Are we over-eager to be appreciated, valued, cared for, missed? Have we encountered unkindness, and how have we borne it? Is it a thing we can't forgive, or can't forgive entirely? O Lord, forgive me all inordinate love, sanctify all my affections. If I have been too much wounded, forgive me. I ought to have learnt a lesson at the foot of the Cross. What are all my persecutions to Thine? What claim have I on the gratitude of others? I compassionate Thee in Thy abandonment.

Think of the injustice with which our Lord was treated—how injustice was heaped upon His head. The council meets to compass His death, and resolves to buy Him. The highest tribunal treats with one of His disciples, and buys Him from His friends. Armed men are sent to seize Him in the night, and He is taken to Annas and Caiaphas. False witnesses are called and can't agree. The High Priest adjures Him to say He is the Son of God, and then He is condemned to death. There is reason to fear there were some who knew He was more than man. Then

they go away to sleep, and leave Him with the servants. Very early they assemble again, and renew their guilty sentence. They hurry Him to Pilate: innocent or not they will have His Blood. Then He is sent to Herod. Herod hoped to be amused by a miracle. Is life nothing? justice nothing? death nothing? Is this man to amuse himself with the last hours of our Lord's life? Ought he not to have looked into it? But He is dragged back to Pilate again. Pilate orders Him to be scourged, as though that were nothing. He is crowned with thorns, insulted in every way, and then the crowd prevails, and He is sentenced to death, and, as if it were all nothing, Pilate calls for water and says He is innocent. There is not a gleam of justice. What so against our nature as injustice!—to be victims of injustice. There are few things we cannot bear better. How many, after years have passed, have a sense of unjust treatment. We can forgive all wrongs but injustice. Our Lord wages war against this part of the pride of life. How cruelly He is treated, crucified as an impostor between malefactors. What is the injustice we have suffered, compared with that He has suffered? "O my Lord, I sympathise with Thee in the bitterness of Thy pain. Thou wert entitled to the service of all men, and Thou hast met only with ingratitude. Stifle in my heart this pride of life. May I submit in union with Thee." Acts of contrition. Admiration of His sufferings.

CONSIDERATION.

SEVENTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON DIFFICULTIES WITH REGARD TO PRAYER.

THE first difficulty we will consider is that of applying the mind at all. It is not complimentary to suppose many of you are incapable of applying your mind seriously for any time, but it is true nevertheless. In prayer it is very difficult to keep the mind fixed. St. Aloysius was thought most extraordinary in being able to pray for an hour without distraction. Between him and us are many gradations. The power of sustaining application can be acquired. Take a book and keep your mind fixed on it without wandering for three minutes by your watch. Then try for a longer time—a quarter of an hour—not a spiritual book, but any book, just to get into the habit of concentrating your attention. Take your watch for four or five minutes, and apply your mind to an act of contrition, or so, without a distraction. You must educate yourself to fix your mind. It requires some effort, but it can be done.

2. The mind easily wanders to what interests us most. If when we should be praying we find ourselves wandering to downright trifles, amusements, etc., say—What a miserable head is mine, it can't be kept off such things and be given to God for five minutes—what a matter for humiliation ! If you are

oppressed by difficulties ask for help. If you are in a puzzle about something and it worries you in prayer-time, pray about it, talk to God about it, and you will get profit out of it. The devil won't be so anxious to trouble us with difficulties if we turn them into prayer.

3. Posture in prayer. Most people find kneeling induces those dispositions which are most reverent. Some can't kneel quietly. If they can pray better sitting, let them sit or stand. One may kneel, sit, stand, or lie prostrate. This last does not favour proud thoughts. You must not get opposite a window or where you will have distractions. A *prie-dieu* is a great help to prayer. Prayer is an effort and takes a great deal out of one. A doctor said once he could manage his religious patients much better if it were not for that horrible meditation before breakfast. God is satisfied to have what He can get—the best we can do before breakfast.

4. Too great anxiety about one's spiritual life is a great obstacle to prayer. People are kept back by over-anxiety to get on. If one is to advance one must go quietly. God does not want us to go too fast. As it is we have a difficulty in keeping humble. In spiritual life we must be content to go as God wants us. You can't have too ambitious desires. It serves His purpose that we should tumble and rise again—and tumble again. Look back five years. My faults—are they less frequent? Are my meditations better? Have I no deliberate sin on my conscience? Is not that grand? You may see how differently you look

on the world, and how much more patiently and courageously you bear certain crosses. You think you don't get on, because you have no delight in prayer, or ecstasy in Holy Communion, but you are really advancing, and ought to be very thankful. That shocking temper, which was a caution, is more bearable. Ask resignedly if you like for a little crumb of consolation—there is no harm in that. You do advance, you must advance, but if you muddle your life you don't get on. If we were content to stumble on in meditation, giving up the idea of doing something wonderful, we should do better. Another thing that hinders us is our being so vexed about our faults. If we accept our falls, saying, "I made a resolution, I broke it—there is no good in trying," it's a terrible obstacle. But you *can* get fruit out of your faults. You have made a resolution against giving way to your temper, and the first time there comes a trial you break it. Well, never mind, say to yourself, "Just like me! I've fallen—my fault. Yes, I ought to be ashamed of it." You ought, and then cheerfully make a fresh resolution. If you worry about it, and give up, you are demoralised. Many holy people waste their life by being dissatisfied and desponding. They have lost their temper on some slight provocation—their self-love is wounded, they think others are laughing at them, but if they own "my temper again" and make an act of humility, they may get profit from their fault and help in prayer. It is pride and self-love that make obstacles to prayer. Another obstacle is overmuch fear and anxiety about sin. You have been

to confession in the afternoon, then you talk with some one, and you think you have said something untrue. You go on wondering whether you have or not, and you decide not to go to Holy Communion. A great loss. You should make an act of contrition and not lose your Communion. God does not expect you to be perfect. Don't go to Holy Communion if you are meditating an uncharitableness and cherishing an idea of doing wrong. If you are in a disposition and mind to do wrong, then you should stay away. Not unfrequently as an excuse for not praying you say, "I lost my temper last night—no good meditating to-day". Meditate about your sin. No doubt we could all improve our meditation by just seeing where the fault lies. Try and find out the obstacle, and then set about correcting it. Spend some time in examining and ascertaining as to this obstacle.

SEVENTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

ON THE PENITENT THIEF.

WE will consider now one of the mysteries of the Cross, to excite us to love and confidence, and also to fear lest we abuse grace. Read the account of the two thieves in St. Luke.

The words, "If Thou be the Christ save Thyself," should fill us with a fear of abusing grace. To be crucified close to Jesus with a shower of the Precious

Blood raining on him and to remain unconverted—what a lesson for us! That it was a time of copious grace we see from the other thief. The agonies of crucifixion were terrible. This unfortunate one, on the point of death, shuts his heart against grace, and joins the blasphemies of the crowd, and so he died, notwithstanding the example of the other robber. What must we fear of a hardened heart! “Save me from a heart turned away from Thee, hardened against Thy Precious Blood and Thy wonderful example and death. May I never throw away Thy grace lest I come to die in my sin.” Can we say this man did not deliberately turn from grace, blaspheming Christ as he passed into the other world, blaspheming Christ who was crucified for him as for Peter or for Paul? But the other thief rebukes him. He too is under the shower of the Precious Blood; he felt his fellow robber was unjust, and he defends Jesus Christ. I rejoice with thee, O blessed thief, atoning for thy sins by this death, and undertaking the defence of thy Lord. “And we indeed justly,” we have merited this. Blessed penitent!—blessed because thou hast confessed thy sins, and bowed down with submission before their punishment, and hast not murmured against justice. I congratulate with thee for thy exceeding sorrow, thy humble petition. “This Man has done nothing amiss.” Well hast thou spoken. He never did evil; He never spoke a harsh word. Great good has He done in His war against the enemies of God and man, re-establishing the Kingdom of God upon earth. Truly hast thou con-

fessed. My Lord! may I join in his confession; Thou art goodness itself; from Thee all goodness has come into my soul; with him I confess and thank Thee.

“Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.” Picture the scene on Calvary. Christ with the thieves on either side. The soldiers representing the Roman Empire and law, the crowd with their jeers and blasphemies, and the Pharisees stirring them up. How little is left of Him, and in this degradation listen to the words of the penitent. Jesus pronounced Thomas “blessed”—“because thou hast seen and believed”. Mary was called “blessed” by the Angel, Peter “blessed” for believing, but how can the thief see then his Lord and his God? He sees through all the ignominy of the Cross, and cries, “Lord, remember me”. Yes, He will remember thee. “Blessed thou that hast believed.” My Lord, again I thank Thee for Thy wonderful grace to him. What a change in that dying man! A short hour or two ago he was carrying his cross, strong and unrepentant. Now he is dying, a humble penitent, heeding nothing of the soldiers and the crowd, the world is nothing to him, he cares only for his Lord and King. “Remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom.” We may be lost in wonder. Is there in Scripture any scene where there is such a triumph of grace? We may never weary in thinking of the power of God’s grace.

“This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

The problem of his salvation soon told, soon completed. What peace, joy, happiness! Glorious martyr, true to Jesus Christ, dying by His side, bold and fearless in his confession. A death the Saints have always envied, dying with Jesus Christ, beside Him in His last great battle, proclaiming to all the world thy faith in His Divinity. I thank Thee, my Lord, for having led him to Thee. What wonders grace might work in us if only we listened, if only we corresponded. If we are inclined to doubt the power of grace, think of this thief, who goes out of this world as a martyr and confessor. O my Lord, do Thou say to me at the end of my life what Thou didst say to him. Let us pray for a strong, intense, earnest faith, to enable us to confess Christ before God and man. Act of contrition for our sins. He died for our sins, to be our ransom, to pay the price of our liberty. O my Lord, prostrate before Thy Cross, I confess the sins of all my life, my sins of ignorance, my sins of commission and omission. Would I had never offended Thee.

SEVENTH DAY.

[8.45 P.M.]

ON THE RESURRECTION.

IN the mysteries of the Resurrection we ought to insist very much on the contrast between the ignominy of the Cross and the glory of the Resurrection.

Whereas in the Passion the Divinity was concealed and was not exerted at all, in the Resurrection He puts it forth in power, majesty, and great peace. Remark also how our Saviour in His apparitions always consoles His disciples.

We will take the scene in the last chapter of St. John, where our Lord appears on the shore when the disciples are fishing, and afterwards gives His commission to St. Peter. It contains some beautiful instruction. You may take it in a contemplation if you like. Think you see Him in His majesty, and brightness, and gentleness : rejoice with Him in the glory of His Resurrection. Look at Peter in his reverence and affection and humility. Enter into the heart and mind of Jesus Christ as regards Peter. He is going to confer on Peter the greatest responsibility—to make him His Vicar. Look into the heart of Peter. He had sworn a few days before he did not know Christ. Does he fly away? He had said once to His Lord, “ Depart from me, for I am a sinful man ”. Now he looks up with reverence and confidence, knowing he is forgiven. What a blotting out of his sin ! He had wept bitterly, and his sin was forgiven, and he was not kept in penance or deprived of his Primacy. How entire the remission of his sins ! He still holds the first place amongst the Apostles. Rejoice in the forgiveness, and that Peter accepted it in such simplicity.

“ Lovest thou Me more than these ? ” Formerly Peter had no hesitation in making protestations, no lack of confidence, but now observe how much more humbly he behaves. He is not betrayed into protesting over others. “ Thou knowest that I love

Thee." This simple loving confession merits "Feed My lambs"—the body of the faithful. Very wonderful is this forgiveness of Peter. Again He says, "Simon, lovest thou Me?" and yet a third time. First it was "more than these". When Peter no longer preferred himself to others Christ was satisfied. "Feed My Sheep." By sheep interpreters understand bishops and priests—all are subjects of Peter. Peter is more bishop in any diocese than its bishop, and more priest in any parish than the priest. Make acts of thanksgiving for this institution of the Supremacy. One may wonder at this work of God—the Church founded on the Rock still bearing the sign of an eternal life. Dwell on this. Then go back to the three declarations demanded of Peter. Had it been a man who had wanted to challenge Peter, he would have said, "Art thou grieved?" Not so Jesus Christ. What He demands is, "Dost thou love Me?" The answer to three denials should be three acts of love. Love is what He asks of you. In our service of God, do we seek to prove our sincerity by our love, or do we go back on the past, tormenting ourselves? This is not the spirit of Jesus Christ, but "Lovest thou Me?" The humility of Peter, how modest and timid! The third question might be an allusion, Peter was grieved. Shall *we* persevere? "Lord, Thou knowest all things"—my temptations, my weakness. Strengthen me; enable me to live up to my resolutions. Peter, simply loving, accepts this tremendous charge.

Then follows the prophecy of the manner of his death. That is to be the result of his being Vicar of

Christ. He is to be crucified like his Master. This is his special reward. "Amen, amen, I say to thee : when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself, and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not. And this He said signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had said this, He saith to him, "Follow Me". How many different times He had said, "Follow Me". "Lord, we have left all, and followed Thee." And now when Peter has made this profession of love, and has had the commission given him to feed the lambs and sheep of Christ, and has had his crucifixion foretold to him, his Lord says, "Follow Me". "And Peter followed ; and seeing John, having had his own future marked out, he asks what John is to do. And our Lord re-proved him. "So I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?—follow thou Me." The one thought of Peter now should be to follow Jesus. In all our temptations and doubts about the future let us think He says, "What is that to thee?—follow Me".

EIGHTH DAY.

[10.45 P.M.]

ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

WE don't stand in need of being frightened, but encouraged in the service of God. There is no

motive that stands the strain of life like the motive of love. Love is strong as death. All fear that is meritorious supposes love.

St. Ignatius begins his contemplation on Divine Love by two observations. 1. Love must be shown in deeds, not in professions. "If you love Me, keep My commandments." We torment ourselves as to whether we love God or not. We may know that we do love Him if we keep the commandments, avoid sin, and pray.

2. The second observation is, that love is proved by giving to the person loved what the one has and the other has not. It is proved by an interchange of good things, by a readiness to give all, even life itself.

FIRST POINT. Go through in memory all the good things God has bestowed on us that we have not—the various ways in which He has given Himself to us. Our body, senses, strength—all this marvellous organisation, which after so many centuries is still a puzzle, we owe to Him. Every discovery opens up new horizons. There have been many discoveries recently about the brain. The more they find out the more remains to be found out. All this organisation, this home in which our spirit dwells, we owe to God. Health is a gift from Him. Then what a wonderful thing is the soul, capable of such grand deeds, such self-sacrifice, and magnificent flights. Think of the greatest men, or the most ordinary—what the body is when the soul is present, but when the soul leaves it how inanimate! What the soul must be! There is a story describing the soul taking possession of the body, which beautifully represents the awe of the body

in the presence of the soul. We ought to feel awe for our God-like nature, for we are God-like in our spirituality and immortality, and there is no element of corruption or destruction in this part of us. Go through your lifetime—a number of years all with a record of blessings, parents, relations, teachers, servants—there is no one, however unfortunate, but can think of many who have done much for him. Our mother, father—God's gifts : more or less of the good things of this life—food, home, attendance, education, all the good people we have known, the advantages we have had, the special dangers that have been averted from us, sharp illness, accidents by land or sea we have escaped, all of which we owe to the goodness of God. There are very few who can't remember some very special blessing in their spiritual life, in having good parents, in the holy, Catholic lives of those around them, in being led into the Church as soon as they could speak, in being given frequent opportunities of approaching Sacraments. Or perhaps we have been waifs or strays, not born Catholics. Still here we are, concluding our retreat. There are some with parents of no religion—how have we come to receive and prize the gift of faith? What a miracle! The life of each would read like a romance of the love of God, such a romance as would exceed all the fiction that ever came from the brain of man. For He has been watching us with so special a providence. All His attributes have been at our service.

God has loved me, and given me His treasures so lavishly. What shall I do in return? What can I

give Him? I have nothing. All I have is from Him. How can I love Him? What can I give Him? He has devised something. He will accept from me what He has given me, as the proof of my love. O wonderful invention of the love of God, that leaves us the happiness of being able to love Him and offer Him something! My God! Thou condescendest to ask me to use my liberty; I will use it in giving it back to Thee. I give Thee my will. I wish to give Thee some great proof of my love. Thou askest me to accept any trial Thou shalt send. Grant me this grace that I may have resignation, and patience, and joy. Thou askest that I should stand beside Thy Son, fight with Him, wage war against the inordinate love of riches, honour, and pleasure. Oh! if I could understand how constant is Thy love—how it has *never* lost sight of me—how it has ever followed me with care and watchfulness, should I not break out and say with St. Ignatius, “Take, O my God, for it is Thine; receive, for I would give it Thee if it were not Thine—all my liberty. Take my memory, my understanding, and my whole will. All that I have and all that I am is a gift I have received from Thy divine liberality. To Thee I restore it all, and ask Thee in return to give me Thy love, Thy grace. With this I am rich enough, and have nothing more I would desire and ask of Thee.”

SECOND. God is present in all creatures, by power and essence. He is present in the inanimate world, earth, water, air, rocks, forest. We are lost in the Divinity as a sponge is lost in the ocean. He is around us on every side, in every portion of our being,

and in all creatures besides ; in the vegetable world—in trees, plants, tiny herbs, lovely flowers, giving them their mysterious life, their soul, which draws its sustenance from the soil in which it is planted. He is in the animal world—in birds, fishes, reptiles, insects, giving them not only this life of plants, but animal life through all the gradations short of man—wonderfully imitating the gift of reason in man, but always falling short of it. The worlds that lie beyond our senses—God present in each. Then at the head of all is man, combining all these forms—vegetative life, animal life, senses, instincts which cross that higher existence of our souls—understanding, free will. What noble creatures we are ! How much we might be ! And then God makes us His very temples. Our spirit itself is the mystic temple of Almighty God. There is a presence of God in us far surpassing His presence in any other part of creation, if only we live as rational beings according to the dictates of conscience. To think that God is present in every being, but most of all in us, and more and more intimately present if we will, so that our life may become absorbed in the life of God. I live, no longer I, but God lives in me. He takes full possession of my whole being that He may reign in it. O God ! how wonderful are Thy works ! I am lost in wonder at the magnificence of the home Thou hast provided for me. This vast life teeming round me—can all this be for me ? But far more wonderful is this little world of myself—this twofold nature of body and spirit, and then the spiritual nature raised up almost to a level with Thy divine life. O God, how Thou hast loved

me! What is there, what was there, in my nature that Thou shouldst be so enamoured of me, that Thou shouldst fill and adorn my residence and abode—living in each life, lavishing such gifts, multiplying Thy presence? However long I might go on gazing at this love of Thine, I should see deeper and deeper into it. O my God, I asked before, what I could do—how I could prove my love—at the end of the first point, and it was but little; and now that I have considered another series of Thy benefits and gifts, what more can I give? Can I multiply myself? I can only say, “Take my liberty, my whole being. True, it is Thy gift. Let there be no reserve, no moment of my life in which I rebel against Thy love. Teach me to see Thee, to remember Thee everywhere, to adore Thee in every form of life, in my fellow-beings, above all in my heart. May I learn the lesson of Thy Divine Presence most of all before the Blessed Sacrament in Thy house. May I remember Thou art there specially present, and be guided by Thee in Thy love.”

CONSIDERATION.

EIGHTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON THE MEANS OF RENEWING OUR DEVOTION.

WHEN in retreat and away from the distractions of ordinary life, it is comparatively easy to pray and keep

oneself recollected. It is different in the world : there the truths of religion don't make the same impression on us. Therefore it is important to carry away some ideas as to keeping up to the mark. Our tendency is always to slacken, so I want to speak of the means of renewing our devotion.

One grand means is to follow the guidance of the Church. The Life of Christ is repeated through the Church's services year after year, and the great festivals are very fitting times in which to renew ourselves. The offices and prayers of Advent prepare and lead us up to Christmas. The whole of the Advent liturgy is a beautifully graduated preparation for Christmas ; then comes Christmas ; then Lent with its preparation for the Passion—all leads up to the three great days of Holy Week, in which the services take quite another form. Then come the joys of Easter, the long Paschal time, kept up by the prospect of sharing our risen Lord's glory, Pentecost, and Corpus Christi. Then follows a long interval up to the Assumption, which is the one great festival which occurs between Corpus Christi and Advent. It is the spirit of the Church that we should prepare for these great festivals. The liturgy of the Church is therefore a grand guide to us. Fix on some festas and resolve to renew on them the resolutions of the retreat. If you read the office of the Breviary you will find that a help. On the vigil or on the day itself make a spiritual retreat again. Select one of the great truths which made an impression on you for your morning's meditations. Afterwards give half-an-hour to look into the

state of your soul. Make an examination to see how you stand with regard to your resolutions. Have I been faithful to my rule of life? With regard to my spiritual exercises—Mass, meditation, reading? Whatever prayers I have fixed, have I gone through them with attention, nicely, regularly? or have I made very little effort and taken no pains to do them well?

You resolved to aim at some particular fruit; for example, to be more charitable or less irritable. How have I been this last month?—more considerate and gentle? Am I advancing in that point? If I am going backwards, let me see how I can pull myself up. Amusements—have I been moderate in the enjoyment of them? At the end if you find you have done well, thank God for it. If you have fallen back, rouse yourself, reproach yourself, make good resolutions.

Another very good exercise is to make a preparation for death. Don't suppose death is very terrible: if looked at calmly and familiarly it loses its terrors: sometimes a deathbed is a very consoling thing. Read over the exercises and prayers of Extreme Unction, saying the prayers for yourself, hoping they may one day be said over you by the priest. Say the prayers for the dying; make a spiritual Communion as though you were receiving the Holy Viaticum.

If you like, the day before your renovation day, say the *Veni Creator* and read over your resolutions, and for a spiritual lecture that day read the notes of your retreat. All this carries you forward courageously and hopefully. Some people do this every month. It is very necessary to do it or we drop down. It is a

proof of good will, and we may hope God will assist us.

Another counsel is, not to be discouraged when you fall. Simple people who have not much experience think they will never fall. One of the things we must count on is that we shall break our resolutions. When that does happen say, "Just like me, I will begin again, *da capo*, I won't be dejected". What wonder that we fall. God is so ready to forgive us, why should we be desponding? Remember the meditation on Peter. He will do the same to us if only we say *Peccavi*.

We must have impressed on us the necessity and advantage of encouraging confidence in God. The right way is to have unbounded confidence. We can't have too firm and unshaken a reliance, that if we do our part God will give us life everlasting and *whatever* is necessary to secure it. There should be such a trampling down of ourselves, such an entire self-abasement.

Spiritual Reading, Eighth Day, *Imitation*, Book III., chap. 47.

EIGHTH DAY.

[5 P.M.]

ON THE LOVE OF GOD (*continued*).

WE meditated this morning how God has given Himself to us in so many ways. Then we challenged ourselves to make Him some return. There is nothing

that He has not given us, and so in return we made an offering of our whole selves.

In the second point we considered not only these favours He gave us, but that He dwells in all creatures, and gives Himself to us in all creatures, and is present in us naturally and also supernaturally.

THIRD POINT. He is present in all creation, laboriously serving us, working for the support of our bodily and rational life. He might have ordained we should only want food once a month, or only one kind. He gives us an immense variety all over the earth, for our enjoyment; fruit in great variety to delight us. He might have supported us by one act of His will. But we see Him continually serving us. Our meals alone involve the toil of thousands of human beings, and in each individual God is serving us by an act of His will with great ingenuity. He works with the planters and the gatherers, with the builders of the ships that bring provisions from foreign lands, and with the navigators of those ships. Effects are more due to the first than to the second cause. Look at those coals which are to make your fire. Thousands of years ago forests grew and decayed, and in the end out of these fallen forests we have our beds of coal. There are forests never seen by man, yet every leaf is for man perhaps in remote ages.

I have spoken of the natural order. Now let us think of our spiritual life—the formation of character, the acquisition of knowledge, the instruments down to the slates and school-books that have been employed

for us to have acquired this learning. We are living on the toils of our forefathers.

Now turn to the work of man's redemption. By an act of the will God could have redeemed us. But no! The Son was made Man. One sigh of His might have sufficed. But no! He would lead a life of sighs and instruction, of miracles and sermons. He would undergo His Passion and Death. We might have been redeemed by His first cry. But no! It is the last cry that redeems us. The whole of the Precious Blood, grand, immense as it is, does not yet correspond to the love of God. The whole of His life, every act, every intention, was all for us. That might have sufficed. But no! It depends on us, our prayers and efforts. God wants to give us piece by piece, lovingly, lingeringly. Though no one but He is *necessary*, yet He would give us His servants to intercede for us. He loves to give us the fruit of His Passion at the entreaty of His Saints. Who can tell how we are helped on by those with whom we are in contact? How we are raised above the world? What good thoughts do we not get from companionship with good people, God acting on us through them? Parents, priests, churches, the walls of churches, windows, pictures—God reaches us through all. He uses creatures. Think of the Church, the Pope, Bishops all bound to the Head—Priests, Religious Orders—the vast machinery established by God; preserved by Him miraculously, the love of God making use of all this splendid work. As we take each part of our life, we see that God is every-

where present, serving us with great ingenuity and lavishness. This is His love. How can I understand it, this service of me? I only get a sort of general vague idea; yet to the wisdom of God all is distinct. God does not get rid of us. The idea is a blasphemy against the love of God. He never leaves us to ourselves. He will never leave us for one second to ourselves, although He will never take from us our free-will. What return can I make? What service? The little I have is all Thy gift. Thou invitest me to serve Thee, to do my duties, to bear my crosses, to be friendly to my fellow-men. It was revealed to St. Teresa that God would have created the world and enriched it only for her soul. How can I understand God's love of me? How little He asks of me! Give me grace to offer Thee my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my whole will.

FOURTH. It would seem as if He had given Himself so entirely, there is nothing more He could give. Yet what would this world be with all its beauty, if we were alone. What renders life bearable is the love and friendship of our fellows. Life would be worthless without the good qualities of our friends. All these are a reflection of God. Truthfulness, justice, knowledge, are a reflection of the wisdom of God. Every true and noble heart is to us a mirror in which God represents Himself. All are so many new forms in which we find Him again. It is God who makes life dear and precious, and not only as regards natural qualities. In the Saints we have

patterns of heroism and devotedness, which have still greater power to draw us to God. In Angels and Apostles, in Martyrs, Doctors, holy Teachers, in Virgins and Confessors, we have wonderful support and consolation. All are reflections of the Divinity, and of the beauty of the Man-God. Every Saint is a picture of Jesus Christ, and encourages us to copy the life of Jesus Christ in ours. Whatever there is of good in our fellows and in the Saints is a reflection of the attributes of the Godhead.

Think again how God has loved us in all these four points, and end with St. Ignatius' prayer *Suscipe*.

NOTES OF RETREAT.

1877.

JULY TWENTY-SECOND, 1877.

[8.30 P.M.]

Points for the Morning's Meditation.

INTRODUCTORY EXERCISE.

FIRST POINT. We all have some object in making this retreat, in leaving for awhile our homes, our occupations, our daily life, to spend our time in prayer and meditation and retirement. The more clearly we see what this object is, the better we shall be able to attain it. It may be that we foresee some trial coming upon us which we feel too weak to bear, and so we turn to God to seek from Him the strength and grace we need; or, perhaps, the future is dark and we cannot see our way, and our prayers and thoughts will be directed to obtaining from God light to guide our steps and grace to follow the call He gives to serve Him better; or we may doubt whether as we are we can please Him at all by our service, whether He does not require that we should leave the path in which we are walking to follow one that will bring us more directly to Him. Whatever be our object, whatever we desire to obtain—grace or light or strength—let us meditate upon it until it is quite clear before our minds, in order that we may know well what it is we want from God in this retreat.

SECOND. Let us consider not only what we want from God, but what He wants from us. If, on the one hand, God is prepared to give great graces, He likewise has His demands. Does our conscience tell us we have anything to make up, to set straight, to change, to improve in our past life? It will be well to look into this, and answer truly and honestly the voice of conscience. How, for example, do we make our prayer? Have we kept off the habits we resolved to form with regard to our meditation? This is a very practical point, and one of great importance for all. The time of retreat will be well spent if you learn from it nothing but this, how to meditate well and profitably, and to rectify in the future your past shortcomings in this respect.

It may be, again, that God has asked you for some sacrifice which you have not made, to forgive some injury, to accept some trial. You wish to refuse no longer, and in this retreat you resolve that God shall not continue to ask in vain; for you will pray that you may not fail in putting the obstacle aside that stands between you and Him, and that you may have strength and grace to accomplish His holy will.

THIRD. We should consider what are the dispositions we should bring with us into retreat. One thing is absolutely essential, that we should have peace of mind. God does not work in trouble or agitation; it is only when the soul is calm His voice can be heard. Another great help towards making a good retreat is to be very faithful in the practice of recollection and silence, and to follow with great regularity the order of the day.

ON THE EMPLOYMENT OF FREE TIME DURING
RETREAT.

In the plan for the day during retreat, various ways may be suggested for the employment of that portion marked "free time". We may quietly advert to the points of the meditation we have been making, and let them simmer, as it were, in our minds; or we may occupy ourselves in vocal prayer, reciting the Seven Penitential Psalms, the Litany of the Holy Name, or any other form of prayer in which you find devotion. You may put down in writing the thoughts, the desires, the resolutions, that God gives you. Or you may stroll about listening to the wind, looking at the birds, watching the clouds, and making use of all those things in nature which help you to raise your mind to God. Or, again, those who wish to have more time for spiritual reading may employ themselves in reading; but you must not be anxious to read too much. You should read leisurely, quietly, going over and over again any thought that is very striking, avoiding all haste or flurry.

One great advantage of a retreat is to bring ourselves up to the mark in meditation. You have the habit probably of making meditation. It will be a great gain to rub up your method and see that you have not got negligent.

FIRST DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE FOUNDATION.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—For a Composition of Place imagine yourself before the throne of Jesus Christ, and that you hear Him saying, “I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End”.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Ask for grace that your understanding may be enlightened to know the end for which you were created, and your will inflamed with a desire to attain to that end.

FIRST POINT. Man was created by God. Consider what the meaning of creation is—we were not and now we are. Our souls were drawn out of nothingness ; our bodies received their life and are preserved by the power of God. He has given us all that being which we possess. We often look at our littleness and feel depressed when we see how frail our life is, how little deprives us of health ; or, when we consider the inconstancy and feebleness of our spiritual nature, how the execution falls short of the resolutions we make. What grounds have we for pride? Can we think anything of ourselves?

Yet how great we are ! How noble we may be ! What an interval there is between the man who rises to the height of his powers and one who has fallen into the depth of vice and baseness ! There is some-

thing very great in our nature, for there is the likeness of God within us. Our bodies are capable of doing service to Almighty God. All this is involved in creation by God. I am absolutely, entirely dependent on God; therefore His dominion over me is most absolute. A servant depends upon his master and has to give him certain limited service—a portion: but that portion the master claims as a right. To God belongs not a portion, but our whole lives day and night. To Him belongs my whole self: He is King without limit. The child depends upon the parent, and owes him love, obedience and service; but what claim has the parent in comparison to that of God? To God we owe not only much, but *all*. So that I come to the conclusion: “Thou, O my God, art my Creator; Thou art my Father, my Sovereign, my Master. These titles belong to Thee; to Thee am I bound as a creature. I must give Thee my whole being as and how Thou dost choose to ask me for it.”

Here is a practical doctrine. Have I considered in the past that God is my Creator? If I have lived heedlessly I have been guilty of a great omission. “My God, I am sorry that I have forgotten this truth; bring it home to me that I may never for one moment again forget it. Blessed to be the servant of such a Master, the subject of such a King, the child of such a Parent! I thank Thee for my life, for my powers of soul, for my strength of body. If I were to spend all my life in thanking Thee, my thanks would be insufficient.”

We cannot at each moment have this truth present,

but our minds should be able to recognise it whenever it is presented to us.

SECOND. God created us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him. There is a mystery in us—the mystery of free-will. “I have placed before you,” God says, “life and death.” This infinite Creator deigns to give to His creatures the power of saying, “I will serve” or “I will not serve”. He does not consult us about our life, but He will not have compulsory service. He wishes our service to be a free, loving gift. We have no privilege comparable to that of making this choice. Angels look on with awe when a human being decides for good or evil. I do not stop to prove it, for your reason, your faith, and your heart tell you that the service of God alone brings contentment. The love of God seems hard and terrible in the distance, but when we grasp it we find it most sweet. I only wish I could bring all I possess and lay it at the feet of God, that I could consecrate all to Him. This should be our desire: have I got it? “God created us to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy with him for ever in the next.” Pray that this truth may never pass from your mind. All else is a figure that passes. This remains to all eternity.

THIRD. “That we may be happy with Him for ever.” He might have demanded all and withheld any reward. As Creator, He has a right to our service; but He has promised to raise us to His presence that we may see Him, love Him, and be happy with Him for ever. Can I be reserved,

niggardly and ungenerous when He has given all this—His own Being, so far as I can share it? Can I do otherwise than offer my whole self? Can I ask Him to leave me something for myself and withhold a part of that which is all His by every right? Is it not just, is it not reasonable, that I should say to God, "Thou art my Creator, my Master, my King, my Father; can I then do otherwise than offer to Thee my whole being, give up everything that stands between me and Thy love and my service to Thee? I beseech Thee never permit any creature to come between Thee and me to rob Thee of that which is so justly Thy due."

FIRST DAY.

[11.45 A.M.]

IN WHAT OUR TRIAL CONSISTS.

THE Preludes as in the foregoing Meditation.

FIRST POINT. God is pleased to ask our love. He gives us the privilege of free-will. We are placed here in a state and time of trial. Those who have the gift of liberty do not receive their last reward till they have made a right use of their liberty. Our trial consists not, like Adam's in one act, but it goes on during our whole life. So long as we remain in this world there are duties to be discharged and certain objects to be abstained from. The truth of our life is that we are only here for that trial, to prove

ourselves worthy of heaven by serving God. Have we realised this? We must choose between two great extremes—life and death, good and evil, heaven and hell. Have we fallen into the error of thinking that pleasure is the object of our existence?

There is this thought in common with our trial and that of the Angels, that once lost we cannot repeat it. We have not two souls that we can think lightly of losing one. If one is lost all is lost. We shall do well to say, "O my God, I firmly believe my life here is one of trial. Thou hast placed me here that I may prove myself worthy of life. I have too frequently lost sight of Thee. Cares, anxieties, pleasures, weariness, trials, have drawn me away and I have forgotten that above all the one great concern is the issue of my trial here. Let me never forget this; let nothing distract my mind. May I always have grace in all moments of trial and duty to recall why I am in this world, and that each day I must make my choice."

SECOND. We may consider that our trial is made up of a great variety of things—the visible creation, changes of the seasons, storms and sunshine, relations, friends, and enemies, our own dispositions, our share of talents and gifts from God, our health and senses, our capacities, greater or lesser; all you can think of may be classed under the name of creatures, and these creatures make up our trial. God will decide our trial with reference to the particular circumstances in which we are placed—our bringing up, the opportunities he has given us, etc.

Then the effects of our past life form part of our

trial—temper we have given way to or other passions. We may have set to work in middle life to cure them, but we carry the effect of that temper and those passions with us to the grave. We may lose an eye through our own negligence: the loss becomes part of our trial. With the difficulties and helps we have we must prove ourselves worthy.

CONCLUSION. Many things I must bear. I find it hard to rise, difficult to meditate; servants provoke me. Am I to chafe and fret? No, my God! You know me. You know my past folly. I have lost my health, but now give me grace to bear it, and if I am carried away by impatience may I repent quickly. If I find a child indolent, if I have to live with a person who has a temper, I must be patient. How much consists in bearing patiently what we can't escape! This weak health is to lead me to glory. This person with a temper is to obtain for me great merit. This child I had made an idol of by its selfishness may be the means of leading me back to my God. What is life but a series of trials we are to bear, all forming part of the great trial? Many are saved in unhappy homes, with weak health and afflictions, who would otherwise have been satisfied here. It is told of one of the Saints who broke his leg that he said, "I did think I was to save my soul with two legs, but now I must do it with one. I must have a new set of duties for the wooden leg." To *bear patiently* is one great portion of the spiritual life.

THIRD. There are certain things we must abstain from. Our Lord has said, "If thine eye scandalise

thee pluck it out". Nothing must stand in the way of salvation. How many serve God up to a certain point and then stop! God asks a sacrifice—wealth, a friend, a position we have coveted. Our duty is plain: it must be given up whatever it may cost us. Those who have gone to heaven have made the sacrifice. There were the martyrs who gave up their life for God. There are others who have been torn from their homes and have worn out their life in mines and hardships. What are our sacrifices to theirs? Sacrifices of our feelings, our hopes and fears, how many have made these sacrifices? To overcome ourselves, to make a sacrifice, is at times the duty of every soul that is placed on its trial. We should not be uneasy at this being so: we should be thankful: it is a proof we are dear to God. "O my God! I will not lament over my trials. I feel this sacrifice costs me much, but may I never fail in what Thou wantest of me. I place myself in Thy hands, asking that I may do Thy will and not shrink from the cross Thou wouldst have me bear, so that the day may come when I shall hear Thee say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord'."

CONSIDERATION.

FIRST DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON THE MANNER OF MAKING MEDITATION.

MANY people imagine that meditation is very difficult. I am persuaded it is not, and that there are very few who could not meditate. I will begin by explaining the body of the meditation, *i.e.*, the exercise of the three faculties of the soul.

1. The office of the memory is to recall some fact or doctrine, as, *e.g.*, those words of our Lord, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

2. The understanding considers two questions. First, What is the meaning of this doctrine? I suppose it means that nothing in the world can compensate me for my soul. When I die everything in this world is past for me. The second question is, What has this doctrine to do with me? The answer will vary according to the individual and the circumstances in which he may be placed. Perhaps I am called to make some sacrifice, to perform some duty involving loss of health, to make choice between my soul and something in the world; or there may be no immediate practical application, but I must get the principle well into my head and renew my resolution to save my soul and see it will profit me nothing to risk my soul for an earthly gratification. This is the substance of a

meditation. We often see a list of questions given—Is it necessary?—Is it becoming? etc. This does not mean that we are to go through all the questions, but that we may sometimes take one, sometimes another, and follow our bent.

3. When the mind has been occupied for some time it will not be difficult to exercise the will. We shall say, "How I wish I had that virtue I have been thinking of! O God, give me this; it is important to me." Aspirations such as these will rise whenever we exercise thought. We shall make acts of gratitude for dear friends, parents, holy advisers, sickness that has revealed so much to us, the beauty of the world, and other countless blessings. The Saints have spent hours and days in considering the goodness of God and His bounty to man. Prayer is the raising up of our minds and hearts to God. If a friend comes to us we have no difficulty in talking to him. If you would go and talk to God as you do to a friend, you would make a beautiful meditation; *e.g.*, "This fine weather makes me joyous," or "Do not let this bad weather make me cross". It is not necessary to have rules: there are books on meditation as on deportment, etc., but walking is not more natural than meditation. You make a meditation naturally upon taking a house or giving a ball, but with God you are like a wooden statue.

A word about the beginning and end of meditation. First there is the Preparatory Prayer, which consists in placing yourself with suitable dispositions in the presence of God and making an offering of the medi-

tation to Him. Then follows the Composition of Place, the object of which is to have some scene before your mind to which you may turn whenever your attention begins to wander. Next you ask for grace: "Enlighten my understanding that I may know and comprehend the truth on which I am about to meditate; inflame my will that I may be filled with fervour and generosity in my resolutions".

The end is to be made in the form of Colloquy. You give God a character as a parent or a friend, and you speak with Him on the subject you have been thinking of, making a *résumé* of all you have wished or asked for in the meditation, and conclude with the *Our Father* or *Anima Christi*.

Examine whether you secure these main points, because in course of time people drop one part or another and so lose much fruit from their meditation.

As regards resolutions, during our retreat we are more occupied in fixing general principles, but in your ordinary every-day meditations you should make minute resolutions.

FIRST DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

ON INDIFFERENCE.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Let us imagine we hear Jesus Christ saying, “I have placed before thee good and evil, life and death”.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O my God! enlighten my understanding that I may estimate creatures at their true value. In flame my will that I may choose always what leads me to Thee.

FIRST POINT. In order that we may bring ourselves to the disposition of accepting what is helpful to our salvation, it is necessary that we should acquire indifference as to poverty, health, long life, etc. We are to be indifferent, not stoical. Some persons are naturally cold and heartless: they don't seem much affected either by prosperity or adversity: that is a matter of temperament, not the holy indifference of St. Ignatius. The virtue of indifference is that disposition of soul which refuses to make a choice; it does not consist in not feeling adversity, but in not allowing the natural shrinking to step in between us and God. Indifference does not mean that we are to be without likes and dislikes, but that we are to master them. Sickness, for instance, may lead us to God. If I am not indifferent, if I love health inordinately, the probability is I shall shrink from sickness and not

accept it in the right dispositions ; but if I hold my attachment to health in such subjection that I am indifferent, I accept it with thankfulness, perhaps even with joy. This indifference is a very precious step in the spiritual life, and is not beyond our reach. If our reason is once convinced such a disposition is right, we may conform ourselves to it *by degrees*. Many begin at once by proposing to themselves some great trial, and in attempting great things lose what is within their reach. If God calls us to some great trial He will supply us with grace, but just now we have to deal with those contingencies in which we find ourselves. You have likes and dislikes for places, persons, etc. ; begin by practising indifference here. Some person tires you, you have a want of sympathy with one you live with, you have been slighted : here are grand opportunities for overcoming yourself. Try not to feel deliberate likes and dislikes when they draw you from God. Do not manifest your antipathy, and by degrees you get indifferent. Troubles, contradictions, miseries in daily life from relations, servants, etc.—have we our indifference so developed that we receive such troubles without offending Almighty God? Without this indifference we can never arrive at the right use of creatures. In looking back we shall find our lives have been too much ruled by antipathies and sympathies. “O my God! in my past life I have not obtained this mastery over self. Now I wish to begin. Grant me the grace to see that all things should be as nothing to me compared with my soul’s salvation. Thou didst create me that

reason might rule my will and my will govern all the likes and dislikes of my soul."

It is disorder and confusion when the body rises against the soul and our inferior being rebels against the law of God, and we follow, not reason, but our passions and inclinations. When I say reason I mean Right, the voice of conscience making known to us the will of God.

SECOND. What are the obstacles to indifference?

1. Giving in too much to our imagination. I am not speaking of day-dreams, because they *evidently* disturb the balance of our being, and no one who indulges in day-dreams can fail to weaken the power of his understanding and will. But many who are alive to the danger of day-dreams nevertheless let imagination play too great a part. They anticipate some difficulty which seems insurmountable. They say, "Who shall roll the stone away for us?" and if they would only go forward boldly like the holy women they would find the stone gone. They resolve to give half-an-hour to meditation: imagination pictures it as insupportable. Let them only begin, and the half-hour will slip by very quickly. Imagination makes difficulties and temptations greater, and becomes thus a great obstacle. It does not exaggerate the graces we are to receive: it is fear on which it plays. All true religious life is founded on truth. All that is fictitious and exaggerated is out of place. The imagination is a great enemy in spiritual life; it will be a great point if we can restrain it.

2. A second obstacle is the understanding. We

are hindered from acquiring indifference by maxims of the world which pervert our understanding, so that we do not see things as they are. The influence of a number of false maxims must be to distort our judgment—*e. g.*, we must do as everyone else does, we must not be singular. (There is some foundation of truth in this, no doubt.) The consequence of fear of being singular is that we lose our liberty. People don't go to Mass, or do other good things because others don't. If we could bring together all the maxims of worldly wisdom and imbue a mind with them, such a mind would be as incapable of understanding the maxims of Jesus Christ as a pagan. Blessed the person who has not any of the spirit of the world.

3. Another obstacle is to be found in the influence of the passions. You are trying to lead good lives, and you think you are in no danger. There is no one, however holy, who is not liable to be led away by his passions. It may be the passion of pride, or vainglory, or intemperance: the history of the Church shows instances of grievous falls. How did these passions come to lead to ruin? There is always some negligence or sloth, and then comes the temptation. When the Vatican Council defined the infallibility of the Pope, a great many made shipwreck of their faith and salvation through disappointed pride in many instances. Pride got possession of the mind, and that mind was no longer able to take in what was not difficult. The understanding is darkened by pride. What we must guard against

is to let no temptation to any passion gain a mastery over us.

These three obstacles deserve our serious consideration. Let us keep them in check, and it will not be difficult to acquire indifference; and if you once have indifference there is no virtue you may not attain.

FIRST DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

ON THE SIN OF THE ANGELS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine a prince deprived of his royal dignity, clad in a coarse garment.

SECOND PRELUDE.—My God, enlighten my understanding that I may learn from this meditation how hateful sin is in Thy sight. In flame my will that I may be filled with great shame and confusion, seeing that so many bright spirits have been lost for one sin, whereas I have committed so many.

FIRST POINT. Look at the Angels as they came forth from the hand of God, very perfect and glorious spirits, far higher in the scale of creation than man, gifted with a brighter intelligence and a stronger will, more drawn to good. Their robe of habitual grace made them children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven: their trial once over, they would have

entered that kingdom by their own right. But Almighty God required a free choice and service. He demanded an act of obedience, a willing allegiance, and a vast number refused to submit.

SECOND. The punishment inflicted on the Angels shows us how Almighty God regards sin. For one single sin of thought they lost heaven for ever.

THIRD. God has spared us and given us time for repentance. Fervent acts of contrition and of thanksgiving for His great mercy.

SECOND DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

ON SIN.

SOME people rather shrink from the thought of their sins and frequent contrition. This is a great mistake in the spiritual life. The foundation of all spiritual life is in contrition for sin, interior penance, shame, confusion. It is an error to fly from a frequent exercise of contrition, a right contrition. There is a way of looking at our sins which is very pleasing to God and good for our souls: To-day is to be a day for contrition, shame, and purpose of amendment.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Picture to yourself Calvary, Jesus Christ hanging on the cross, the Victim of sin.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O God, enlighten my under-

standing that I may know my past sins, and inflame my will with a firm purpose of fidelity in Thy service for the future.

FIRST POINT. We are to look through our past life in a general way. Have I often offended God? The greater holiness there is in souls the more ready are they to accuse themselves. I consider the actual sins I have committed, the sins of omission, the sins into which I have led others. I acknowledge I have sinned; I have sinned greatly. "O my God! how dost Thou pursue me with Thy patience! How canst Thou endure such a sinner! In the bitterness of my soul I will recount to Thee my sins, my hidden sins, those for which I have given occasion in others."

Many who profess to live a holy life wonder they taste so little consolation; very frequently this dreariness comes from the neglect of contrition and of making frequent cries to God. If we shed more tears of repentance, we should know more consolation.

What good have we done? If God were to ask us what is due to us as a reward, to what could we lay claim?—to five talents or two talents? How many souls must confess that if they have not even buried away their talents, they have trafficked with but little diligence! The graces of God have been most wonderful, and in return what have we done? We have been unprofitable servants: our good works, how imperfectly have they been performed! How seldom have we felt the need of God's help! How often have we cried from our souls, "God be merciful to me a sinner"!

SECOND. Who am I that have offended God? One speck, of no more importance than as if I did not exist. If I were to die how many souls would know it in London? and what is London compared to the world? What an atom am I! Yet I have dared to hurl my feeble defiance against my Creator.

What, again, are we in comparison with the Angels? They read our souls and see all the sinfulness there—what a spectacle! How insignificant, how little mankind must appear in the sight of the Angels! What then must I individually be? What am I compared to the noble and magnificent Angels? And what are they compared with Almighty God? The Angels are not so far above mankind as God is above the Angels. And I, the lowest speck in creation, have gone up to the throne of God and said, “I will not serve”. And it would have been the greatest happiness for me to have served, to have worn myself out with labour for my God. Foolish he who abuses his freedom to defy his Creator and glory in his independence when he might have been truly great, truly noble. “O Lord! enlighten my understanding that I may see the folly of sin, the insanity of preferring self to such an Infinite Being.”

THIRD. Consider any attribute of God and compare it with yourself; *e.g.*, His Almightyness—how by an act of His will He created the world and sustains it, how this world is only one of millions all sustained and ordered by the power of God. To get an idea of His power we may think of a great storm—how it carries everything before it; of the sea—the force and irresistibility of its waves; or, again, of some terrible

fire spreading and destroying, utterly annihilating all that it lays hold of; these are but faint images of the power of God. Then consider your own power, how little it is!

Or look at the knowledge of God—a knowledge in which there is no effort, no study, no combination, but everything present. Compare it with your knowledge, which is so limited.

Look, again, at the holiness of God—a holiness unapproached by any breath of imperfection. We think of St. Teresa and the height of sanctity to which she attained; yet what was her sanctity compared to that of our Blessed Lady? But far, far above that of Mary is the holiness of God—and you, what are you? What virtues have you?

End with an exercise of contrition in the form of a colloquy.

SECOND DAY.

[11.30 A.M.]

THE UNREASONABLENESS OF SIN.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine yourself very ill, with no hope of recovery.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Pray for grace to have a contempt for the world, such as you would feel if you were on the point of leaving it.

FIRST POINT. Consider that sin viewed only by the light of reason is very detestable: untruthfulness, for example, what meanness it shows! What want of courage! Consider it in a friend—how it would pain us! it is something so unworthy. I should like openness, candour; any falseness would be distasteful. It must be as bad in myself as I see it to be in others.

Or vanity. Many persons are annoyed with thoughts of vanity who are not vain. But what a miserable thing it seems to be fishing for praise and admiration. How well I speak and look and walk! Vanity finds food where common sense would starve. How pitiful that any heart should be so trivial! There is something so ridiculous, so very small about it. Consider how you would feel about vanity in a friend or a holy person.

Take, again, anger. Under the influence of anger a man will entirely lose command of himself and be even unable to speak. We don't see the folly of it in ourselves. If you were to go through all your sins and judge them by the light of reason as they would appear in a friend or a superior, you would find they are hateful, hideous, ridiculous, an upsetting of right order. Ask that you may thus judge yourself: a sense of the sinfulness of our past life is a grace given to prayer. "My life so far as I have sinned has been ridiculous. O Lord, give me understanding that I may see the perversion of right order, the hideousness and unreasonableness of my past life. Deliver me, O Lord, from my passions. May I participate in Thy holiness. I am ashamed of myself. Is this the use

I have made of reason and of the graces of God? May I aspire to something more noble in future.⁹

SECOND. What a mistake one has made in past life! When you were recovering from a severe illness, how did your past life seem?—wisely spent?—an honest fulfilment of the purpose for which you came into the world? Or had it been a great mistake?—had you loved everything but Almighty God?—had you served others but not Him?

Perhaps you have tried to serve God. Still there is much you have omitted. If you were to live it again, would it be more for God, less for self? Then you know what resolution you should take for the future—a resolution to be faithful to your rule of life.

THIRD. Look out on the world from your sick-bed—what impression have you? How hollow it looks! When you form no part of it yourself, you can judge the world at its true value and see that gold and silver are no more than the earth of your grave. Pleasures, indulgences, distractions—to a sick person how unreal, how like a dream they seem! Thou fool! this night shall thy soul be required of thee.

A retreat may be called a death, for in the same way it withdraws us from our occupations, and it becomes possible for us to take a true view of the world. God places us in the world, but we must use it as though we used it not, without giving our heart to it as our servant and our creature.

CONSIDERATION.

SECOND DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON ORDINARY CONFESSIONS.

THE devil often turns into a hindrance what was intended for our help and comfort. Confession is meant to help good persons in three ways: to obtain for them (1) forgiveness of sins; (2) peace of mind; (3) grace to deal with daily difficulties.

1. With regard to the first we may remark that the remission of the *punishment* due to sin is more or less complete, according to the dispositions we bring to the Sacrament of Penance.

If you think what it is to kneel at the foot of the Cross and receive forgiveness, it would seem there must be peace, and yet, in approaching this holy Sacrament, many, instead of improving their peace of mind, lose it. Some continue to disquiet themselves in the examination of their conscience. They never have finished: they go on to the moment of confession and even during the absolution. It is plain this is not the meaning of Jesus Christ. Where, then, are we to stop?

In the first place we hold firmly that we are only *strictly bound* to confess grievous sins. We ought, however, to confess deliberate venial sins and many that are not deliberate, hardly voluntary. What sort of sins may good people profitably confess?

There are few who make their meditation every day

and say their Rosary who are not safe in confessing *sloth and negligence in spiritual duties*. They will see that on one morning perhaps more than usual they have given way to and encouraged distractions. They can mention this, but to go on worrying through a whole week is hopeless. It is not often that people who come every day to Mass are deliberately inattentive, but every now and then there may be something to say about this. *Sins of temper*, irritability, impatience, are often matters of constitution to which most are subject from the state of their bodies. I have been guilty of impatient feelings two or three times with some deliberation. I spoke impatiently. *Sins of the tongue*. I have said something that was uncharitable: this must be confessed according to the circumstances. One escapes many dangers by never talking about the sins of others: this little practice of charity draws down special blessings from God. Another may have failings with regard to *vanity*. It is not an object to bring a long list of sins, but to devote one's attention to an act of contrition. To prepare for confession a quarter of an hour should be quite sufficient.

Some torment themselves because they cannot feel contrition: it is difficult to *feel* it and not necessary. Say calmly, "I wish I had not done it," and have a purpose of amendment. Think more of your purpose of amendment than of your past sins when these have been indeliberate.

In confession itself there are those who are never satisfied with their self-accusation. Yet it can only end in one of three things: "I did or I did not, or I

don't know if I did"—if the latter, say so. There is no good in putting in excuses.

Many lose some of the benefit of confession by mixing up direction with it. As a rule, let confession and absolution be well over before asking questions.

Persons who serve God are always tempted: others who take no pains are not tempted. Good persons find themselves tempted against faith, hope, purity, etc. How are they to deal with these temptations?

No one can commit a grievous sin, even in thought, without its being perfectly plain; but there is room for sin if, for example, you allow wrong thoughts, temptations to despair, etc., to remain before the mind. There may be negligence in not putting away temptations—a slowness in rejecting thoughts against confidence in God. Confess that.

Be very careful not to have your peace of mind disturbed: that is the secret of real progress. Many lose great degrees of sanctity by trying to disturb themselves, and fancying they can't be right if they have peace of mind.

SECOND DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

HELL.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

PRELUDES as on page 36.

FIRST POINT. Many shun the thought of hell as

though it were too terrible, but indeed it suggests motives of consolation, and helps to give a very solid foundation to our spiritual life. The Saints frequently meditated on hell. We hear of St Jerome keeping on repeating the word *Eternity*. To him there was no consideration which gave such solidity to piety. It is a false spirituality to shrink from looking at hell. Jesus Christ was not severe, He was full of meekness; He would not extinguish the smoking flax, nor bruise the broken reed. We know how He received sinners and let them touch Him. There was nothing harsh about Him, yet how does He describe the torments of a lost soul? Utter darkness, weeping, gnashing of teeth. Call the fire a figure only of the torments of hell—some say a spirit cannot be tortured by fire—yet it is certain Jesus could discover no torment which so nearly conveyed the idea as fire, and it would be very rash to say there is no foundation for His language.

Again, any soul which is faithful will receive a very glorious reward. Heaven must surpass all our power of imagination, because, even here, we have tasted moments of consolation which have carried us through long years. What, then, will be our capacity for happiness when we have cast away temptation for ever? Now, a soul that has forfeited glorifying God in His mercy and His goodness must glorify another attribute—justice. The glory to the justice of God, in punishment, must be very great. There is a saying, "The Breath of God shall fan the flames of hell". What is the Breath of God? The Holy Ghost, the

Love of the Father and the Son, a Person equal to Themselves. All that the love of God would have done to magnify a soul in heaven it will do to the lost soul. We need not have material flame—leave that out—only remember the words of Jesus Christ, and how terrible, yet how just !

We feel we cannot fathom the wickedness of a grievous sin : such an act can never come to its last consequences. Sin is so against our reason that we feel a difficulty in realising the mercy of God. When the soul has deliberately said to its Creator, “I will not be Thy creature,” and made its Creator say, “I will not be Thy God,” it is less of a mystery that this should go on for all eternity than that it should not. You deprive yourself of sight carelessly, in a moment, and you have to bear the effects all your life. We know the consequences of our actions are too often irrevocable. We don't look for a miracle to undo the consequences of our actions ; so if a sinner dies, saying, “Thou shalt not be my God,” is there anything that shocks us in the conviction that he will always bear the consequences ? After a hundred years is his will changed ? I do not believe any lost soul ever recalled the sin by which it was lost.

Do we not know how sin hardens the will?—that the devil has never relented?—he is what he was when he said, “*Non serviam*”. There is no light to his understanding, no help to his will that he had not before. No, the farther a sinner goes from God, the farther he goes also from repentance. Our reason can discover no sufficient cause why the sinner should cease his

rebellion ; therefore, in the midst of all this talk of the nineteenth century, we must hold to the plain truths of Reason and Revelation. No single soul is lost except by its own wilful deliberate act. Quite knowingly it said it would not obey. It was tempted, but it was helped : it had the full power of choice. My God, pierce my flesh with Thy saving fear. In all my life may I never forget those terrible words, "*Depart, ye cursed, into everlasting fire*". May I never sin and expose myself to the danger of these torments.

SECOND. Friendship is one of the charms of life. How unhappy should we be without any who cared for us ! It would be still worse to be condemned to live with one who is utterly repugnant. In this world there is none so bad but he has some good point : in the society of the lost souls there is no such compensation. All disguise is torn away ; everyone is in his final state ; they are all companions in misery ; there is no consolation, no friendship. They were made for God with a craving for truth, but they have brought themselves to hate and detest the good their nature was made for. There is no light in that darkness. Imagine them if you will without fire, without pain, on thrones, in palaces, but in entire despair, with the consciousness, *I am lost for ever*. No creature can bring comfort where there is despair. To be alone would be bad enough, but to be with others, to see your despair in them—how fearful ! Yet, by the light of reason we know this is the portion of those who have said, "*I will not serve*".

THIRD. We cannot shut out the remorse. The lost souls will constantly live over again their life—all its temptations and pleasures. I might so easily have been saved. I had grace—it was entirely my own doing—and for what? *For what?* A question through eternity never to be answered. For what? Was it for the whole world?—for a part of the world? Some great conquerors have conquered a great part of the world: others, thieves, have amassed great treasure, but the great bulk has been lost for nothing. No one has been quite successful in a whole course of sin: winning much, he was miserable because he had not won more. I am lost—and for what? Pray God to give you a holy and saving fear: it is not necessary to have a sensible fear. Make an act of sorrow that you could have put yourself in danger of incurring separation from Him for eternity, and a firm purpose never to do so again.

It is quite possible to avoid mortal sin. Theft would have no temptation to such as you. You ought to be in the same disposition with regard to any deliberate grievous sin.

SECOND DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

DEATH.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine yourself lying on your death-bed. Your confessor tells you that you have only a few moments more to live.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O my God, that I may see life and all connected with it as I shall see it at the moment of death. In flame my will that I may now love and seek what I shall then wish to have desired and sought.

FIRST POINT. Death is certain. “It is appointed unto all men once to die.” Knowing this to be the truth, it is only reasonable to shape our lives according to it, and to prepare for death continually by acts of submission to Almighty God, acknowledging His right and dominion over us, and accepting death as the only means of going to Him, our Creator and Last End.

SECOND. Consider how in the moment of death everything will be changed. The soul, no longer impeded by the body, will rise to a higher degree of knowledge. Our knowledge now comes to us chiefly through the senses; our estimate of things is influenced by the body; our ideas are tinged by this union of the soul with the body. But when once this union is dissolved there will be a great change, for

the soul will then enjoy an independent existence and will see things as God sees them. How shall we then look on the world and its honours and pleasures? Reason and revelation tell us what our judgment of these things will be; let us try to have the same estimation of them now. Let us keep our hearts and minds above the influence of the senses, and not suffer them to be weighed down by the body: let us renounce those objects which have deceived us or which we have preferred to Almighty God.

THIRD. Death is not only certain, but is also very near to each of us—we do not know how near. It comes unexpectedly, our Lord tells us, “as a thief in the night,” at an hour when we are not thinking,” and so He warns us to be always ready. The immense majority of men are taken unawares; a great number die suddenly even after a long illness. Many, through the folly and selfishness of those around them, are kept in ignorance that they are dying: others, though they are told that death is near, cannot be made to believe it.

Let us then resolve to be ready whenever our Lord shall call us, and often make our preparation for death. It is well once a month to meditate on death and spiritually to receive the Sacrament of Extreme Unction, reading the prayers for the dying, and applying them to ourselves.

Often make use of the petition: “From an unprovided death, O Lord, deliver me”.

THIRD DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE PARTICULAR JUDGMENT.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—To imagine myself before the judgment-seat of God.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will : enlighten my understanding that I may estimate my own life according to the light of the last judgment ; inflame my will that I may have a holy and a saving fear.

FIRST POINT.—That we are to be judged immediately after death. How? Perhaps with our Guardian Angel on one side and the devil on the other—the Angel defending while the devil accuses us, and God holding the scales of justice. Or with God alone, and we our own accusers. We shall know all our sins. Our past life will stand out vividly before us. I knew a priest who was all but drowned, and during the time he was insensible he saw the whole of his life. I also knew an artist who, when painting, fell from the scaffolding : between the ceiling and the floor he saw everything he had ever done. A Protestant gentleman who was in a railway accident told me that in the moment of going down the embankment all his life came back to him. These instances, which have come under my own observation, make it seem very possible to me that we shall be our own accusers.

The trial will be ended. Mercy will be over. It's a terrible thought. In retreat we think of our sins and imperfections, and are afraid to dwell upon the thought of them. What will it be when our whole life is unrolled before us? O Lord, give me now a great fear of Thy judgment. It will be terrible even for the just. Give me fear, that it may preserve me from worldliness, from vanity. The moment will come when I shall stand alone in Thy presence.

Here we can forget God in ourselves, and can give ourselves up to our passions: it gives us security to see others leading careless lives, but then there is no hope, none to countenance us, to scoff at death and holiness. We are *in* the next world with the tale of our life minutely told. How can I with all my foolishness stand alone in presence of Thy great holiness? Now I will accuse myself, now make reparation. Grant, O Lord, that I may not be blinded, that I may see things as they are. May I *never* forget that I am soon to be judged.

SECOND. Imagine the terror and consternation of the soul before its Judge. Alone it entered the world; alone it goes out of the world; alone it stands before its Judge. What will that moment be for a soul who would not serve, who would not have God for its Creator? If a spirit could give a cry, how piercing would that cry be which tells of a life suddenly brought to its close, a powerless creature in the grasp of an Infinite Power, waking up to all those realities it refused to consider in its lifetime, confronted with the justice, holiness, omnipotence of

God—all deceptions at an end. What will the world appear then? House, servants, friends, doctor—no more the minute after death. “Pierce my heart with Thy fear.” Give me the gift of forgiveness.

Recordare Jesu pie
 Quod sum causa tuæ viæ,
 Ne me perdas illa die.
 Quærens me sedisti lassus
 Redemisti crucem passus
 Tantus labor non sit cassus.

Of ourselves we are full of weakness. Now there is time to turn to God. Let us try to lead such a life that when we go to God it may be not without hope, not without love—*it cannot be without fear* even for the holiest: but we may go with confidence, confessing our wretchedness, knowing that we have repented, knowing that we have believed and hoped in Him, One God in Three Persons, and that we have put no creature before Him. So shall we go, not without fear, but with joy.

But now we are not secure; others as good as we are have fallen; so we should work out our salvation with great fear and trembling. The holiest have been filled with fear, knowing their inconstancy. Mourn for your own weakness. “Fill my soul with a holy and a wise fear. Be my Saviour, Jesus, not my judge. Say to me, ‘Come, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord’.”

THIRD DAY.

[11.45 A.M.]

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Our Lord in the midst of His disciples speaking this parable.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding that I may know the mystery of man's wilfulness and of God's mercy. In flame my will that I may have a great distrust of self and a great confidence in God.

Diffidence and want of confidence in God are our greatest difficulties in making real progress. We want more distrust of self. The story of the Prodigal Son is one of the master lessons Jesus Christ gave. It teaches confidence, it gives such a picture of one's own life.

FIRST POINT.—The prodigal leaving his father. Consider the circumstances in which the parable was spoken, when it had been said of Jesus, "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them". It is one of a series comprising also the parables of the Lost Sheep and the Lost Piece of Money, in which He would show us His rejoicing over a repentant sinner. This is what He wishes us to have an idea of—the joy in heaven when a sinner repents. Our Lord does not shrink from what we should call a ridiculous comparison—an old woman finding her coin.

This young man in the parable on which we are medi-

tating represents a reasonable soul placed upon his trial. "Let me leave this monotonous life," he says. "Give me independence; let me follow my own will. I am weary of this round of prayer; I want to go into the world. Give me this world, not the world of faith I have never seen. Let me be free." The father divided his substance. He gave the young man free-will. The young man leaves his father and home and a wearisome round of duty. In the beginning a soul has plenty of philosophy. "I will go to Holy Communion at the Indulgences. I will go to Mass on Sundays." You begin leaving God with a certain amount of good resolutions. By degrees it gets easy to give these up. "He went into a far country." Why not stop near? Why go so far? It is the course of sin to make an abyss. "He wasted his substance living riotously"—wasted health and strength, advantages, money, the esteem of friends: the majority of those who go away from God waste everything, and drag themselves and others into an ignominious grave. "There arose a mighty famine." In the beginning there is something left, but after a time there is no satisfaction, not even a prospect of pleasure: the whole world is full of weariness. "He began to be in great want"—the heart becomes so empty that nothing can fill it. "The citizen sent him to feed swine." He becomes the slave of a very hard master. Consider the wretchedness of the man. He had left a kind father, and now in his hunger and misery he cleaves to this hard master, who employs him in the meanest office, and "he would fain have

eaten the husks, and no man gave unto him". It is a picture of utter destitution—the son of a good father, born to abundance: it is the history of every passion that is allowed to become our master. Pride, ambition, jealousy, envy—each passion is full of meanness and degradation: the soul becomes the victim of that passion, and cleaves to a pitiless master. And this is partly realised in those who are half-and-half, who cleave partly to the world. They must be up early and late, hither and thither, wasting youth and health and talents; and how ruthlessly the world casts off its victims. There is no pity from the world. To those who hesitate and halt between God and the world there is only a sort of half peace. They alone know true peace who remain in their Father's home and are content with His consolations. Nothing matters to them: they have their Father; they know they are cared for. If duty becomes irksome, they persevere because of the knowledge of their Father's love. At times they have anxieties and desolations, but there is an abiding sense that His hand guides them, and they would not give up their life of penance for the brightest moments they have known in the world. Engrave on my heart, O Lord, this truth, that with Thee alone is peace. Thou wilt have my undivided love. Grant that I may give myself with all my heart to Thy service.

SECOND. "*Returning to himself.*" Where had he been? Out of himself, far from his own reason. "Returning to himself, he said, how many hired servants of my father have bread, and to spare." Here

he thinks of the home and the father who provides plentifully for everyone: "and I his son perish with hunger". So every sinner begins by returning to himself, looking into his conscience, confessing his misery. "Perish with hunger." Nothing but God can satisfy the heart. Sometimes it is well to think of the hunger we have felt when away from God. The resolution, "I will arise and go to my Father," expresses the true disposition of penance. We should never fear to meet our Father, whatever our sins may be, if we are but sorry for them, saying: "Father, I have sinned," simply—though it may be difficult to pride—making no excuse. "I have sinned; I am not worthy to be called Thy son. I cannot ask to be taken back where I was; but load me with burdens, give me desolation and weariness, take me as a hired servant; only take me back."

Pass over in your mind these traits of the parable, because they are put on purpose by Jesus Christ. If your conscience tells you that you are still in your Father's house, beg to persevere; if you have left it, try to go back in the spirit of true penance.

CONSIDERATION.

THIRD DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON HOLY COMMUNION.

HOLY COMMUNION ought to be the source of the greatest happiness in the world ; yet how many convert their communions into misery and anxiety ! Sometimes very holy people do this. They say they are not worthy. These are the last words of the Church before she gives us the Blessed Sacrament : *Domine non sum dignus*. We are all unworthy. If we make a true, simple, profitable acknowledgment of unworthiness, it brings no uneasiness ; but there is another in which is mixed up a little reliance on self. I have many sins, they vex and humble me. I can't control my temper, I am worried and disquieted. This is not good. We should take ourselves as we are, and offer ourselves to God, and say, " My God, I love Thee, forgive my faults ".

Is there any limit to frequent Communion ? Yes. What disposition is a lawful hindrance to Holy Communion ? Grievous sin, and, moreover, a deliberate affection to sin in our heart. For example, you have had a quarrel, and you have not got the spirit of charity our Lord requires. With that disposition of anger you could not receive Holy Communion ; or if you have committed theft and confessed it, but not made restitution.

An *affection* to deliberate venial sin, such as speaking of the faults of others, would be an obstacle to *frequent* Communion. A person with such an affection should go to Communion once a week only, and pray to overcome it. Then there is the obstacle of what I may call want of sufficient respect to the Blessed Sacrament. If you have very engrossing duties up to the time of receiving, or if you are continually at parties, leading a life of amusement, it would not be reverent to receive Holy Communion oftener than once a week. If on the other hand, you do all you can to avoid deliberate venial sin, you may go every day with *immense* profit. If you are living in particularly trying circumstances, you need special grace. If, again, you are leading a very quiet, regular life, daily Communion is suitable.

With regard to preparation—some people are always wondering if they are rightly prepared—I would say: Let there be no sin, no attachment to sin (saying a hasty word or some passing feeling of vanity would be no obstacle), have no malice, be very charitable, have good-will towards those who are near to you, and a sense of your own unworthiness. Make acts of faith. This is the greatest mystery of faith: “Lord I believe that Thou art here, do Thou strengthen my faith”. Make acts of hope. To those who are troubled with despondency Holy Communion is the pledge of eternal salvation. For what is everlasting salvation but to see God as He is, and what greater pledge of this could He give us than He gives in Holy Communion? You have storms and tempta-

tations : Jesus is in the boat. You have an arduous task : how can I accomplish such a duty? How can I bear such a cross? You have Jesus Christ coming to you, who will do all for you. No one who cries, "Lord, save me I perish!" ever perishes.

We should have a great desire for Holy Communion. It won't do to say, I have this or that business or pleasure to attend to. We ought to have such a desire as Juliana Falconieri had when too ill to receive the Blessed Sacrament. She asked that It might be laid on her breast, and it was laid there, and the mark was left where our Lord had been.

If you have these dispositions, go to Holy Communion, though you may not have given much length of time to your prayers before. The devil has no device so injurious to pious people as that of keeping them from Communion.

How are we to make our thanksgiving? Think what you would do if Jesus Christ were to come as a guest to your house. You would kneel at His feet and adore Him, and profess your faith in Him, and ask for what you wanted, and offer Him everything He might wish to have. "Here I am, O my Lord, dumb, having nothing to say, but willing to give Thee all Thou mayest ask of me." Your heart will tell you what to say. Let your heart say what is in it, all that is in it. It is a precious time—the time to ask for great graces, conversions, graces for others, help in difficulties, everything we want.

THIRD DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE PARABLE OF THE PRODIGAL SON (*continued*).

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

PRELUDES as in the last meditation.

This parable is a picture of the mercy of Almighty God. The one condition for forgiveness is that the son should say, "I will arise and go to my father, and say, Father, I have sinned"—that he should go to his father and make a humble confession. If any sinner will do this he will have the same mercy shown him.

"When he was a great way off his father saw him." It is as if his father all the while was waiting and looking out for his return, and recognised him notwithstanding he was starved and in rags. This is an improbable story to our human ideas. A mother, might expect and look out for the prodigal, but here it is a father. How unlike earthly fathers. Without hearing a word this father takes him in his arms again, takes possession of him at once. There is no dignity, no standing on his wounded honour. Not only is this true of God's reception of the sinner, but it is true of the soul. The soul thinks it is afar off from God; it forgets the surpassing love of God, who is moved to compassion, and only waiting for the time when He may take us in His arms and give us His consolation. We won't be satisfied with God's way of treating us. We want all to be done in our way.

“Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee.” He had prepared his confession, but when he feels his father’s arms round him he cannot say, “Make me as one of thy hired servants”. It would be unjust to the love of such a father. Most fathers would expostulate, would make some reproach, we should think, but this father utters no word of blame. “Bring the best robe,” he says to his servants, treat him as my son, my favoured son; wipe out all the traces of his undutifulness. What a wonderful picture! Jesus Christ will teach us there is no limit to the mercy of God. “He was dead, and he is come back to me.”

“And they began to be merry.” The elder son who was in the field came and heard what had happened, and he is wounded and hurt. According to the ordinary standard of human life, this conduct of God is enough to provoke people. Ordinarily, good people cannot understand it. The most touching thing is how the father began to entreat his elder son as if he felt his treatment of the prodigal was against reason. But the son will not be entreated. He puts his own conduct before his father, and contrasts it with that of the other. This is a picture to show us God’s love, remember. “Son, thou art always with me, and all that I have is thine.” It is true this treatment of my son is outwardly in excess, but all I have is thine. You were never dead, never lost. “It was fit that we should make merry”—a lesson that ought to give us infinite comfort. For those who have gone away from God there is all this mercy in

store. It is also true of those who have become at all negligent. God is always looking and waiting. He may try us, but if we persevere in our penitence, He will give us overflowing consolations. What we must not do is to stop short of confessing "I have sinned". We *must* do our part. There must be generosity. We must *go* to God, and He will meet us with the treasures of the Church—His servants, graces—shoes to run hard ways—the ring to bind us to Jesus Christ. Have we dealt in this way with Almighty God? or do we wonder if He will ask too much of us? Do we hesitate about going to Him? It looks as if there were so much to be done, but there is so little, really. How much would you have to change in your outward life in order to become a saint? It is the spirit God asks. Keep what you have, only say, "I will arise". When we have arisen, the real work is done. It is not difficult to go to such a Father, who has such love, such patience, such lavish gifts, that He longs to heap upon us. If we could only find a human being with a hundredth part of the love that God has, all the world would run after him. If our faith were lively, if we could overcome this love of self, then we should arise and go to our Father and receive His choicest consolations.

Conclude with many acts of confidence. Be firmly convinced that there is no set of difficulties for which His grace is not sufficient.

THIRD DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

ON THE BLESSED EUCHARIST.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Read St. John, chap. vi.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Think that you see our Blessed Lord surrounded by a great multitude.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Pray that your understanding may be enlightened that you may know “the gift of God,” and your will inflamed with an ardent love of this great gift, and a desire to make a good use of it.

FIRST POINT. “I am the Bread of Life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst.” Consider that the Blessed Eucharist is truly the Bread of Life of which the manna given to the Jews in the desert was a type. When received with proper dispositions, it maintains and strengthens the spiritual life of grace in our souls. The Church calls it the seed of immortality according to that saying of our Blessed Lord: “If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever”.

Examine what are your habitual dispositions in approaching this holy Sacrament. Make acts of contrition for your many sins and shortcomings, acts of faith in this Divine Mystery, acts of hope and confidence, acts of love and humility, acts of desire, etc.

SECOND. “The Jews therefore murmured at Him,

because He had said, I am the living bread which came down from heaven. And they said : Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then saith He, I came down from heaven. Jesus therefore answered and said to them, Murmur not among yourselves." Consider how much the Jews lost by murmuring. Had they humbly said, "We cannot understand, but we believe that this Man is a Prophet sent by God," Jesus Christ would have explained His meaning. Have we not sometimes said like these Jews, "How can this Man give us His flesh to eat? How can this be the Bread of Life, the Body of Christ?" instead of prostrating ourselves before the Divine Majesty and saying, "My Lord and my God, I cannot see, I cannot understand, but I believe in Thy words. Lord, I believe, help Thou my unbelief."

THIRD. "Jesus said to the twelve : Will you also go away? And Simon Peter answered Him : Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we have believed and have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God." Our Lord puts His Apostles to a great trial : they were but simple men, and they had heard the learned among the Jews murmur at His words. When they murmured our Lord did not recall His words, but repeated them more emphatically, and many of His own disciples said, "This saying is hard, who can hear it?" and they "went back and walked no more with Him". And Jesus said to the twelve : "Will you also go away?" St. Peter answers : "Lord, to whom shall we go?"

He does not say, “I understand”. He could not understand, but he had the true wisdom of the simple ones of God. “To whom shall we go?” Thy saying is indeed incomprehensible, but we have believed and we have known that Thou art the Christ the Son of God. To whom shall we go? with Thee we will live and die. These should be our words: “To whom shall we go?—where shall we turn? Not to the fleeting honours and pleasures and riches of this life, not to the vain philosophers of the world—they have no words of eternal life, they have nothing that can satisfy our immortal souls. We have believed that Thou art the Christ, and however marvellous is the mystery Thou hast revealed, we know that Thy saying is true and that Thou hast the words of eternal life.”

FOURTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—To imagine the towns and villages through which our Lord went in His public life, preaching, etc.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may know Thee and That I may know myself;

inflame my will that I may love Thee, that I may hate myself.

Up to this point in our retreat we have been engaged in removing obstacles; now we come to something positive. God made man for Himself, His rights are unlimited. He is King. He cherishes most of all His empire in the hearts of men. Not all the world is so dear to Him as the soul of one of His rational creatures. In the beginning Adam was placed on his trial: he threw off his allegiance, and sin entered into the world. The empire of God was broken up. For four thousand years God put up with the world. Even among His chosen people many would not obey Him. Then He was pleased to reassert His Kingdom, but it must be as before in the free-will of man. Men must freely accept His service. Sometimes we only think of the atonement for sin, but part of the scheme of Redemption was to wage war with the devil, to take part of his gains, and the hearts of men are the theatre of the war.

St. Ignatius proposes a parable: he had been a soldier, full of chivalry; we must bear that in mind. "There was a king," he said, "possessing all noble gifts: imagine him making this speech to his followers: 'I invite you all to the holy war I am about to undertake, but I will only have volunteers. I will ask none to do what I have not done myself, and when we return all shall have a share in the reward.' Would not each of his followers come forward and say, 'I accept willingly and cheerfully'? What would be thought of one who said, 'No! I will go home and be comfortable'?"

Transfer this parable to the life of Jesus Christ on earth—the fairest of the sons of men. All were drawn to Him in love and confidence. He is King not only in His Divinity, but as man, for He is the first-born of all creatures. He is King also by conquest, triumphing over His enemies, Eternal King, Mighty King. Such a King is worthy of our service. To be His servant is to be noble. Acts of faith and adoration.

This King is sent into the world by His Father to reconquer a kingdom that had been snatched away. This kingdom was lost through our inordinate love of the things of the world, and therefore He says: “I am sent to reconquer it, to win your allegiance, and because you have loved inordinately pleasures, riches, and honours, I will wage war by choosing poverty, pain, and ignominy. For your sakes, that you may make your choice well, I choose these sufferings and humiliations. I will go before you. Follow Me. You shall not be asked to suffer more than I have suffered, and if in the time of trial you will be faithful, I will open the gates of My Kingdom, and you shall share it. This is the application: the warfare is to be waged with invisible armour: it is a spiritual warfare. The Kingdom of God is within you: there the battle takes place—in silence, in the presence of the Leader and His Angels. We have his help, His example, His grace, the prospect of his Kingdom. There is no question of defeat, we are certain of victory; the only question is how far we shall dare to aspire. If I have any right feeling, if I have a

heart that can respond to generosity, what answer shall I make? Shall I hesitate? Should I not say Yes! Gladly and willingly will I follow such a Leader in such an enterprise. Thou alone art truly worthy. In the strength of Thy love to me, I will follow Thee in this warfare. What can I do for this Leader, the noblest, truest, most royal of all hearts? Shall I content myself with merely not being a rebel? with what is His of strict right? We will attack the enemy in his stronghold, banish him entirely. Perhaps we feel some chill at the idea of striking a blow at pleasures, honours, and riches; but we must look unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy set before Him despised the shame. We will be ready to attack His enemies—affections for things that lead to sin, love of independence, of ease, and comfort. Ask yourself what can I offer Him? Strengthen me, O Lord, that I may follow Thee, that I may persevere in this war, bearing gladly and triumphantly poverty, and pain, and humiliation, and share Thy spirit in the fullest degree.

FOURTH DAY.

[11.45 A.M.]

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST (*continued*).

PRELUDES as in the preceding Meditation.

We must picture Judea to ourselves. The idea of St. Ignatius is to bring before the mind the scenes

amongst which our Lord spent His Life. St. Ignatius was a great realist. He made the journey to Palestine with the object of seeing the places where Christ lived and taught, and afterwards, when he was founding his order, his idea was to go back to the same country, and go about and teach where our Lord had taught.

We have a picture of one day of our Lord's life, and it is amazing. We are reminded of it by St. Francis Xavier, who went on catechising till he could speak no longer. Our Lord's life was one of intense labour, very hard work. He would often spend His nights in prayer. See him going about dressed as a carpenter with His Apostles—fishers, sailors—people pressing on Him, like the blind man to be healed. Picture Nazareth—a lovely scene as it is described to us, a quiet, beautiful spot, where Jesus Christ obeyed and worked as a carpenter. We see there an absence of worldliness, no great people, all working, poor pay, poor living, a total want of all that we think makes life tolerable. Try and bring all this before your minds: His hidden life—nothing to break the monotony except that one mysterious event of remaining behind in the Temple: it is a real history, undoubtedly true, as real for us as it was for those who saw Him: so make a picture of it to yourself.

We ought to aim at a great love of Jesus Christ. Fear is the beginning of wisdom, but it is not all wisdom. Fear will not induce us to do much, it partly paralyses us; but with *love* of Jesus Christ we can do *everything*. It is equal to any degree of

perfection to which God may call us. It is a thing to aim at, to set before our eyes. Nothing else is sufficient to carry us through our warfare. How are we to acquire this love? Tell Him that you love Him, that you wish you loved Him more and more. By loving you get to love more. If you have no intercourse with a friend, your friendship grows cold. Love seeks to pour itself forth; it never exhausts itself. Say to Him in every meditation, in each Holy Communion, in all your actions, "May I love Thee, my God, more and more". The surest test of love is to be found in deeds, in overcoming ourselves, in making the conquest of ourselves. This is the point to be dwelt on in our love of Jesus Christ. Let us regret the past and promise to do better in the future; let us have a firm purpose to increase in love; let us hate self and resolve to overcome all self-love. We are not to hate ourselves in every sense but love ourselves wisely, in the proper way. It is unwise to love things that pamper my appetites and feed my passions; love of riches, if inordinate, is unwise, as is also the love of honour, because this temporal life is what is least worthy of my consideration. True love of self is when I prefer the noblest part of my nature before what is perishable. The more I love my own soul the more I love Jesus Christ. We sometimes puzzle about this, and say we can't hate ourselves. There is a true sense in which we ought to love ourselves, and in doing so are loving Jesus Christ.

Consider the honour He promises to His servants :
"You who have followed me . . . shall sit on

thrones". A soldier must trust in his leader; he makes no provision for himself. We cannot doubt that Jesus Christ is far more than an earthly leader. He truly leads us, He truly shares every danger, He truly divides with us all His inheritance. There is no imagination about this: it is a sober reality far above what man can conceive. So we should get a most unbounded trust in Jesus Christ as our Leader. I know and believe He leads the way, and my trust is as great as if I saw Him in His Resurrection, at His Ascension, or seated on His Throne. But our hearts are too narrow, too cold. It is the old story of Peter on the waves: as long as he looked at Jesus Christ he was safe, but he lost his trust, and immediately he began to sink: "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" How often have we deserved to hear from Him, "Why didst thou hesitate?—why have so little faith?" Let us arm ourselves with an unbounded confidence. However wild the storm, we shall walk on the waves if we have but confidence, if only we trust Jesus, if only we have unshaken faith in His affection and concern for us. However little we are, we are to Him as though we were alone in the world. His love is so vast that He can give the same to each one.

These are fundamental principles of the spiritual life which we engrave on our minds more deeply when we are in retreat. By repetition you get deeper impressions: they become part of yourself. Increase this trust in Jesus Christ. Do all you can to strengthen it. Resolve to arm yourself against all love of self.

We said just now that noble natures would not be content with little: they would want to do more. We may dwell on this and ask, "Can I do more for God? Is there anything, O Lord, Thou dost ask that I can give? I am ready. I desire only to devote myself entirely, completely to Thy service." His invitation deserves this response. Is there anything I know He asks for—something, perhaps it is quite lawful I should have, but which He wishes me to renounce? "O my Lord, if I give Thee all I have, it is very little: my talents, my education, my health—take all."

Consider the contrast between a noble heart consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ, and a noble heart enslaved to the service of the devil and the world. What a sad spectacle is that of these great natures wasted! They have been invited to follow Jesus Christ, but they reply, "We will not have this Carpenter-King, this God we have never seen". So they gave up their eloquence, their talents, and influence to the world and Satan, and at the end they ask for their reward, and the world and Satan reply, "What is that to us? Thou hast served our turn."

Contrast the end of life in the generous soldier. What peace! What happiness! A St. Francis dying full of joy, longing to meet his King, to hear the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant: enter into the joy of thy Lord". Who would not do anything he could to have St. Francis' meeting with Jesus Christ?

CONSIDERATION.

FOURTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON SAYING THE ROSARY AND ASSISTING AT MASS.

THE Rosary is a devotion that has done great things in the Church. St. Dominic, by means of it, revived the Church. How such a result was produced is a puzzle to those who do not consider what the Rosary is. It consists of saying so many *Paters* and *Aves*, while thinking of some mystery. To say *Aves* in a mechanical way glorifies God, is prayer, though not the most perfect way of praying, yet is pleasing to God. But the Rosary occupies our minds with the mystery of our Lord's life. Take the Nativity. You know some painting of it. Look at it really or with your memory while you say the decade, or have your heart filled with love of Jesus Christ, who became an Infant: or it is winter and you think of the cold, and have a feeling of compassion: or you picture to yourself Angels adoring round the Child: or you feel amazement that God should have become Man: or you admire the humility of Jesus Christ: or you occupy your mind with any pious thought or affection—you cannot go wrong. Sometimes look at our Lord, sometimes look at St. Joseph, or Mary, or the Angels—there is no end to the pictures you may contemplate—the less effort the better, the more leisurely the better; it is more easy than to occupy oneself with

good thoughts. The Rosary is everyone's devotion. It is adapted to the poor and blind, it can be read without eyes, it is suitable in times of sickness, the poorest find abundant matter in it, to the greatest Saints and Doctors it is ever unfolding new delights. St. Thomas himself never came to the end of the treasures it contains. The Rosary fits every disposition and every mood: joy, sorrow, it has a language for all.

Some people like to add a word which tells the mystery. "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus 'crucified,'" Jesus "risen," Jesus "ascended into heaven," etc. Variety is useful.

Then, again, think of the Mother of God. Think of her in her Immaculate Conception or as Queen of Heaven; or make acts of contrition, or of gratitude, or of humility—no thought is out of place in the Rosary.

From the Annunciation to the Coronation of Our Lady it contains the whole of Christianity. Hence the reason it was such a powerful instrument in the hands of Dominic. It was such a plain, homely way of putting Christianity before everyone. No wonder it regenerated the world. It will regenerate us too. Let it be the expression of our disposition. How much balm and peace there is in it! If we would only try it when we are desponding instead of going to call on a friend! Some rather despise it and call it Japanese machinery. Not a bit!—it is an immense treasury of Grace.

In order to assist profitably at Mass it is a great

thing to understand what we are doing. To a Hindoo or a Protestant the Mass looks so inexplicable : yet it is really wonderfully simple. There is not a gesture in it without a meaning. Go back for a moment to one of the bloody sacrifices of the Old Law. It involved three acts : (1) The victim chosen from the common herd and set apart. (2) The priest taking away the life of the victim in acknowledgment that God is the Author of life and has dominion over every creature. (3) Eating the flesh of the victim.

In the Mass the three parts are perfectly distinct—offertory, consecration, and communion. (1) Offertory, or the separation of bread and wine from our use for the use of God. In ancient times the people used to bring bread for this purpose. (2) Consecration corresponds to the taking away of the life. The shedding of Christ's Blood is mystically enacted. The words of consecration would place separately the Body and the Blood in a state of death—not truly, because since His Resurrection His Body and Blood cannot be separated—but it would be a taking away of life if that were possible. For example, had Mass been said by St. Peter whilst our Lord's Body was in the tomb, the words of consecration would have produced the Body and the Blood separately. The state of the Eucharist is very much the state of a dead body. It is a re-enactment of what took place after our Lord's death. (3) Holy Communion is the participation of the Body and Blood of the Victim.

All that goes before the offertory is not part of the *sacrifice*, but only of the service. There was always a

collect and always the preface, but the *Gloria in excelsis* is comparatively modern, as are also the *Credo* and the *Introit*. So slowly has the Mass grown up to its present form, that in St. Ignatius' time he directed his priests to use at the end either St. John's Gospel or that of our Lady. The custom of reading the second Gospel was not then established. Mass only takes half-an-hour. There is not a cross or a lifting of hands which has not its meaning.

Have a method of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, with a book or without, as best suits your devotion. The fact of being present is an act of homage to God, an act of adoration to Jesus Christ present on the altar for our sins; so that the poorest who assists at Mass is making an eloquent protest against the millions outside the Church who worship they know not what.

You may follow the words in your missal or say your beads or meditate on the Passion—all are good ways of assisting at Mass. What is essential is that at the elevation you should think that Jesus Christ died for you on Calvary and adore Him present, and recollect yourself in His presence. At the elevation of the chalice it is a good practice to ask for some particular grace.

At the Communion of the priest it is also essential to make an act of spiritual communion. It is not necessary for all to know the words or to be able to read. To be present is a great act of worship.

Examine as to your habit of saying the Rosary and of assisting at Holy Mass, and see what you can do to improve it.

FOURTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

CONTEMPLATION ON THE INCARNATION.

ONE object in making a retreat is to bring our meditations up to the mark and see that no negligence has crept in. The difference between meditation and contemplation is that in contemplation there is no exercise directly of the memory, no question put generally by the understanding, but the particular question at once—What is this to me? We look at persons or hear words, and say, What is this to me? The whole weight is derived from the dignity of the persons who are the objects of contemplation. Affections of the will come in everywhere. Contemplation is more easy than meditation in many cases.

Our contemplation this evening is to be on the Incarnation. We have to consider what a miserable state the whole world was in before the coming of Jesus Christ—how there was only one little corner—Judea—in which there was any belief in God. Then, when things were at their worst, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity was to come. We must dwell on the message of Gabriel, the answer of Mary, and “The Word made flesh”.

FIRST POINT. We look at the state of the world : the grand Roman Empire extending over a great part of Europe—greater splendour and magnificence than now—Africa, America, China busy as now—people going on as you see them now in the Strand—here a war,

there a festival. They are all created free on purpose that they may serve God. As we pass through London, we sometimes think how many people ask themselves whether there is a God, or remember that they are here on their trial. Much more might we have done so, then. There is fighting, quarrelling, laughing, crying, darkness, God not known, stocks and stones worshipped, human victims sacrificed, the natural law in some instances blotted out : bad as we are, we are good compared with those ages.

Then I ask, What is this to me? I am like those people, placed on my trial, and all these things around me are vanity and foolishness : the work of God is so undone, all these immortal beings so fallen away, that the image of God is almost obliterated. What misery is it to leave God ! Save me from this evil. Grant that in my course through life I may try to sanctify all its events and make them subservient to the salvation of my soul.

Think of the Three Persons of the Adorable Trinity existing by necessity from all eternity in their calmness, their truthfulness, and holiness. How is it God comes to care for mankind? I adore Thee in Thy Infinite Perfection and Majesty. I am infinitely unworthy Thou shouldst take care of me. I thank Thee for the remedy Thou has brought to this universal degradation. How many millions during those four thousand years have come and gone, how many have been lost, and all lost quite wilfully—and who am I that I should look into Thy designs? I adore Thy Infinite Patience, bearing with men, bearing with their ignorance, their stupidity, their unspiritual life.

Consider how God prepared His plan step by step—choosing out the Jewish people, then a tribe, then a family. When we come to see it all, it will appear a work of great beauty. There were many good souls even then. God is very slow, but He prepares His work, and if we don't spoil His work it will come out in us perfect and complete. Perhaps it may be because we are too short-lived that we are so impatient. We want to have things done quickly, and God takes time. Don't be distressed because the work of your sanctification is not done in a week. O my God! give me the lesson of patience. May I bear my infirmities as Thou dost bear with me, and wait patiently for Thy time and work.

SECOND. The Angel Gabriel is sent to Mary. Imagine the Holy House. Our Lady was probably praying, because the greatest gifts are given in prayer, and this stupendous gift of being the Mother of God would most likely be given in prayer. Look at her—perhaps praying for the coming of the Messiah, and deploring the sins of Judea in those prayers from the Old Testament the Church uses during Advent. Would that I could pray for one moment as Mary did when Gabriel came! Alas! if my prayer is not answered, perhaps it is because I have not learned to pray with all my mind and heart. I will try to pray more fervently, and not be so lazy and comfortable.

Imagine the Angel coming with great reverence: we cannot without blasphemy conceive his coming without reverence. Have I always shown that reverence to our Lady? The Church gives a special

word to the worship due to her—"hyperdulia"—because she is so far above the Saints. This is the woman who, even before she receives her supreme dignity of becoming Mother of God, is saluted "full of grace". If I have been influenced by the din that there is in this country against the Mother of God, I will ask pardon. Obtain for me, O Mary, the grace to love thee more truly. Make a prayer to St. Gabriel to obtain this grace.

Listen to the words: the words of the bad people, immortal souls gifted with the gift of speech—alas! that they should so pervert it and turn it to wickedness and folly. I will guard against a foolish tongue. O God! spare me, that I may learn to make a good use of this wondrous gift.

"*Ecce Ancilla Domini.*" Acts of wonder and admiration. God would not accomplish the mystery of the Incarnation without the consent of His own creature. Oh, the wonderfulness of the ways of God! I may wonder at the holiness of Mary—that He depends on her word before He accomplishes the greatest event in the world—that a human being should be so dear, such an object of reverence to Almighty God. O Blessed Virgin! I thank thee for myself and all mankind that thou hast listened to God and given thy consent to this wondrous mystery. O God! I give Thee thanks for this wondrous mystery by which Thou hast been pleased to work out the redemption of mankind. And this redemption is for me! Pray that you may not lose it. Make acts of the love of God.

It was a good old Catholic practice to use frequently the words: "The Word was made flesh". That was the origin of the custom of carrying the beginning of the Gospel of St. John about us. These words, "*Verbum caro factum est,*" are a beautiful prayer in times of temptation.

FOURTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE NATIVITY.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The history. St. Luke, chap. ii., verses 1-7.

SECOND PRELUDE.—The scene. The house at Nazareth. The road to Bethlehem. The stable, a cave in the rock.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will: enlighten my understanding that I may know Jesus Christ my Lord in the mystery of His Nativity; inflame my will that I may love and follow Him. O Lord! grant that I may know Thee and know myself, that I may love Thee, that I may hate myself.

FIRST POINT. Look at the persons: the Emperor Augustus, who represents the power of this world—an unreal, empty power—not thinking of the hardships he entailed on his subjects in causing them to be en-

rolled. Look at Joseph and Mary on their journey ; they have no pomp or wealth. Yet all the world in the sight of God is as nothing compared to them. The passers-by took no heed of them, or perhaps scorned them. The Angels followed worshipping.

Listen to the words of Augustus, as we may fancy them, giving his orders in a tyrannical, inconsiderate way. Are we haughty to our inferiors, to servants, children, or others ? If so, here is a great matter for correction. Let us examine if we have due consideration for the wants and feelings of those around us. If there were a little more thought for others, how many miseries would be avoided.

Listen to the words of Joseph and Mary. The journey was long, but they console each other in every difficulty by remembering that they are performing the will of God. Probably they began the journey with a little prayer. We cannot imagine them gossiping or talking about the faults of their neighbours. Let us examine our habit of speaking, and correct what is amiss.

Watch the actions. The Emperor's actions, imposing a great deal of trouble on others. The world is ever more exacting than God is in the sharpest trials He sends us. The actions of the Holy Family—they obey a stranger. A lesson for us to obey properly constituted authority, to obey hard rulers for the love of God.

SECOND. Joseph and Mary go round Bethlehem to find shelter. We imagine the persons, the inhabitants of Bethlehem, the visitors gathered round the different inns, talking and laughing, full of any thought except that of the great event that is about to

happen. Joseph and Mary are hardly noticed in the crowd ; quietly, meekly, they seek for shelter, not murmuring when it is refused. It was a hard trial, but they bore it patiently, offering it up to God. " He came unto His own and His own received Him not." Do we not sometimes shrink from receiving Him ? Are we not too often indifferent and inhospitable when he comes to us ?

THIRD. The birth of Christ. Contemplate the stable, the ox, the ass, the manger. Make acts of adoration to the Divine Infant. He is your Captain. He teaches you the way in which He will wage war against comfort and luxury and honour. Renew your homage to your King. Say that you will not forsake Him now you see His trials. Offer yourself to share His fare—His manger, His cold, His thirst and hunger. Admire Him : how He reserves nothing for Himself ! With what generosity He gives Himself utterly to us ! Renew your faith. Strengthen yourself in the warfare you must carry on against the spiritual enemies of your soul.

FIFTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE ADORATION OF THE MAGI.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Recall the history. St. Matt., chap. ii., verses 1-11.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Imagine the scenes—the long journey, the palace of Herod, Bethlehem.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O Lord, and inflame my will, that I may know Thee in this mystery and may follow Thee.

FIRST POINT. Look at the persons. The wise men, kings, men of position and wealth, given up to serious studies, held in consideration by their neighbours—see them talking together. Wonder at the grace of God, who is pleased to call them from among the Gentiles ; and this same grace has been given to me : He has called me also. These men were given to reading and serious occupations. I shall be more ready to receive grace if I am serious and occupy myself. Work is a great preparation for the grace of God. May I ever remember this. May I henceforward make a good use of my time.

Look at all the men in the East who were not wise, who were idle, gossiping, engrossed in amusements, or in getting money by unjust means, going on very much as the world goes on now. I pity these ; I renounce amusement.

Listen to the words of the three wise men : “ Here is that star : what can it mean ? ” They have heard the tradition of the star that should point out the Messiah, and they consult with each other and resolve to follow the star. There are many difficulties, but these do not deter them, and away they go. Very sensible talk theirs ! Very sensible the conclusion to which it leads ! How do I talk and act ? Give me grace, O Lord, that henceforth I

may use my tongue and my mind in Thy divine service.

There were others who said "What is this star? Well! that must be the Messiah's star"; and they stared at it and did nothing. When it became known that three sensible men were going off to follow it, it was said they were gone crazy. "Poor people! Out of their minds." We know how the world speaks of those who go after Jesus Christ: "Good people, but not right in their heads". It was probably impressed on these three Magi how they would not be able to show their faces again in their own country when they found there was no King of the Jews. May I have grace to despise the world and persevere in good resolutions. "It's absurd your going to Mass every day," the world says. If we listened to the world, we should do nothing. It thinks you a lunatic if you make an hour's meditation every day. One condition of serving God is to set the world at defiance. If your friends are concerned about your health because you go out to Mass in the morning, laugh and agree with them, but do it nevertheless.

Observe the actions. The wise men started off on their journey, not knowing how it would end, but full of confidence in God. "Actually going off after the star," their acquaintances said. Very likely, at the end of the first day, they had temptations to go back. It was suggested to them that it was all moonshine, and they had better think no more about it; but away they went, day after day, till they got to the end. A grand lesson for us in our journey to heaven! It is very well

to make resolutions, but after a few days, when the fervour of retreat has cooled, it seems a very stupid journey, and there are a great many difficulties, and we begin to think perhaps our friends were right and we had better have remained as we were. But there is the star, and each day brings us nearer to Jesus. So let us go on as these wise men did, steadily accomplishing each day's journey, not trying to do the work of two days in one, but quietly doing the one day's work as it comes, and resolutely facing every difficulty that may arise.

SECOND. When they got near Jerusalem, the star which had led them so far disappeared. Fancy their faces—after so many days' journey the star was gone! How chilled and discouraged they must have felt. It happens to us often to experience desolation and dreariness, or to meet with some apparently insuperable obstacle.

Look at Herod in his daily round of worldliness, cruelty, pleasure, etc. Who would not sooner be in the place of the wise men, with all their desolation, than be Herod? Sometimes I have complained of desolation. I should have accepted it humbly, patiently, thankfully. "Do with me what Thou wilt, O Lord! only let me put myself into Thy hands."

Look at the Scribes and Pharisees; what they said when sent for by Herod, wondering what it could mean; thinking Herod wanted them for any reason except the true one—namely, to answer the question, "Where is the King of the Jews?" May I never shut my eyes to the light.

The kings ask their question without any misgiving —“ Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star, and are come to adore Him”. To say this to Herod was as much as their lives were worth. What grand courage! Would that we were all equally bold and free from human respect. We are so afraid of being laughed at, often we are ashamed to do what we know we ought to do. “Give me grace, O Lord, never to fear what the world may say. I thank Thee that Thou hast taught me this lesson against human respect through these Thy servants. May I have the courage to live up to what I know is my duty.” Think of Herod’s smile of contempt when he saw these three sensible men and heard what they had come to ask him. He sends for the Scribes, whom he equally despised, and refers the question to them. They consult the Scriptures, and say that Christ is to be born in Bethlehem. What a mixture of folly and craft there is in this world! If Herod believed in those prophecies, he must have seen what a fool he was to think he could overreach Almighty God. Is there any of this folly in me? “Spare me, O Lord, *from the blindness of the wisdom of the world. May I be simple and truthful in all my designs and dealings with others, and with Thee, my God.”

Herod tells the wise men that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, and begs them to let him know when they have found him; and the wise men go off on their journey, and the star reappears to them. Consider how pleasing they are to Almighty

God in their noble simplicity and grand straightforwardness, and, on the other hand, what a miserable being is King Herod, flattering himself that now his rival is in his power. Think of the disappointment of the Scribes and Pharisees at having been summoned for what they considered so unimportant a matter. They were finger-posts. They had pointed out the birthplace of the Messiah to these wise men, and then went off with their Bibles.

Can Herod say, if he is lost, that he had no grace given him? Should he not have been struck with these wise men? He was very cruel and wicked—probably there was not a worse man in the world—yet this immense grace was offered to him. If God deals thus with a murderer like Herod, do you suppose there is one soul to whom he refuses the grace it needs.

The Scribes—had they a grace? Was it not a grace to be called to that consultation? to point out when and where the Messiah was to be born? Probably by many of them the grace was rejected. At times we can almost see how some take graces and some lose them, as, for example, in the case of the two thieves on Calvary. Christ is always a sign of contradiction, but we all receive at some time or other a great grace: it depends on ourselves whether we make a true choice. “Give me always grace, O Lord, to see Thy star and follow Thy call.”

Here is a little lesson for us. When the Magi lost the star, they did not give up and cry and go home. They said: “What can we do? Probably the king,

who is now in the capital, will be able to tell us." They used their common sense and did the best they could. God made use of Herod and the Scribes to put them on their way, and because they had done their best under the circumstances in which they were, He sends the star again. This shows us how He rewards the soul that does not give up in difficulties and desolation.

FIFTH DAY.

[11.45 A.M.]

CONTEMPLATION ON THE HIDDEN LIFE.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The history. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them. And His Mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Picture to yourself the house at Nazareth and the carpenter's shop where our Lord lived and worked.

THIRD PRELUDE.—O Lord, enlighten my understanding and inflame my will, that I may understand the mystery of Thy hidden life, and may have grace to follow the example Thou dost set me.

We are now to contemplate Jesus Christ as He lives at Nazareth until His thirtieth year. Look at

Him rising into boyhood ; reaching manhood ; as a poor carpenter, content to remain with His parents, working with Joseph, performing services for Mary, preparing the meals, etc. See Him, too, at His prayers—in every good Jewish family there would be stated times for the worship of God—observe His reverence and fervour. See Him at His work, labouring so industriously, very early, perhaps, in the day going off with St. Joseph to some distant work. O my Lord, I believe in Thee. Thou art the Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. I believe Thou hast become man in order to wage war against our spiritual enemies—Thine and mine. O Lord, increase my faith. I look on Thee with wonder and amazement, spending these thirty years, not idly, but for my instruction, to show me how I am to carry on my spiritual warfare—to guide me, and be my example in the performance of my duties. How can I thank Thee enough, even if I followed Thee all my life?

I wonder when I think of the Eternal Wisdom spending thirty years in this obscure manner. O Angels! bow down in adoration looking on your King in this His life of poverty and hardship. O my Captain! deign to instruct my ignorance and tell me why Thou didst spend all this time in this hard work. I look at Thee on Thy work ; I see Thee carrying what Thou hast made to its destination and waiting meekly for payment. Was it for Thyself? No. I believe Thou wert Infinite Holiness—holy with all the holiness of God—temptation had no danger for Thee, but

out of love for me Thou didst lead this life. It was to teach me to be content with my work, to bear my cross meekly. O Lord, help me to overcome that pride and independence which I feel, that impatience of restraint, that rebellion against the irksomeness of quiet steady work. Open my eyes that I may see and understand Thy example. Ought I not to accept my lot—married, single, in religion, in service? Can I rebel when I see Thee going about Thy daily toil in Nazareth? I have been so impatient under the round of my daily duties. Thy wisdom is greater than mine. Thou knowest what is good for me better than I do. I confess and am sorry for my wilfulness. Now I offer myself for whatever Thou mayest send. I am content to make Thy will mine; only grant me grace to be patient and constant.

This is one great lesson from Nazareth—to be content with our lot, our trial, whatever it may be. We are so impatient: we think the particular trial God has sent us so hard to bear. If we had less anxieties, less responsibilities, perhaps we should give less to God. Our Lord, as a poor carpenter, is a very practical example for us all in our daily life. There are few but may confess they have not accepted patiently and made the most of the lot which has been assigned to them. Resolve to make the best you can of the circumstances in which you are placed.

Look at our Blessed Lady. Her occupations were those of a good mother of a family. She prayed, worked, was at meals with a bright countenance, yet she had a great anxiety in her soul. You think if you

had her graces all would be easy. Are you prepared to take up the cross of our Lady?—watching her child, knowing Him to be God, with the prophecy of Simeon ever in her ear, and ever uncertain when it would be fulfilled. When and how would the sword come?—that was her trouble, that the explanation of her grief at losing Him those three days. She preserved the words of Simeon in her heart, and her heart was full of a great sea of sorrow. Still she went about her duty as though there were no sorrow, no dreadful shadow over her life—quietly, patiently, cheerfully. She did everything properly. Oh! if we could do this, if we could bear our crosses resignedly, quietly, not making our neighbours suffer. How many wives and mothers make their crosses a pretext for not attending to their daily duties.

Listen to their words. How would they have spoken? Nothing uncharitable was ever said, nothing to the disparagement of a single human being. If neighbours were spoken of, it was to sympathise in their sorrows and their joys. They chose right subjects of conversation, and such conversation is very meritorious. A wife at the end of the day, if she seeks to cheer up and enliven her husband by cheerful conversation, is as pleasing to God, or more so, than in her prayers. God gave us tongues that we may communicate with others. Conversation sometimes is a great charity. How often we would give anything to be alone! What merit if we force ourselves to meet others with a cheerful countenance: at the end of an hour of such intercourse we may expect some great consolation from God.

Look at their actions. Hard work, and for thirty years. Why is it, O Lord, that Thou dost make benches and boxes during all this time? It is to teach us to be occupied, to dread indolence and never to waste time. There are some who call *doing nothing* happiness: perhaps it may be, but it is a profitless happiness. It will be a poor account to take to Almighty God of the use of our head and heart that we have spent our day in sitting by the fire and dreaming. Do something, however unimportant it may seem, rather than be idle. Everything almost is useful; only let there be no idleness, no sitting still and mooning, but go on reasonably, quietly, working, resting, taking reasonable recreation.

What can I do? Learn a language, learn mathematics—anything rather than be idle. Work something very choice for the altar, that people may not have finer dresses than vestments. Knit stockings for the poor; do plain work; keep accounts for some association.

As the fruit from this meditation, ask that you may learn these two lessons—to be content with your lot, and to fly from idleness.

CONSIDERATION.

FIFTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING PEACE OF MIND.

AFTER the grace of God there is nothing so important as peace of mind. When the mind is calm, reason can make her voice heard. It is more easy if we are calm to overcome temptation and acquire virtue ; in every way we are more capable of serving God.

1. One help towards peace of mind is to have a firm conviction that we must or may always have some suffering. Then, when the cross comes, we say, " Here is my trial !—very well !"

2. Another maxim is to reason with oneself upon the vanity of the world, to cultivate in oneself a conviction of its worthlessness. The fear of losing things of this world disturbs peace of mind.

3. To make small account of the praise or censure of others. What I am in the sight of God, that I am and nothing else. To bring this home to oneself as a rule of life. If you know any one who is a victim to what is said, it may serve as a caution. It is a help to have a sort of esteem for what people say. What we have to guard against is inordinate desire for praise.

4. To guard against too much eagerness and impetuosity. Hurry interferes with peace of mind. There are so many people who are too good.

5. Not to count beforehand on succeeding in what

you undertake. If, having done all you can to ensure success, you say, "I have done my best, but there may be a failure," then whatever happens you are not ruffled. If you stake all on success and don't succeed, where are you? We can't always command success, but we can do our best.

6. Do not attempt too many good works. Good works seem to grow. You undertake a certain work, and twice as much comes in your way. Do not be led on to do too much. A great security is, to do what one does with order: punctuality is a wonderful means of getting through a great deal. If we get into a state of nervousness and our brains are over-taxed, then if we have not got self-control we become irritable and lose our peace of mind.

7. Always avoid looking on duties as irksome. We should have delight in the work that is our duty. "I have got to grind through my Rosary." That sort of disposition should be avoided. We should throw ourselves into our duty with pleasure. If anyone takes vanity in having a well-ordered house, I think God will give small purgatory for that.

8. When you really have too much to do, take each thing you have got to do at the moment and do it as if there were nothing else to be done, and leave the rest till to-morrow; and if you should die and can never do it, the world will go on very well. Take what you can do and do it: if there is some confusion, it won't be mended by your doing what you can't find time to do.

9. The ninth rule is not to trouble yourself about

your neighbours unless it is a duty. What worries you is a lot of affairs of other people's which you have undertaken in a meddling spirit. Do not mix in the quarrels of others unless it should be strictly a duty to do so.

10. Not to trouble ourselves too much about future troubles. To-morrow somebody is coming, and we don't know if we shall be ready! Some rather cultivate anxiety about a trouble that is coming or may come: obviously this does not improve our peace of mind. If there is trouble coming on Saturday, we will be happy on Friday at all events.

11. Never to give way to deliberate venial sin. One who has this disposition looks down on all the troubles of the world with calmness. He will have acquired great indifference.

12. To accustom yourself to see the finger of Providence in everything. Whatever happens, I can derive great benefit from it now and more hereafter.

THREE RULES WITH REGARD TO SPIRITUAL LIFE, SPECIALLY FOR THOSE WHO ASPIRE TO PERFECTION.

1. Not to be immoderately afflicted or disturbed by your sins and temptations. "I can't get through this temptation, it is too hard," and you fret yourself till all peace of mind is gone. We spoke before of two kinds of contrition—Judas' and Peter's. Judas' contrition is, not that he has offended God, but that he had been base and mean, and that is no true repentance. Peter wishes that he had not offended God, and that is an availing sorrow. So we often are

more vexed with ourselves than sorry that we have offended God.

We must be on our guard against worrying ourselves about our contrition. If we from our hearts can say, "I have sinned ; I wish I had not," it is all over—our sin is forgiven. It is no wonder we have sinned. As regards temptations, we know God can give us grace to overcome them. Go on as if all were right, and all will be right.

2. To beware of too much self-examination, going on worrying for hours, perhaps, over our sins or our temptations, whether we consented to them or not.

3. We want to do more than we can do. We worry because we have not such a gift of prayer as some one else, or are not doing so much. Do honestly what you can do. That is what God wants. He does not want the same of everyone.

FIFTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE THREE DAYS IN THE TEMPLE.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The history. St. Luke, chap. ii.

SECOND PRELUDE.—The road from Nazareth to Jerusalem, the courts of the Temple.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O

Lord, that I may know and understand the lessons Thou wouldst teach me. In flame my will that I may obey Thy teaching and follow Thy example.

FIRST POINT. The journey to Jerusalem. Every Jew at the age of twelve was required by the Law to go up to Jerusalem for the Pasch, and to remain there seven days. The journey was a sort of pilgrimage. It would be a three days' journey from Nazareth. See the caravan in which were the members of the Holy Family, issuing from the valley and joining the other caravans from different parts of the country—the Son of God as man for the first time amongst the pilgrims. To a poor family there must have been many hardships entailed by this fortnight's absence from home. Our Lord gives us an example of fidelity to law. Fidelity to law in the service of God is a lesson we require every day. We find so many reasons why we should leave something out, why we may be lukewarm, why we must let something interfere with meditation or rosary, and exact punctuality in fulfilling our rule. Let us examine how far we have learnt to have a thorough reverence for rule: examine whether we easily allow obstacles to stand in the way of our spiritual duties. After all, if I keep the rule, the rule will keep me. What peace will it give! How much more easily and perfectly I shall perform my duties! "O Lord, I reproach myself for want of courage. I cannot even be punctual for love of Thee, though I say I am ready to die for Thee."

We may imagine how Joseph and Mary looked and

conversed on the journey, and draw some lessons for ourselves.

SECOND. The return. After having fulfilled the Law, the pilgrims turned homewards: Joseph and Mary were with them; but Jesus remained in Jerusalem. His absence was not discovered by Joseph and Mary till the caravans halted for the night after a day's journey, and they immediately began to seek Him in the greatest distress, but it was not till the third day of their search that they found Him in the Temple. Our Lord in the last Meditation gave an example to be imitated by all. There was nothing in the Hidden Life at Nazareth that all ought not to imitate—those in the world as well as religious. But in this incident He gives an example all are not called to follow—that of leaving father and mother when the service of God requires it. This is the life, not of the Ten Commandments, but of the Counsels of Perfection.

We have to contemplate the effect of our Lord's conduct on Joseph and Mary. We see their anxiety and fear when they have gone through the whole encampment and can see nothing of Him. Think of them the next day on their journey back to Jerusalem. Another night without Him! And these to whom this great trial is sent are the two beings on earth who are nearest and dearest to Almighty God, by reason of their dignity in the charge given to them and their eminent sanctity. They are full of strange, incomprehensible anguish; yet they are God's friends—His best friends. Did He not know their anguish? Yes.

Did He permit it? Yes; it was He who arranged it. He knew all they were going through; He remained away from them, knowing their sorrow. They suffer, but this does not prevent them from acting. They do all they can do. They pray most earnestly that their Treasure may be given back to them. They accuse themselves, though they are not in fault. They find Him, but not till the third day.

God allows his own chosen souls to suffer sometimes most keenly. We may take suffering as a sign that God loves us, as a mark of His special friendship. Have I always accepted suffering as a proof of His love to me, or have I said he does not feel for me or care for me? Have I failed to understand His dealings with His chosen ones? "O Lord, may I learn now in all my trials to use what means Thou hast given me to overcome them, and then to be resigned and to trust in Thy providence."

The thought of Joseph and Mary in their suffering should give us hope, that when we are tried it is because we are dear to God. His best friends are those He tries most severely. "O my Captain! who givest me now these lessons in Thy valiant soldiers Joseph and Mary, teach me not to fear suffering, but even sometimes to meet it with joy."

Look at our Lord. He knew what their trial was, yet He did not shorten it. He talked to the Doctors as though nothing were happening. Why did He put them through this trial? In order to give us a lesson—that the business of His Father would sometimes require Him to give terrible anguish to those most

dear to Him. He broke His rule of obedience to His parents to show us that God may call at times, and His call must be answered and preferred to the claims of human relationship. From His Mother there was wrung some sort of complaint. He does not console her or explain his conduct. "Did you not know I must be about My Father's business?" They did not understand, and we do. His words mean that sometimes Jesus Christ will say to a soul in the enjoyment of home and happiness: "Come and follow Me to a life of hardship in which you will never do your own will. It is hard for you, harder still for those you leave behind. Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth. I came not to send peace but the sword. Think ye that I am come to give peace? I tell you no, but separation."

Few are called to follow Jesus Christ perfectly: privileged indeed are they who are so called. Not one amongst that chosen band has ever caused others to suffer as keenly as He caused Joseph and Mary to suffer during those three days. He must have His body-guard to cleave close to Him: "If thou wilt be perfect, take up thy cross and come, follow Me". There were those He called in the days of His flesh who would not follow Him. "Lord! suffer me first to go and bury my father. Lord! let me first bid those farewell who are in my father's house." Another went away sorrowful because he had great possessions. All who are called have not the courage to make the sacrifice.

THIRD. Consider how those to whom Jesus Christ appears to be lost should seek Him. With what

ardour they should long to find Him : how they should continue to do their duties and pray very earnestly ! If His sensible presence is lost, we must seek it fervently and with tears.

FIFTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

OUR LORD CALMING THE STORM AT SEA.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The history. St. Mark iv., 36 to 40.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Imagine the sea of Tiberias ; the boat in which our Lord was sleeping ; other boats.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding and inflame my will : enlighten my understanding that I may understand the lessons conveyed to me in this history ; inflame my will that I may have great confidence in Thee, my God and my Saviour.

Look at the Persons—our Lord covered with dust after a hard day's work. His life was no idle life. He makes use of the night to cross the sea. How are we imitating His example of toil and labour ? His disciples, not prim, tidy men, but hard-working fishermen such as you see at seaports.

Observe how our Lord took His sleep in a boat with a coil of rope for His pillow : He leaves comfort and luxury for Herod—He and His friends are

roughing it. He gives a lesson against softness and effeminacy. Are we too indulgent in the matter of sleep and comfortable beds? The Apostles are looking after their ropes: they use all human means against the storm. If we were more worked we should not find time for uncharitable conversation.

There arose a great storm of wind: the waves came into the ship: our Lord slept. His disciples did not disturb Him at once, knowing how fatigued he was. Here is a lesson for us. Have we that consideration for others we ought to have?—for those we live with, servants, children, all that are committed to our care? We ought to think of them and study them. Unless we take pains to acquire this spirit of consideration for others we shall not have it. It will not come of itself.

When the storm became very violent they awoke Him. “Doth it not concern Thee that we perish?” If we have any great trial do we at once go to Christ? “Lord, save me, I perish.”

“And rising up He rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.” Adore our Lord and God. Make acts of faith and confidence in Him: in your difficulties beg Him to help you. The elements obey Him, but we do not: our wills are often more difficult to subdue than the wildest storm. Pray Him to quell the storms of doubt and despondency that arise in your heart.

“And He said to them, Why are you fearful?” Yet it seems they had reason to fear. He would say: “I

was near you. I was asleep, but I knew your danger. Have you not faith yet?" O my Lord! I confess that I am fearful: do Thou drive fear from my heart. I am very short of faith, and I have not hope: strengthen my faith, increase my hope.

"And they feared exceedingly." What were they afraid of? Not the storm, but God: they were brought face to face with the supernatural, and they feared as men fear when a miracle is worked in their presence. "My God! give me a saving fear—a fear that brings me to Thy feet. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

End your meditation with a fervent colloquy to Jesus Christ, making acts of faith, hope, and love. Renew your resolution to follow Him who is always with His soldiers and cares for them so lovingly.

SIXTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE TWO STANDARDS.

WHEN we have made a retreat, we are apt to think we have done all that is necessary. This is a mistake, for in reality there is no time when we are so likely to be tempted as when we have made a good step forward. On the other hand, Jesus Christ will never leave you and say, "That is enough, you need do no more". He will always invite you to a higher perfection.

Some people imagine that the object of the meditation on the two standards is to make them choose between the service of Christ and the service of Lucifer, whereas it comes after the one on the Kingdom of Christ and those on the Hidden Life, our Lord in the Temple, etc. Now it never could be doubtful whether a person who had got so far had made his choice or not. The idea of St. Ignatius is that you have cut off sin and the world, that you have listened to the invitation of Christ our Lord, but that you have now to watch yourself because you may fall. Jesus Christ has other services He wishes you to render Him. You must now consider how the devil will set about alluring you away from the holy life on which you have entered—how you are to know whether you are listening to Jesus Christ, or yourself, or the devil.

This Meditation consists of two parts: (1) the devil's method of tempting souls; (2) the way in which Jesus Christ draws souls to Him.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The two camps: that of Lucifer in the plain of Babylon, and that of Jesus Christ outside Jerusalem, the city of peace.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O Lord, that I may know the deceits and frauds of the devil. Inflame my will that I may arm myself against them.

FIRST POINT. The devil and his method of proceeding. Picture the devil amidst smoke and

fire in a vast plain outside Babylon (meaning wealth, civilisation, etc.), a tyrant, having no real kingdom, but reigning only over the souls that give themselves to him, amidst turmoil, confusion, excitement, restlessness, shouting, crying, etc. The service of the devil is a huge imposture. How are people caught by such an imposture? They know it is a lie, wasting their health and lives, yet they are fascinated and drawn in. They know the danger, yet they will not avoid it.

Listen to the words Lucifer addresses to his followers: "Go out and conquer souls" (he makes no promises); "spread snares for men and drag them to me to be my slaves" (he is speaking now of those who have said they will not serve him); "catch them with the love of the things of this world, love of success, of comfort, of money. Then will come the desire to be esteemed, and after that they will be puffed up with pride, and when once full of pride they are caught, they are capable of any sin." I know instances of people who have reached a certain degree of holiness; then perhaps they began to save money; having money they begin to think themselves of importance; they must dress better, and make more appearance in the world, and some fine day the devil makes fools of them. The devil does not begin by tempting good people to gross sins: he begins by getting them to care for dress, gardens, pictures, etc., trying to make them put their hearts into these things, though he lets them say their prayers nicely all the time. The next thing is to get them to care for the esteem and praise of others: this leads them to pride and to a spirit of

independence, and when once that has taken possession of them they are always liable to fall into some grievous sin. Sometimes God allows them thus to fall to show them their state and bring them back to His service. Am I giving my affections to things of this world? We ought to be in this disposition that we use these things as though we used them not, and are quite ready to lose them if such is God's will. I do not say that we are not to *feel* the loss, but we must be *prepared* to part with all we most care for. Poverty of spirit consists in not loving inordinately, in being ready to give away all if God so wills it. There was the young man who had kept all the commandments: Jesus Christ offered him perfect poverty, and he went away sad. If in spite of his sadness he had remained with Jesus Christ, it would have been all right. Then we must consider whether we are inordinately influenced by the esteem of others; if we have become more sensitive as to what others say, whether we are too much attached to something God wants us to give up, whether there is in us the spirit of pride and independence.

How well the devil is served! How eager infidels are to spread the devil's doctrines whenever there is a chance! How few are content to be wicked alone! There is a zeal and enthusiasm in the service of evil which is appalling to think of. It does look as if the devil were better served than God: I do not think this is really the case. I think there is really more hard work in the service of God—a great heroism and noble devotedness of which the world never dreams.

SECOND. We have seen the devil's method: what

Jesus Christ says to His servants is : “Go and draw men from the things of this world, teach them not to set their affections on riches and honour, show them how to be poor in spirit if I do not call them to actual poverty. Lead them on to make great account of humiliation and the cross, to rejoice if they are found worthy to suffer contempt for My Name, or at best to bear it patiently till they get the grace to see that contempt is to be desired.” There never was a Saint who did not reach this degree of virtue—to desire contempt. If we don’t feel this desire let us at least wish that we had it. Without having it habitually you may have it in moments of grace. Cherish such a desire if it be but for a moment. Then will follow absolute, entire dependence on the will of God. To have no deliberate will of our own—this is perfect humility.

Conclude with three colloquies—to our Blessed Lady, to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Eternal Father.

SIXTH DAY.

[11.45 P.M.]

THE THREE CLASSES OF MEN.

WE have now come to the time in our retreat when we must see what there is to be corrected or put right in our lives. In some there may be a habit of grievous sin, in others of venial sin to be overcome.

Another may be held back from leading a holier life by attachment to some creature : she must resolve to renounce this attachment in order that she may give herself to God more perfectly or to the service of her neighbours. There may be some work to be done : there may be opportunities of influencing others for good. A mother may be wanting in self-denial, in not making home as pleasant to her children as she might : she may have to give up some spiritual reading. Let her give it up and make the house bright instead. Sometimes it is not an easy bit of duty, when one has got to love quiet, to give up one's solitude, and surround oneself with young people. Another instance—you meet people in society who are not at ease about religion and would like to make inquiries. Perhaps when they have asked you, you have repelled them. You are shy and draw into yourself, whereas if you came out and talked, you might do them good and yourself too. Or you have leisure, and there are many good works you might undertake. A very common interior work is to overcome sloth, to be punctual about the time of meditation, generous with Almighty God. We have all our own resolutions to make in retreat. This Meditation deals with this subject.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine yourself kneeling in the presence of the whole court of heaven.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O God ! enlighten my mind that I may see what is best to be done : inflame my will that I may have courage to accomplish it.

St. Ignatius makes up a parable. There are three classes of men who have each got a sum of money—ten thousand ducats. They did nothing sinful in acquiring this money, but they had not a right intention: in getting it they were not influenced by the love of God, or a desire for the good of their own souls, and they are not easy about it; so they want to put themselves right, and they make a retreat.

1. The first class say: "I want to lead a holy life and to have peace of mind. I do not want any affection to these ducats to come between me and God;" and they go on saying this every day till they die, and do nothing more. Does this at all describe my state of mind? as, for example, what we spoke of just now—a mother who has been too fond of her devotions to the neglect of her children. She says: "My God! I love Thee. I have sought myself, I know, in this reading, and I know my family has fallen from Thee;" but still she goes on with her spiritual reading. It is not a sin, but it is not done for the love of God; it is done to please herself. Am I in this case? I saw I ought to give up my Rodriguez and amuse those dependent on me, and I have not done it. In my last retreat I saw there was something I might give up, and so have more peace in the service of God. Have I given it up? O my God! I am trifling with Thy goodness. I am ashamed of myself, ashamed of my want of generosity. I should have been honest and straightforward and liberal with Thee, but I have treated Thee so badly. I have not done my duty. I have not dared to carry on the war against

self, but have let my love of ease and comfort, my shyness and indolence, prevent me from serving Thee as I might have done.

2. The second class go farther. They kneel down and say : " I wish to serve Thee well, my God ! I have these ducats, and I do not want to have any inordinate attachment. I will fast on Saturday and say five decades of the Rosary every day and give alms." This is all very well, but there are the ten thousand ducats : they will not consider whether God wants these or whether they may keep them with perfect peace. Next year they come to their retreat, and there are the ducats again. They offered their fasting, dined in the middle of the day, said their Rosary, gave their half-crowns, but they kept something they loved not purely for God's sake. The fasting and beads were amusing and harmless, but not the real thing that God wanted. They may have a reward, but they will not have peace of mind. It is the story again of the mother keeping on with her reading. They are afraid God may say, " Give up the ducats and come, follow Me ".

Examine whether you have gone on deluding yourself, giving up some things, but keeping the one thing God wants.

3. The third class kneel before God and say : " O my God, I want to serve Thee. I want to have the conviction that there is nothing between me and Thee. Here are these ducats. I will not keep them unless I know it is for Thy greater glory." Ducats are useful, but the affections of this class are entirely subservient to the love of God. We all have something which

corresponds to the ducats : in my present retreat what is it that stands between me and God? What is there that may be an obstacle to my serving Him? Can I say honestly there is nothing I reserve for myself? Thy rule shall be my will. Guide me to obey, and I promise to be faithful to Thy inspiration. Self, in one shape or other, is always what hinders us. Good examination shows us where self steps in to dispute the sovereign will of God. By way of making sure, we may say, "Thou knowest I often deceive myself, I beg of Thee to make known to me if it is Thy will I should have the ducats". Where the will of God is not unmistakably made known to us, it is well to ask God to impose upon us the sacrifice we shrink from.

Three colloquies—to our Lady, to our Lord, to the Eternal Father.

CONSIDERATION.

SIXTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON THE THREE DEGREES OF HUMILITY.

I SAID the proper business of to-day was to make resolutions for the amendment of our lives, first as regards the putting away of anything that has been displeasing to God in the past, and then going on to regulate our future conduct. We must have a rule for our spiritual exercises, and, above all, for approaching

the Sacraments, and see how to draw greater profit from them. We must consider how we are performing the duties of our state—duties to husbands and families, etc., and see if anything can be improved in this matter. What good am I doing in the world? Can I do more? Is there anything in my character that can be corrected which prevents me from doing good? Look to your temporal affairs, your expenditure as to alms, dress, etc., your duties to friends, whether too much time is given to amusement, and too little to serious occupation.

Carry away some little saying or text that has struck you, and let it be constantly in your mind, such as “Though He slay me, yet will I hope in Him”; “*Sursum Corda*”; “Kind words break no bones”; “It takes two to make a quarrel”.

People want to know if they are advancing in perfection. St. Ignatius, in his consideration on three degrees of humility, gives rules for finding this out.

1. The first degree is possessed by that soul who, for no created object, not even to save its life, would grievously displease its Creator, and this degree is *necessary* for salvation.

2. The second is that for no object in the world would the soul deliberately commit a venial sin—(little movements of impatience, anger, vanity, etc., are often quite involuntary)—and this degree requires a soul to be so indifferent to every created object, that if the service of God is equally secured, it would not choose one rather than the other: natural likes and dislikes are so overcome, it is different as to health

or sickness, pain or pleasure, riches or poverty, etc. In this state the soul accepts whatever pleases God with equal willingness, not that it can like one as well as the other, but over and above and independently of its liking, its will is ever subject to the divine will. If one goes on for six months without deliberate venial sin, it is a high degree of perfection.

3. But there is yet a higher degree, and this requires that we should be not only indifferent, but that, supposing it to be equally for the glory of God, we should for the love of Jesus Christ, and to be more like Him, prefer humiliation and contempt to riches and honour, so that we may say with St. Paul: "I live, not I, but Christ lives in me". *There* is Christianity: *there* is the full acceptance of the doctrine of Jesus Christ.

Listen to a story from the *Little Flowers of St. Francis of Assisi*.

"As St. Francis was going from Perugia to Santa Maria degli Angeli in the winter, and suffering a great deal from the cold, he called to Brother Leone, who was walking on before him, and said to him: 'Brother Leone, if it were to please God that the Brothers Minor should give, in all lands, a great example of holiness and edification, write down, and carefully observe, that this would not be a cause for perfect joy'. A little farther on, St. Francis called to him a second time: 'O Brother Leone, if the Brothers Minor were to make the lame to walk, if they could make straight the crooked, chase away demons, restore sight to the blind, give hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, and,

what is even a far greater work, raise the dead after four days, write that this would not be a cause for perfect joy'. Shortly after, he cried out again: 'O Brother Leone, if the Brothers Minor knew all languages; if they were versed in all science; if they could explain all Scriptures; if they had the gift of prophecy and could reveal, not only all future things, but likewise the secrets of all consciences and all souls, write that this would not be a cause for perfect joy'. After proceeding a few steps farther, he cried out again with a loud voice: 'O Brother Leone, little lamb of God! if the Brothers Minor could speak with tongues of angels; if they could explain the course of the stars; if they knew the virtues of all plants; if all the treasures of the earth were revealed to them; if they were acquainted with the various qualities of all birds, all fish, of all animals, of men, of trees, of stones, of roots, and of waters, write that this would not be a cause for perfect joy'. Shortly after, he cried out again: 'O Brother Leone, if the Brothers Minor had the gift of preaching so as to convert all infidels to the faith of Christ, write that this would not be a cause for perfect joy'. Now this discourse having lasted for the space of two miles, Brother Leone wondered much within himself; and questioning the Saint, he said: 'Father, I pray thee, teach me where to find cause for perfect joy'. St. Francis answered: 'If when we shall arrive at Santa Maria degli Angeli, all drenched with rain and trembling with cold, all covered with mud and exhausted from hunger; if, when we knock at the convent-gate, the porter should come angrily

and ask who we are ; if, after we have told him that we are two of his brothers, he should answer angrily : “ What you say is not the truth, you are but two impostors going about to deceive the world, and take away the alms of the poor ; begone, I say ” : if he refuses to open to us and leaves us outside, exposed to the snow and rain, suffering from cold and hunger, till night arrives—then, if we accept such injustice, such cruelty, and such contempt with patience, without being ruffled and without murmuring, believing with humility and charity that the porter really knows us, and that it is God who makes him speak thus against us, O Brother Leone, write down that this is a cause for perfect joy. And if we knock again and the porter comes out in anger to send us away, as if we were vile impostors, with oaths and blows, and saying, “ Begone, miserable robbers ! go to the hospital, for you shall neither eat nor sleep here ! ” And if we accept all this with patience, with joy, and with charity, O Brother Leone, write that this is indeed a cause for perfect joy. And if, urged by cold and hunger, we knock again, calling and entreating with many tears, for the love of God, to the porter to open to us and give us shelter, and if he comes out more angry than before, exclaiming, “ These are but impertinent villains, I will deal with them as they deserve ” ; if he takes hold of a knotted stick, and seizing us by the cowl, throws us on the ground, and, rolling us in the snow, beats and wounds us with the knots in the stick ; if we bear all these injuries with patience and joy, thinking of the sufferings of our blessed Lord, which we would share out of love

to Him, O Brother Leone, write that here finally is cause for perfect joy'.

"And now, brother, listen to the conclusion. Above all the graces and all the gifts of the Holy Spirit which Christ grants to His friends is the grace of overcoming oneself and accepting willingly, out of love to Christ, sufferings, injuries, discomforts, and contempt; for in all the other gifts of God we cannot glory, because they do not proceed from ourselves, but from God, according to the words of the Apostle, 'What hast thou that thou hast not received from God? and if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' But in the cross of tribulation and affliction we may glory, because, as the Apostle says again, 'I will not glory save in the cross of our Saviour Jesus Christ'. Amen."

SIXTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

THE LAST SUPPER.

FIRST PRELUDE.—The history. The eating of the Paschal Lamb; washing of the feet; institution of the Blessed Eucharist; treason of Judas.

SECOND PRELUDE. The chamber in which our Lord eats the Pasch. He and His disciples eat after the manner of the Jews, reclining on couches.

THIRD PRELUDE. Enlighten my understanding that I may know Thee in this mystery of Thy Passion.

Inflame my will that I may love Thee, that I may have a great compassion for Thee, that I may imitate Thee.

FIRST POINT. The eating of the Passover. Consider how our Redeemer on the very eve of His Passion most minutely observed all the particulars of the Jewish Law. In His great grief He did not abate one tittle of the Law—the service of God. When we are in great trouble, instead of omitting our spiritual exercises, then, if ever, we ought to be most constant. Let us awaken in ourselves acts of admiration of our King who is so constant in His warfare and does not think of self. May we do what is pleasing to our Father and pray to have this heroic spirit. Let us love Him for His nobility and courage, and make acts of self-accusation and resolutions to imitate Him.

SECOND. The washing of the feet. “Jesus knowing that the Father had given him all things into His hands, and that He came from God and goeth to God,” what follows? “Having taken a towel, girded Himself.” We think from the preface some great act of power is to be performed, but “He putteth water into a basin, and began to wash the feet of His disciples, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded”. Look at Jesus Christ seriously and tenderly rendering this service. It was a usage amongst the Jews: our Lord did it as though He were a servant. He knew we should require this example of humility. He understood how terrible our pride is. Apply the lesson to yourself, and see how you may practise humility.

THIRD. The institution of the Holy Eucharist. "Take ye and eat : this is My body," etc. Acts of faith, confidence, love, humility, and adoration. Lord, give me this Bread. May it be the nourishment of my soul, the pledge of everlasting life.

FOURTH. Judas. Probably Judas was better at one time than we are now. Once he was very sincere, and he had accepted the invitation of Jesus. What was the cause of his ruin? Love of money, inordinate esteem for the things of the world. Judas was purse-keeper; he allowed that office to be a temptation, and he fell by avarice. No one is secure. We have terrible examples of people who have fallen, and we may well pray for perseverance and perfect detachment from the things of the world.

The devil makes use of Judas to try and hinder good people from receiving the Blessed Sacrament, persuading them they may make a bad Communion. Do not be afraid. Judas knew quite well what he was about, and committed the sacrilege intentionally. Have great confidence in this Divine Food which our Lord instituted as strength for the weak.

SEVENTH DAY.

[10 A.M.]

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The history. St. Mark, chap. xiv., verses 33-36.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Imagine the path from Jerusalem to Mount Olivet ; the garden of Gethsamani.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O Lord, that I may understand the mystery of Thy agony. In flame my will, that I may have a great love and compassion for Thee in Thy sorrows, and an ardent desire to imitate Thee.

FIRST POINT. Look at the Persons—our Lord very sorrowful, leading the way to the Mount of Olives, followed by His Apostles. Look at Him in the Garden. Is this my King? Is this truly the Son of God? Nothing is more terrible than the sorrow of the strong. Make an act of faith: “Thou art the Second Person of the Adorable Trinity”. Sympathise with Him and offer Him compassion.

Watch the Apostles. They are cowed. They still have the memory of their first Communion: they have Him within them and they are awed: they cannot take their eyes from Him: they wonder what this sorrow is which seems to overpower Him: they are sorrowful because Jesus is sorrowful. “O my Lord! would that I had the like sorrow! would that I had

the same sympathy for Thee as I should have for a friend who suffers. I am so different from Thy disciples : it seems as if for Thee I had no feeling."

Watch Judas and his accomplices. Look at the zeal, the energy, of the wicked. "O my God! give me some zeal in Thy service."

SECOND. Look at Jesus Christ in His prayer—His face to the ground, His soul filled with sorrow, His heart praying to His Heavenly Father. This picture may encourage us when we feel inclined to give way to drowsiness, or when we are desponding. Think of Him on His knees—the sight of all His sufferings before Him, every outrage and humiliation, all the pain and anguish and exhaustion. He foresaw the ingratitude of men, how He would be scorned and His Passion thrown away. "What profit hath there been in my Blood?" How many would refuse His invitations and spurn His graces, and prefer to Him their pride and self-indulgence! How His Heart must have been rent in foreseeing the coldness of His friends! "Couldst thou not watch one hour?" If Peter had struggled to pray for one hour, would it have been a consolation to Him? Yes, most certainly. So, our constancy, our effort to fix our drowsy hearts, is a great consolation to the Sacred Heart. Your service now is as precious to Him as though it had been given then.

THIRD. Consider how there came a point when the Blood forced itself out through the pores of His Body and fell to the ground. There are very few instances of suffering approaching to this. His anguish was so great that the Blood could not remain in its

proper channel. We fancy we have had great disappointments, bitter sorrows, but what were they to this? Confess that it is your sins that have caused this suffering. Offer Him your sorrow and your sympathy. "My Lord, Thou dost suffer because of my selfishness. I confess that Thy Blood is upon my soul."

SEVENTH DAY.

[11.45 A.M.]

THE AGONY IN THE GARDEN (*continued*).

PRELUDES as in the preceding Meditation.

FIRST POINT. The three Apostles who ought to have been watching with their Master. We read their eyes were heavy—it was not drowsiness and weariness—they fell asleep for sorrow as we sometimes do. He does not say, "You may sleep on". He reproaches Peter. "Couldst *thou* not watch one hour?" Here is a very practical matter for examination. When through despondency and sorrow we don't feel equal to exertion, do we give up prayer and meditation, and neglect our duties? Watch: you should fight against this despondency and not yield to it. Let us see if we are in the habit of giving up, and if so, accuse ourselves and make resolutions to do better. "O my Lord, I confess that I have been too often like Thy favoured disciples. Thou hast invited me to share Thy trials. I have given up the fight; I have not made my prayer a wrestling to obtain from Thee that

grace I needed. When I required prayer most, I neglected it most. Give me now some true courage, some constancy in the fight. I will not shorten my prayer in times of despondency. I will call upon Thee continually. *Deus in adjutorium meum intende.* Lord save me, I perish. We neglect prayer just when we are on the verge of some terrible temptation, and then, like Peter, are quite wild ; we are out with the sword and cut off the ear ; we will *do* something when God wants us to be alone with Him in prayer.

SECOND. Our Lord's prayer, " If it be possible let this chalice pass from Me," is a great consolation to our weakness. Even He is appalled at the chalice of humiliation and anguish presented to Him. If it be possible give me some help in this my hour of desolation—there is nothing wrong or imperfect in such a prayer. The words He said we may say if it is bodily pain or a loss of some kind ; above all, if it is a spiritual trial for which we need strength. I thank Thee for having thought of me and taught me how I may pray in my trial and discouragement. " Nevertheless not what I will but what Thou wilt : " our prayer ought always to be with that condition. There ought to be no repining. " O my Lord, this is sometimes difficult to me. I do not trust myself to Thee. I am afraid to walk on the waves even with Thy Hand to hold me up. I believe : help Thou my unbelief."

Our Lord returned again and again to His prayer : " Being in an agony, He prayed the longer ". Good people often say : I have said it once to God, that

is enough. I shall not bother about it more." Almighty God loves that we should repeat the same thing, as a mother is pleased when her child persists in asking over and over again. It is pleasing to God, and good for us, that we should keep on and on with our petitions: we are to be like children and like beggars; we are to strip ourselves of our pride, and throw ourselves upon his bounty and mercy. Like Jacob, we are to say, "I will not let Thee go unless Thou bless me," and never desist till we have what we want. Do we pray in that fashion? Do we leave God no peace till He grants our request? Let us confess our shortcomings in the past, and make a resolution for the future. "Give me the grace and the faith that I may ever be importunate and constant in prayer, and never cease till Thou dost grant me the blessing for which I pray."

THIRD. The treason of Judas. Look at Judas kissing Jesus. Make acts of sympathy with Jesus, for this was undoubtedly one of the bitterest pangs of His Passion. Think what Judas was, and what he has now become. Once he was like Peter and John, one for whom a throne was set. Think of the personal graces he had received: how high he was at one time in the sight of the Angels. He was so great, called to such a noble work on earth, and now he is a deserter, and has joined the enemies of Jesus. He had seen his Divine Master's miracles, but now he is blinded and hardened. At a single word from Jesus, the soldiers fall back, yet he is not afraid: he goes through with his crime, and then, when it is too late, his eyes are

opened, but his heart is not softened, and he is lost. You can hardly see our Lord in any scene of His Passion without having a lesson of fear and hope. The mystery of a hardened heart is as incomprehensible as the mystery of God's mercy. O my God, save me from a hardened heart. You ought never to make a meditation on the Passion without making an act of contrition. "I resolve to shake off all pride—anything that can harden me. Give me great simplicity, that I may see the malice of sin as Thou seest it."

CONSIDERATION.

SEVENTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON DESOLATION.

DESOLATION, and how we should manage ourselves when under its influence, is treated by St. Ignatius in his Rules for the Discernment of Spirits.

When people are trying to overcome their sins, the devil seeks to trouble and disquiet them, tells them there is no use in their making meditation, etc.; whereas God strengthens and consoles them, and fills them with peace and delight.

What is true spiritual consolation? 1. When the soul feels itself drawn to its Creator, so that it cannot love anything except in and for God. 2. Tears which flow from a supernatural cause—such as repentance,

meditation on the Passion, etc. 3. Any sort of sensible increase of faith, hope, or charity. Reading a book sometimes fills you with confidence—you make acts of hope—that is consolation.

Desolation is the exact contrary to consolation. Sometimes it shows itself in a darkening of the soul. What was quite clear yesterday, you do not see at all to-day—or it produces an agitation of mind, when no consideration will calm us—or a *drawing to earthly things*—food, dress, money, etc. (When we are in consolation, we utterly despise the earth, and feel drawn to heaven.) All these phases of desolation lead us to diffidence and despondency. We are convinced we shall never be able to do this or that which God requires of us, and then we may be sure the enemy is near. The result is that the soul is left slothful, tepid, shut out from God as it were. And yet we know that there is no real barrier. When St. Catherine, after going through a dreadful temptation, said, “Where wert Thou, Lord, all that time?” our Lord replied, “I was in the midst of thy heart”. You feel that you are separated from God: if you were really separated from Him, you would not feel it in this way.

St. Ignatius tells us how we are to conduct ourselves in desolation.

The grand rule for one in desolation is fidelity. Be faithful to your previous resolutions. If you say, “My meditation is so unfruitful, I have been going on for a week, and I get no good out of it, I will give it up”—that is just what the devil wants. When he suggests such a course to you, say to him, “Come back this

time next week, and if I am in a different mood, I will see about it”.

It is a good thing in desolation to increase your penance and prayer, instead of yielding to the temptation to shorten it.

A soul in desolation should think God has left it without an abundance of grace, in order to see how much it is willing to do with only just sufficient grace. If you feel a great disgust to good people and things, and would like to send them flying and yet go on with all your practices of devotion as though you felt delight in them, it is a proof that you really do love God. In serving God in consolation there is a little serving of self. We should love God because He deserves our love, not because He gives us consolation.

There are three principal causes why God allows us to experience desolation. 1. Because we are tepid in our prayers, not punctual and exact, or diligent in putting away distractions. 2. Because God wants to test us as we saw just now. 3. That we may understand that all consolation is a gift of God, and does not depend on ourselves. If we are convinced of this, we give up fretting and worrying about it, and just leave it to God. It is delightful to have consolation; but we may be very holy and not have it. Examine and see what is your conduct in this matter.

SEVENTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

THE CONDEMNATION OF OUR LORD BY PILATE.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—The history of the examination of Christ by Pilate.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Imagine the tribunal of Pilate—Jesus Christ standing bound before him.

THIRD PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O Lord, that I may know the mystery of Thy humiliation. In flame my will that I may have a great sorrow for my sins, which have caused Thee to suffer so much.

FIRST POINT. Let us contemplate our Blessed Lord. His Hands are bound; He is very worn with His agony, His long fast, and the terrible night he has passed. His hair has been plucked out, the marks of blows and spittle are upon His face, His eyes cast down before this haughty, tyrannical governor Pilate. Make an act of faith in His Divinity. “Thou art truly my Lord and my God. I am amazed that Thy Angels in heaven can allow such outrages to be offered to Thee. The reason is that Thy love has stayed their arms. It is my sins which have bound Thee, which have been a heavy burden to Thee: my sins which have heaped insults and injuries on Thy countenance. What a lesson is given to my pride! I wish to pass for better than I am, and here is Jesus Christ, the Holy of Holies, content and resigned to be

dishonoured and treated with contumely. He is content—nay, He has voluntarily chosen such treatment to teach me the lesson that I must fight against my pride. He is contented to be accounted more worthy to die than Barabbas. I accuse myself of my pride. Have mercy on me and forgive me. Open my eyes that I may see myself, if only in part, as I am. I resolve to fight against this enemy of Thine, my pride. I compassionate Thee in Thy bitter sufferings. I love Thee with my whole heart and wish that I had never offended Thee.”

SECOND. Contemplate Pilate—a man who had risen by his abilities and now held this important post. He had much self-reliance and a great contempt for the Jews. It is wonderful how for a few hours grace assailed him and was thrust upon him. What was there in this cruel pagan that he should receive so much of the grace of God? There was all that Jesus said to him: there was his wife’s message: he knew there was something out of the common in Jesus Christ: he asked: “What is truth?” then turned away and would not wait for the answer, was drawn down deeper and deeper, till at last he went through the mockery of washing his hands and protesting his innocence. Think of that man playing with the people, trifling with the blood of an innocent person, after all that passed before him and the graces he had received, deliberately saying, “I am innocent”. Grace was offered and thrown away: then came the deliberate acceptance of a great crime—taking away the life of one he knew to be innocent. . . . We wonder how

God deals with this soul or that : it is His providence that we should not know : but if Pilate received so many graces, how many do not Christians receive ? Ours are lavish, abundant. We may hold it as a certain truth that no one comes to his trial without receiving plentiful grace, and if he is not saved it is his own wilful, deliberate act. God denies to no one abundant means of salvation. O unfortunate man ! better thou hadst not received that grace ! Thou hast looked upon the face of Christ ; thou hast heard His words of wisdom, and yet thou hast been the instrument to condemn the Holy of Holies to a malefactor's death. If Pilate was guilty, if he abused grace, am I clear of the same guilt ? Forgive me, O Lord, for my abuse of Thy grace. Our abuse of grace is a terrible thought. O my Lord, give me grace to fear to abuse Thy gifts. May I be faithful and labour diligently, and prove myself worthy of the talents Thou hast confided to me.

THIRD. Our Lord found less worthy of life than Barabbas. The Holy of Holies is put in the balance, not with a good man, a common man even, but with a murderer, a man dangerous to society—and that by the governor of the country, the minister of justice. Then that he should ask which of the two should be released, that is humiliation enough ; but how much more that the priests and people should prefer Barabbas, and Jesus not to be released too, but crucified. How much our Lord chose to suffer in His Sacred Humanity ! as it were industriously He heaps upon His head all that could render his humiliation more terrible. How utterly unlike me ! I cannot bear patiently even little

humiliations. May I learn to consider the esteem of men as something worthless ; may I overcome all desire for it. I confess my many sins of pride. Give me meekness, patience, resignation, when I am not honoured.

FOURTH. "His Blood be upon us and upon our children." This is the end of all the miracles God had wrought for the Jewish people : when their God is proposed to them, their cry is : "His Blood be upon us". There was a great national sin, and we know the punishment which followed. God gave Jerusalem into the hands of its enemies : a quarter of a million of Jews were crucified—so many that there was no timber left to crucify more. God does not always show us His punishments—here He does. We may well be terrified. May the Blood of Jesus never fall on me in anger, but in mercy and forgiveness and indulgence for my many sins and imperfections.

SEVENTH DAY.

[8.30 P.M.]

MEDITATION ON THE DEAD CHRIST AT THE FOOT OF
THE CROSS.

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine the Cross on Mount Calvary. The Body of our Lord has been taken down and placed in the lap of our Blessed Lady. St. Mary Magdalene is kneeling there, St. John, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus, and others.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O Lord, that I may understand this mystery of the Son of Man dead for me. In flame my will with an intense love and compassion, and a deep sorrow for my sins.

FIRST POINT. The Wounds in His Hands. What are these wounds, and who has pierced them? Think that His Blessed Mother is speaking, that she says to you, "What has He done that you should pierce them? They were once the Hands of an Infant—for you they knew toil and labour—for you they were the instruments of so many graces bodily and spiritual. How often were they raised up in prayer! How often have they bestowed blessings! They were laid upon the sinner, and his guilt was taken away; they gave eyes to the blind, and hearing to the deaf. Was it for acts such as these that you have wounded His Hands? 'These Holy and Venerable Hands,' as the Church says: in which He took bread and blessed it. Why have they been pierced?"

"O most blessed Mother! these Hands were pierced because of my sin. Forgive me. Thou art His Mother, but Thou art my Mother also; forgive me."

Make acts of faith in the Divinity of Jesus Christ; acts of confidence, for He died that we may obtain all graces; acts of love for the great love which caused Him to lay down His life for His enemies. As long as you can find affections, dwell on these wounds in His Hands. Ask our Lady to let you kiss them. Wonder at the goodness of God who delivered Himself for us.

SECOND. Something in the same way dwell on the Wounds of the Feet. Think that the Blessed Mother is asking why they have been pierced, and giving you the history of those sacred Feet at Bethlehem, and at Nazareth, and in Galilee: the long journeys of His public life, how He sat down wearied, and often it happened that He was very wearied: His life was intensely laborious. Many long miles did He walk, that we might have the spirit of labour and toil in our daily duties. These are the Feet at which Magdalene knelt and found pardon—was it for this you pierced them? These are the Feet that journeyed to the Mount of Olives, that bore Him to the presence of Annas and of Caiaphas, up to the height of Calvary. Was it for these last journeys that you pierced them?

Make acts of faith, etc., as in the first point. Confess to our Blessed Lady that these wounds were made by your sins.

THIRD. The Wound in the Side. Our Lady asks what He has done that you should so wound His Sacred Heart. With what constancy has this Sacred Heart loved you! what sacrifices has it made for you! This Heart that has loved so long and so ardently—why should the spear pierce it, and the treasures of Precious Blood be shed? Go through His life and see His love, and ask why this return was made.

And I can only answer: "This wound was made by me: The Precious Blood was shed for my sins. Heart of Jesus! Thou hast loved me: I have not loved Thee. Would that Thou wert loved! Who can tell Thy love—a love so burning, so consuming,

so universal, that it embraces all mankind and every individual. Thou lovest : Thou art not loved. Would that Thou wert worthily loved and served even by one heart as Thou deservest.

Make acts and affections as in the preceding points. "We have sinned, we have betrayed this just Man." Sympathise with Blessed Mary, with our Lord in His death. Say all that comes into your heart.

EIGHTH DAY.

[9.30 A.M.]

THE RESURRECTION.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine the room in which the Apostles and disciples are gathered together.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O Lord, that I may know the glory of Thy resurrection. In flame my will that I may love Thee more ardently, serve Thee more generously, and hope in Thee more firmly.

Contemplate Jesus Christ risen with a glorified, spiritualised, immortal, impassible Body: all the shame of His Passion has disappeared, excepting only the wounds. Now He is robed, as it is right He should be, in majesty and beauty. The robe was His by right, but He would win it. "I adore Thee risen from the dead, the conqueror, who didst enter into

conflict with Thy enemies, and allow death to subdue Thee, and the punishments of sin to be heaped on Thy Head. Thou hast come forth victorious from the struggle. Thou art the strong man who has killed the lion and found the honeycomb in his mouth. I adore and believe in Thee, Thou Son of the living God. Be Thou ever my Lord and my God. May no one dispute my allegiance to Thee. I rejoice with Thee in Thy joy and triumph. I rejoice with Thee, my Mother, because of the triumph of thy Son. Thou wert near to Him on the Cross as in the Sepulchre. Queen of Heaven, rejoice !

“ I rejoice with thee, O Magdalene ! thou first and most fervent of penitents, who didst stand beneath the Cross when Apostles had fled, who wert so constant in thy search on the morning of the Resurrection.

“ I rejoice with thee, O Peter ! great in thy sin, greater in thy repentance. I rejoice that thou didst see the look cast on thee by thy Lord—that look which made thee weep so bitterly. I rejoice that thou hadst the courage to resume thy service, and take thy place as though thou hadst not sinned. I rejoice that thou art where Christ wishes thee to be—at thy work, with thy community. I rejoice with all the Apostles who have overcome their cowardice and tepidity, and have come back, as they thought, to His dead Body, but find that Body risen and glorious. I thank Thee, O Heavenly Father, for having so rewarded the valour and self-sacrifice of Thy Son.”

Our prevailing sentiment in this contemplation of

the Resurrection must be one of joy, confidence, and hope. We are to think of the glory prepared for us by our risen Lord, animate ourselves with the thought, and pray for grace to be generous in following such a Leader. You fear the Cross; your human nature is terrified at a life of desolation and suffering; but look beyond to the glory of the Resurrection, to Jesus as He passes through the closed doors and shows Himself to His disciples, His wounds all bright and glorious, and then resolve never to refuse any service your King may ask of you.

Consider the disciples who were gathered together in the evening of Easter Day. They know He is risen. When He appears there is great awe; but what must also have been their joy and exultation! Think of the terrible despair out of which they had come: try and imagine how dark those hours were to His Apostles. Where were His promises? Where were their hopes? We hoped He should have redeemed Israel. What did they feel when they learned from John that He was dead and buried, and the stone rolled against the tomb . . . and then transport your ideas to their feelings when they found He was risen and was with them again. Look at Peter: see his tears of sorrow and of joy: he loves nothing but God, and in and for God.

Think of John and Andrew, and then of Thomas. What conflicting emotions must be his when, after eight days, he sees Jesus! He is so ashamed of himself because he would not believe during those eight days—ashamed that he had laid down a law for

Almighty God—"Except I shall see the wounds and put my hand into His side I will not believe". Now he must have said to himself: "Fool! why did you hesitate? Why did you reject the testimony of Peter and of Mary Magdalene for all these days?" "Except I shall see the wounds I will not believe." Let us kneel by Thomas at the Feet of our Lord. We too have hesitated, we have been wanting in faith, we have set conditions for Almighty God. I will serve Thee on such and such terms—if I may *feel* Thy love, if I may have peace and happiness in my mind, and feel that Thou art satisfied with me. "I too have been obstinate and hard; now, covered with a sense of my own unworthiness, I cast myself down at Thy Feet. I have sinned against Thee, my risen Saviour—forgive me."

Have we not said, "If only I could *feel* secure about my past life, then I would do anything," and is not that want of confidence? Where would be the merit if we felt we were perfectly right? "Because thou hast seen thou hast believed: blessed are they who have not seen and have believed." We come to a point of great value in the spiritual life when we can say: "I thank Thee that I have no certainty about my past. I love to think of my utter dependence on Thee. I want no conviction of being in Thy grace and favour. I leave all to Thee, my past and my future, my difficulties and my trials, my fears and my hopes."

SECOND. Ponder and think over the obstinacy of Thomas—how the other Apostles try to cheer him and

tell him about the Resurrection, and how he resolutely holds to his own will. "Except I see in His Hands the print of the nails, I will not believe." A will which won't hear reason, which won't listen to direction, which won't give in, is a very great difficulty, a thing to be afraid of. If you want to be holy, say to God, "Save me from stubbornness and obstinacy".

THIRD. If our Redeemer were to honour us with appearing to us, how we could live on the remembrance of such a joy! What a consolation must his appearing have been to the disciples! How does He come? He comes saying, "Peace be with you". It is right that we should desire consolation, because we stand in such need of encouragement; but if we want to receive consolation we must attend to Jesus Christ saying, "Peace be to you". Be very much afraid of worries. Avoid all worries, temporal and spiritual. Some people can't be satisfied unless they are worrying: this is but playing into the devil's hands. Try and exclude everything that goes against peace. When the soul is muddled, you do not see a grace any more than you can see a sixpence in muddy water. Cultivate peace as a valuable help to your spiritual life.

Consider how Jesus Christ in the Resurrection puts forth His Divinity. In the Passion there was no sign of It, but now It is shown in the raising of His Body, in the properties His Body possesses of passing through walls, etc.

Consider the change in the hearts of His disciples, and believe that He is as willing to give us new

dispositions, more love, more generosity, more self-sacrifice. Believe this as firmly as though He were here to say it to you.

EIGHTH DAY.

[11.45 A.M.]

OUR LORD'S APPEARANCE TO HIS DISCIPLES ON THE
SEA OF TIBERIAS.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Our Lord standing on the shore of the Lake of Tiberias.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Enlighten my understanding, O Lord, that I may know the glory of Thy Resurrection. In flame my will that I may love Thee more ardently, serve Thee more generously, and hope in Thee more firmly.

Let us take the last chapter in St. John's Gospel—that wonderful chapter—and select a bit here and there for our meditation. All is full of signification.

Contemplate the disciples getting their boats ready. They are plain, hardy fishermen. What a training they have gone through! They are very ordinary men in the sight of man, but before God they were not so. We should learn not to judge others, as we don't know what they may be before God. When we *see* faults, there is no rash judgment in recognising them as faults; but how often do we unnecessarily impute

motives, or determine that such and such a one is proud. We should never form a judgment unless it is a duty: perhaps we don't know the rights of the case. Let us have a number of excuses in our minds for the conduct of others, and be ingenious in applying them.

Honour the Apostles as they set out in their boat on account of their dignity. Peter says: "I go fishing". If anyone, even one in authority, proposes anything, how often we raise objections and give way to our self-love. The Apostles answer: "We also come with thee". Here we have a lesson of hearty fellowship and honest acceptance of authority. It is not a common quality. Our first impulse when anything is suggested to us is to say, "What is the good of that?" and to object.

"We also come with thee." Do we also, when we see a good work being done, say, "I will help". In members of the same family, of the same congregation, there ought to be a hearty co-operation. The enemies of the Church push on wonderfully together, but inside the Church, how often is Peter against Thomas! "I am of Paul and I am of Apollo." How seldom there is this hearty acquiescence: "We go fishing too". What good did not St. Francis of Assisi do, because he got together all these companions who were as much in earnest as himself, and who went with him! Or St. Dominic with his followers preaching to heretics! If you could get another Dominic rallying an army round him, you would see villages and towns converted. We want a Saint here in England—a Curé d'Ars.

Let us lay aside all little prejudices, and jealousies, and suspicions, and everything which is an obstacle to that broad spirit : " We also come with thee ".

They went to work. We must not expect everything from prayer : we too have to work. That night they caught nothing. Many of us would not have gone on all night. After an hour or two we should say we have had enough. A night's fishing, catching nothing, and not losing one's temper, is excellent spiritual training.

They did not go home in the morning. After night there does come morning, as certainly in the spiritual as in the natural order. Jesus stood on the shore, apparently looking on, like as an ordinary person might do. He was there, but they did not know He was so near. How often this represents our spiritual life !

" Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find." Supposing we were fishing, and a stranger came and gave us directions as to what we should do, should we not say : " What do you know about it ?—mind your own business ". Remark the simplicity of St. Peter—a grand simplicity ; a seafaring life teaches simplicity : the stranger tells him what to do and he does it. I do not mean to say that we are to listen to every stranger, but let us see whether we have not too much self-reliance, and whether we are unwilling to obey lawful superiors. Too often we lose the blessing of obedience. For most of our affairs in life there is some one we ought to obey. People don't know what a blessing there is in obedience—obedience without reserve or hesitation.

The disciple whom Jesus loved said : " It is the Lord ". The fathers point out that it is a privilege of virginity to see Jesus Christ—to see truth.

Peter forthwith cast himself into the sea. He does not talk, he is a man of action. He will at once be at the Feet of his Lord. He had that love for his Lord, he would never be away from Him when he could be with Him.

CONSIDERATION.

EIGHTH DAY.

[3 P.M.]

ON LOVING OUR ENEMIES.

LOVE of enemies is a virtue we profess : perhaps we may consider this doctrine with advantage to our souls, because for many it is the most practical part of Christian charity.

Who are our enemies? Not those only who have inflicted some great injury on us : anyone is an enemy for whom we feel a coldness, a dislike, a shrinking from. We may feel this on account of many things, whether it be some defect of character or some natural defect. A slow, phlegmatic person who does everything in a minute, particular manner, creeping about cautiously, may be the "enemy" to a lively person. Or again, to those who are slow and deliberate, to have bustling active people about them

is a misery. Some people are tired by the voices of others which seem to shake all their nerves. I call these natural enemies. Then we take a dislike to the appearance of others: "There is that giant again: it gives me a crick in the neck talking to him". Or we object to others for being short and stout, or for being scraggy, or because their hair does not please us: we are so strange, we try each other very much. These are one class of enemies.

Another class consists of those who won't pay us that deference we think we are entitled to. Some servants are very provoking, very tidy and particular: they will put everything away, and we don't like that. Then parents are distressed by want of respect and affection in their children, who speak of them as the "governor," or the "old lady," and in this sort of way are enemies. Then there is a large class of people we have no sympathy with—we don't know why. Often there is no sin in these antipathies, but they must be attended to, or they may become sinful. There are besides our unmistakable enemies. Jesus Christ gave us the doctrine to love our enemies—a new and, to the end of time, a difficult thing: He said we were not only to forgive, but to love them and do them good. The world would call this a mean disposition: it is a very Christian disposition. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," was our Lord's first lesson from the Cross.

Here are a few rules which will help us to obey this divine precept of loving our enemies.

1. In the first place, we must never cherish in our

hearts any ill-will, any desire to retaliate. Some acquaintance has calumniated you. You meet the acquaintance. I do not say you must behave as though the calumny were true. No, you may observe a certain reserve with one who has wronged you ; but you must not have in your heart any desire that he should suffer and be punished for the wrong he has done you, and that is sometimes very difficult.

It is not a bad plan sometimes, instead of meditation, to make a spiritual visit to all your friends and see if you cherish resentment against any, and if so, put it right in your heart. Be careful never to rejoice in the misfortune or ridicule of your enemies.

2. Never speak to others of your dislike to a certain person. That is very hard, but you can command the resentment if you keep it quiet in your own heart. It is such a comfort and relief to talk against some one, such a consolation (not a spiritual consolation !); but you will find that by so talking your dislike is increased. There is a limit to this rule : we may sometimes speak of our dislikes to a prudent person—a wife, for example, might speak to her husband, or you may speak to your confessor, though it is better not to mention names. God does not want us to have all our miseries pent up, only we must not relieve ourselves at the expense of charity.

3. When you meet persons for whom you have an antipathy, do not show it in your countenance. This is not such a difficult rule as the last.

4. Here is a higher point. Overcome yourself so far as to do good to your enemies. Render a service

to one for whom you feel an antipathy. Some make a point of rendering a service to those to whom they have no natural drawing. To be kind to people whom you dislike is to have the spirit of Jesus Christ. No one obtains a victory over self without gaining a great reward from Almighty God.

5. Instead of cherishing ill-will, try to conquer it. Try to make your enemy a friend. A person has immense power who can make friends out of enemies. It is not easy ; it involves trouble and ingenuity. You must watch your enemy, see how you can conquer him and bend him to your purpose.

Some persons keep a list of their enemies, and never fail to recommend them to God, and ask all sorts of blessings for them. We lose a great deal in our life with Almighty God if we don't forgive our enemies. Faults against charity are the greatest obstacles to consolation : they form a barrier against the entrance of Jesus Christ into our souls. How can He enter into an unforgiving soul? One of the most important points in confession is any deliberate fault against charity. Who are we, wanting so much forgiveness ourselves, that we should say we won't forgive? The more perfectly I forgive, the more perfectly does God forgive me. "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." Sometimes we think, how could our Lord put those words into our mouths, it is so difficult to say them.

St. Thomas tells us that everyone possesses good and bad qualities. If in our enemies we look at the good qualities instead of at the bad, our resentment

will be strangled : in ourselves we should look at the bad rather than at the good points.

Self-denial is the foundation of the spiritual life, and there is no way of mortifying self so pleasing to God as forgiving and loving our enemies.

EIGHTH DAY.

[5.45 P.M.]

CONTEMPLATION OF DIVINE LOVE.

ST. IGNATIUS makes two observations as an introduction to this contemplation. First, that love shows itself by deeds rather than by words, and secondly, that love is manifested by an interchange of good things, so that, if among two friends one has wealth and the other power, each will give the other what that other has not.

Such a contemplation comes in very well at the end of a retreat when we have gone through the whole spiritual life. The exercises of the four weeks are closed by putting before us the strongest motive of all—the love of God.

In meditating on our Lord's life, it is the *Man-God* we are loving—a real Human Person, really living close to us, not discernible indeed by our senses, but to be perceived by faith. Our loyalty is loyalty to a Human Being. Over and above that is the love of Almighty God, and this is the idea that will carry us the furthest.

[PREPARATORY PRAYER AS USUAL.]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Imagine Almighty God and all the court of heaven looking down upon us with love.

SECOND PRELUDE.—O Lord, enlighten my understanding that I may know the number and magnitude of Thy benefits to me. In flame my will that I may make all the return I can of love and gratitude to Thee.

FIRST POINT. We should consider and turn over in our minds all the benefits we have received from Almighty God—our souls and bodies ; a certain share of natural gifts, both of body and of mind ; then that we have been put in this particular sort of trial, which is longer than that of the Angels, and how God gave us all that we have out of His abundance. What noble beings we may become, if only we will be what He has destined us to be !

Then He has redeemed us. All that He gave to Adam He designed for us. We have a great many more blessings than those had who lived before Christ. He has redeemed us so abundantly, given us such wonderful Sacraments, so many graces, the Scriptures, the examples of the Saints, the marvellous presence of the Holy Ghost : it would take a long while to meditate on all that is included in the word “redemption”. Each soul is created with a great expectation of glory before it.

Your life may appear very ordinary and commonplace outwardly. Yet if its secret history were written, it would be found to be full of quite extravagant proofs

of the love of God. You remember others who have gone astray, whilst you have been always trying to serve God. Is it not a singular protection of God that has enabled you to lead a good life? Most of us can see some special love which seems shown to himself individually. "O Lord it is Thy goodness that compels me to be good, much more than my own genuine love of Thee."

Each one should try and think over and recall all his personal benefits: the helps, examples, and instructions that have been given him, and ponder on them with much love of God. Think how God has pursued you with His providence, love, and care. He is so great, and yet He seems to run after His own creature. What have I given to God in return for His love? Have I nothing to offer Him? "O Lord, I have nothing: pity me in my nothingness. Thou dost so condescend that Thou art pleased to accept whatever I will give Thee. What can I give?—what can I refuse? Shall I give Thee some of my wealth?—a portion of my heart? O my God, I have nothing that is not Thine: take all I have; take my understanding, my memory, my will, and give me Thy love. Take my success, my health, my strength, my time, my whole heart."

SECOND. Let us consider that God dwells in all creation for us. He not only gives us Redemption, Justification, etc., but He gives Himself in everything. He is present in all things: there is nothing that is not created by Him. He is present also by His Power, for He sustains everything: at every second we are

propped up and prevented from falling into nothingness by His Power. By His Immensity He is everywhere: in the world of minerals it is God who sustains their qualities. It is God who gives life to the vegetable world—that endless round of life in the gigantic tree and in the tiniest herb, and who, in the animal world, gives not only vegetative, but also sensitive life. God is in my fellow-men giving them life and also free-will—that marvellous resemblance to His own Spiritual Nature. He makes my soul His temple. He takes up His abode within me, and in a still more wonderful manner He enters into that temple bodily. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity comes to us, that we may tell Him how we love Him. I cannot think of any part of creation in which God is not present.

We have all these benefits as though they were for us alone; yet they are much more ours, because there are millions who share them with us. Think how He has planned all this: think to what a dignity He has raised us! O my soul, bless the Lord! All ye works of the Lord, bless ye the Lord! Invite all creation to join in blessing Him. He gives Himself to me all through creation. “Is there anything left I can offer Thee, O my God? I am destitute and empty-handed. I am nothing and have nothing: the little I had I gave Thee. Take all my liberty: would that I could multiply this gift—it would be some return. Shall I see Thee in all creation, and be insensible to Thy love? May I often remember that Thou art with me: by my service of Thee in all my duties, may I confess Thy presence.

“Take, O my God, for it is Thine ; receive, for I would give it Thee if it were not Thine, all my liberty. Take my memory, my understanding, and my whole will : all that I have, and all that I am, is a gift which I have received from Thy most pure liberality. To Thee I restore it all, and resign it entirely to Thy will and good pleasure over me. And I ask of Thee to give me in return Thy grace and Thy love : with these I am rich enough, and have nothing else I would ask or desire of Thee.”

THE END.

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