Canon C. Chambost

THE SPIRIT AND THE VIRTUES OF FATHER CHEVRIER

L'esprit et les vertus du Père Chevrier

From the French of the Vitte edition (Lyon, 1926)

English translation

Contributed to Mind of the Church by a friend of the library who wishes to remain anonymous

---

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this translation · 5

Front Matter

Title Page · 6
Declaration · 6
Letter of His Eminence Cardinal Maurin, Archbishop of Lyons · 6
Preface · 7

Chapter I. Faith

Chapter I. Faith · 9
The Importance the Venerable Attached to Faith — Outward Marks of His Faith · 9
The Holy Trinity · 11
The Holy Spirit · 11
Jesus Christ · 13
The Incarnation · 16
The Eucharist · 17
The Holy Mass · 20
The Passion · 23
The Blessed Virgin · 25
The Holy Angels · 28
The Saints · 28
The Propagation of the Faith — Catechism · 30
Preaching · 34
The Holy Books — The Gospel · 37
The Holy Place · 40
The Ceremonies of Worship · 42
The Breviary · 43
The Holy Church · 44
The Pope · 45
The Bishops · 46
The Priests · 48
The Commandments of God and of the Church · 51
Indulgences · 52
Confession · 52

Chapter II. Hope

Chapter II. Hope · 53
Confidence in His Eternal Salvation · 53
Exhortations to Confidence · 53
Contempt for the Things of the World · 57
Confidence in God and Recourse to Prayer · 57
Hope Solely in Providence · 61
Everything for God and Souls · 63
Joy in Suffering and in Fulfilling His Ministry · 64
Consolation at the Thought of Death · 67
Hope Rewarded by Extraordinary Graces and Helps · 68

Chapter III. Charity Toward God

Chapter III. Charity Toward God · 72
Care to Avoid Sin and to Correct His Imperfections · 72
A Mind Constantly Occupied with God. His Manner of Speaking of Him and Praying to Him · 74
Horror of Blasphemy · 77

Pains Taken to Inspire the Love of God Around Him · 78

Chapter IV. Charity Toward the Neighbour

Chapter IV. Charity Toward the Neighbour · 82
SPIRITUAL AID · 82
TEMPORAL AID · 96

Chapter V. Prudence

Chapter V. Prudence · 103
All His Actions Were Done to Obtain His Salvation · 103
Practice of the Evangelical Counsels · 104
Flight from Occasions of Sin. Love of Work. Relations with the Neighbour · 105
Prayer, Study of the Gospel, Love of Recollection and Retreat · 107
Struggle Against His Faults and Imperfections. Love of Simplicity, Frankness and Uprightness · 108
He Asked Counsel, He Acted with Calm, with a Wise Slowness and a Great Practical Sense. He Fled Human Prudence · 110
In the Exercise of the Holy Ministry: Great Good Sense, Broad Direction, Gentleness and Firmness · 113
Direction of Scrupulous Souls. Moderation. Reasonable Care of Health. Before All, to Put the Spirit of God into Souls · 117

Chapter VI. Justice

Chapter VI. Justice · 120
The Spirit of Justice Animated All His Actions · 120
Respect for the Sovereign Pontiff, Bishops, Parish Priests, Priests, Civil Authority · 120
Fidelity to the Divine Office · 122
Duties of a Superior. Spiritual and Temporal Care for the Persons Entrusted to Him · 122
Duties of Justice: Workmen and Suppliers · 124
Gratitude Toward God, His Parents, His Collaborators and His Benefactors · 124

Chapter VII. Fortitude and Patience

Chapter VII. Fortitude and Patience · 130
In His Childhood, His Studies, His Ministry, His Foundations · 130
His Life at the Prado. His Writings · 131
Forced Rest. Condemnation of Laziness · 133
Perseverance in His Designs, in His Direction · 134
Patience in Sufferings, Persecutions, Insults; in Contradictions, Oppositions, Lack of Regard · 135

Chapter VIII. Temperance

Chapter VIII. Temperance · 138
Mortification in Food. He Contented Himself with the Necessary. He Avoided Gluttony, Luxury, Refinement · 138
Mortification of the Senses. Correction of Faults · 141
Bearing Sufferings. Practices of Penance · 144

Chapter IX. Humility

Chapter IX. Humility · 146
Father Chevrier Never Spoke of Himself, Bore No Allusion to His Holiness and Regarded Himself as Unworthy of Consideration · 146
He Attributed to God Alone the Success of His Work and Regarded Himself as a Sinner · 148
He Accused Himself Publicly of His Faults and Humbly Bore Contempt and Reproaches · 150
He Refused Everything That Could Make Him Noticed, Effaced Himself as Much as Possible, Even in His House, and Went Begging at the Door of La Charité · 152
He Formed With Care to the Practice of Humility the Souls Entrusted to Him · 154

Chapter X. Obedience

Chapter X. Obedience · 159
Father Chevrier Renounced His Own Will All His Life · 159
He Sought Only the Will of God · 161
He Made Great Account of Obedience in His Instructions, His Counsels, His Direction · 162

Chapter XI. Poverty

Chapter XI. Poverty · 167
His Predilection for Poverty · 167
Motives for the Choice of This Virtue. Teaching and Examples of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Saints · 167
The Present Necessity for the Priest to Bear This Distinctive Character · 169
How the Ven. Father Chevrier Realized This Ideal of Poverty. At Saint-André · 171
At the Cité de l’Enfant-Jésus · 172
Foundation of the Prado, House of Poverty. Poverty in Lodging · 173
Poverty in Clothing · 177
Poverty in Food · 178
Poverty in Goods · 180
Poverty in Work · 186
Poverty in Service · 188
The Priestly Work: His Ideal of the Poor Priest · 190
Realization of His Priestly Ideal · 191
Pradosian Formation of His Pupils Whom He Destined for the Ministry of the Poor · 195

Chapter XII. Chastity

Chapter XII. Chastity · 199
Constant Modesty · 199
Vigilance Over Himself and Reserve With Persons of the World, With the Sisters and With the Children · 200
Renunciation of His Heart · 201
Means of Preserving Purity, in Himself and in the House · 203

Table of Contents of the 1926 Edition, and Publisher’s List

Table of Contents of the 1926 Edition, and Publisher’s List · 204
Table of Contents · 204
Various Works (publisher’s list printed after the Table of Contents) · 205

About this translation

Translated from Canon C. Chambost, *L'esprit et les vertus du Père Chevrier* (Lyon: Vitte, 1926): the writings and sayings of Father Antoine Chevrier, founder of the Providence of the Prado, gathered by subject under the virtues, with the depositions of witnesses at his process of beatification. The front matter of 1926 is included. The translation gives no page references to the French edition.

Front Matter

Title Page

THE SPIRIT AND THE VIRTUES OF THE VENERABLE ANTOINE CHEVRIER, Founder of the Providence of the Prado

Extracts from his Writings and from his Process of Beatification

Work preceded by a letter of approbation from His Eminence Cardinal Maurin, Archbishop of Lyons, and adorned with a heliogravure portrait.

Catholic Bookshop Emmanuel Vitte, Lyons, 1926.

(Advertisement on the half-title page, by the same publisher: "The Priest according to the Gospel, or the True Disciple of Jesus Christ," by the Venerable Antoine Chevrier, founder of the Providence of the Prado — 8vo, 580 pages, with a heliogravure portrait. — "A New Life of the Venerable Antoine Chevrier, founder of the Providence of the Prado, drawn from his writings and his Process of Beatification," by Canon C. Chambost, 5th edition, 8vo, 620 pages, with several engravings.)

[Translator's note: in this translation Chevrier's own words (his writings and sayings, which the French prints between « ») are given in "double quotation marks"; the witnesses' depositions are given as plain running text; Chambost's headings and editorial linking sentences appear as headings or in *italics*. Square brackets are the translator's.]

Declaration

In conformity with the decrees of the Holy See, we declare that we attach only a historical and human value to the qualifications employed and the facts related in this work, and that we have no intention whatever of forestalling the judgment of Holy Church. [The usual formula required of books about persons whose cause of beatification is pending: decrees of Urban VIII.]

Letter of His Eminence Cardinal Maurin, Archbishop of Lyons

ARCHBISHOPRIC OF LYONS

Lyons, 4 December 1925.

Dear Canon,

You have had the happy thought of completing your publications on the Venerable Father Chevrier. After giving us his *Life* and his *True Disciple*, you have wished to make known to us his *Spirit* and his *Virtues*. In this new volume we enter more deeply into his interior life; we admire him in the detail of his virtues; we have, as it were, the photograph of his soul.

It is he himself who reveals his spirit to us in his writings. It is the most intimate witnesses of his life who bear testimony to his virtues, and whose depositions at the process of beatification obtained for him, with the introduction of his Cause, the title of Venerable.

While attending in Rome the festivities of the canonization of the holy Curé of Ars [St John Vianney, canonized 31 May 1925], who was the guide and support of the founder of the Prado, I gave my soul over to the sweet hope of seeing him too, soon, upon the altars. It will be a new glory for our diocese, and especially for the city of Lyons, where he spent all his life and founded all his works, and which keeps his tomb.

Your book presents him to the faithful and to priests as a model easily imitable of the Christian life and of the priestly life. To all the members of his Work of the Prado it shows him in a livelier light, which allows them to walk more surely in his footsteps, to recall in detail the traditions he established, and to continue his admirable works in the very spirit which inspired them and which must make them live and prosper.

To all, Father Chevrier seems to repeat the word of St Paul: *Be ye followers of me*, "as I also am of Christ." [1 Cor. xi, 1.]

I congratulate you on having composed this writing, and I express the wish that priests and faithful may be numerous to draw inspiration from it.

Accept, dear Canon, the assurance of my fatherly affection and devotedness.

† L.-J. Card. MAURIN, Archbishop of Lyons.

Preface

(by Canon C. Chambost)

This book might be entitled: "The Venerable Father Chevrier in His Intimate Life." It is the complement of his great work, The Priest according to the Gospel, or the True Disciple of Jesus Christ, and it completes the revelation of his beautiful soul as priest and saint. It is also, as it were, the second volume of his New Life, which has been read with so much edification and admiration, especially in many communities, seminaries, and also in pastoral retreats.

In that Life, the virtues of the founder of the Prado were spoken of only so far as the sequence of the narrative required. Here, on the contrary, all his virtues are studied in detail, one after another, and the facts, the words and everything that relates to each of them are gathered as in a sheaf, so that each is specially brought into relief. Instead of the fifty pages on this subject that one read in the popular Life written thirty years ago by M. Villefranche [J.-M. Villefranche, Vie du Père Chevrier, 1894], one will find here nearly five hundred pages, which are only a long development of them. It is therefore a work at once new and old.

To compose it, we drew first upon the numerous writings of the Servant of God, especially upon his True Disciple, his letters, his catechism and his so precious explanations of the Mysteries of the Rosary. But we made principal use of the depositions of the seventy-six witnesses of his Process of Beatification. These are contained in an enormous folio, printed in Rome, which contains fourteen hundred pages. It seemed fitting to give the most important extracts from it in a volume easy to approach and within the reach of all.

It is therefore the priests of Father Chevrier, and especially his successors in the direction of the Prado, Fathers Duret and Broche; it is his Sisters, the oldest, and above all their Superiors, Sister Marie and Sister Véronique; it is, finally, his benefactors and his friends; it is, in a word, all those who lived with him or who knew him more closely, who come to tell us what they saw and heard, in regard to his person, his soul and his works, particularly the First Communion and the Clerical School. Their account is precise and living, and they speak with an accent and an emotion which others could not have. Each expresses himself in his own language, at times vivid and picturesque, which makes the testimonies more interesting and more varied.

We have suppressed, as far as possible, the repetitions that were inevitable. One will not be astonished nevertheless to find some still, for often the same facts and the same words confirm several different virtues at once. It did not seem fitting to give ordinarily the reference for each witness and each quotation. Besides the fact that many witnesses are still living, these notes would overburden and constantly interrupt the narrative. We must add that we have quoted almost in full the Personal Memories of Father Chevrier written by Father Duret, in so lively a manner and showing so great a spirit of observation.

For the order of the virtues and the developments on each of them, we have followed, as a sure and official guide, the questionnaire inserted in the Manual of Postulators, *according to which the articles and the interrogatories for the examination of witnesses are composed. One will therefore see successively what relates to the theological virtues, to the cardinal virtues, and to the annexed virtues.*

We cannot sufficiently thank the discreet generosity which enables us to publish this new work, as well as the persons of the Work who have helped us, in this long labour, with so much devotedness and perseverance.

The spirit of the Venerable Father Chevrier results clearly from the virtues which he practised in a special manner, and which he left as an inheritance to his children, as giving to his Work its particular, well-determined character. They are contained principally in the admirable Picture of Saint-Fons: the mystery of the Crib offers the example of poverty and humility, the mystery of Calvary teaches renunciation of self and penance, finally the mystery of the Tabernacle preaches charity and zeal for souls.

The publication of this work, we hope by the grace of God, will be able to produce happy results. It will continue in the world the apostolate of the Servant of God, and will procure the edification of souls, in a manner the more effective and the more extensive as the progress of his Process of Beatification will make him better known in the whole Church. On the other hand, it will be useful to the Prado itself. The elders, who knew the founder personally, are disappearing little by little; but their testimonies remain, to satisfy the legitimate desire of all the members of the Work who continue it with so much zeal, of the priests drawn by the beauty of his priestly ideal, and of the pupils of the Clerical School. All aspire to know yet more fully and in more detail the spirit of the Servant of God, in order to be penetrated with it, to live by it and to transmit it in all its purity. Now this work will reveal it to them in a sure manner. It therefore comes at its hour, and will contribute to realizing, more and more perfectly, the motto so dear to the Venerable Father Chevrier: **Everything for God and souls!**

C. CHAMBOST.

Chapter I. Faith

Chapter I. Faith

The importance the Venerable attached to this virtue. — Outward marks of his faith. — The Holy Trinity. — The Holy Spirit. — Jesus Christ. — The Incarnation. — The Eucharist. — The Holy Mass. — The Passion. — The Blessed Virgin. — The Angels. — The Saints. — The Propagation of the Faith. — Catechism. — Preaching. — The Holy Books, the Gospel. — The holy place. — The ceremonies of worship. — The Breviary. — The holy Church. — The Pope. — The Bishops. — The Priests. — The Commandments of God and of the Church. — Indulgences. — Confession.

The Importance the Venerable Attached to Faith — Outward Marks of His Faith

“I thank God that He made me be born in the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church.”

“O Word, O Christ, put in me a great faith in You.”

Father Chevrier often said: “Faith is everything; to make the good God known is everything, and the rest is nothing. What does it matter whether one lives a longer or a shorter time? Though we had only two farthings’ worth of life left, we should still have to give it for the good God. [Fr. *pour deux liards de vie*: the *liard* was a tiny old coin, a quarter of a sou.] Faith is not only believing, but doing things with the spirit of faith, that is, with the intention of pleasing the good God.”

“To put faith into the souls of children is the greatest treasure one can give them. That is why souls of faith are needed to teach the catechism.”

“O my children, how beautiful faith is! How precious it is to have faith! A man who has faith can work wonders: he passes through life without fear and goes straight to his goal. I would have my head cut off to defend and affirm my faith.”

“How happy he is who has faith! He has no need to travel so far to see beautiful things; he has everything in the holy Eucharist; he finds himself at the Crib, at Calvary, in the Cenacle. People travel to venerate the great relics of the saints, and our good Saviour has left us the beautiful and precious relic of His Body and His Blood. How happy one finds oneself to have so many riches, and everywhere, so that the poor peasant can, without travelling and without spending a penny [Fr. *un sou*], make all the beautiful pilgrimages of the world, is it not so? And in your own parish you can make the great pilgrimages of Rome and Jerusalem. Go then with faith and love to the Crib and to the Calvary of our good Saviour.”

Father Chevrier was a man of faith, a man of great faith. This virtue shone in an extraordinary way throughout his life. It exclusively inspired all his thoughts, all his words, all his undertakings; in all his conduct he realized these words of Holy Scripture: *Justus ex fide vivit*. “The just man liveth by faith.” [Rom. i, 17.]

I have always admired this first and fundamental virtue in the Servant of God. In him it was very lively, very deep and very perfect. His faith was truly the life of his soul. Not only did he firmly believe all the truths of our holy religion, but he meditated on them unceasingly and nourished his soul on them. Never did he study them in order to dispute them, but always to understand them better, to be more penetrated by them, and to explain them better to the faithful. This faith he fed and developed by incessant prayer and a continual study of God, of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of His divine word, as can be seen from the numerous writings he left. All of them have for their object the truths of the faith, the teachings of Our Lord, and have for their aim to make souls understand these truths and these teachings better.

Father Chevrier possessed faith to a heroic degree. In conversation he brought everything back to faith. One felt that he was always in a state of recollection which made one suppose that he lived in the presence of God. The sight of him gave peace, joy, the love of the good God, and led to recollection. A seminarian said one day: “When I see the Father crossing the streets of the Guillotière, it seems to me that I see Our Lord crossing the streets of Jerusalem.”

The foundation of the Prado and the life he led there are a great proof of his faith. He gave faith by his examples, his words, his teachings. To hear him pray gave faith and the love of the good God; but he was simple in his prayer, as everywhere, and his manner had nothing affected about it. In his catechisms he spoke much of faith and recommended us to pray for an increase of faith. By following his advice one found the Christian life easy. He said: “Let us have this spirit of faith, this interior life, this supernatural life which must be the principle of all the actions of the Christian.”

Father Chevrier showed his faith particularly in his preaching and still more in the meditations made aloud; to hear it gave faith. In his catechisms he insisted much on the most important truths, and, after he had explained them well and demonstrated them well, he would tell the children to make an act of faith in these truths. I heard him several times put questions such as these: “Do you believe this truth, my child? Do you believe that God exists, that Jesus Christ is God, that He will come one day to judge us?” The Father composed acts of faith on the principal mysteries and on the divinity of Jesus Christ. He himself had the children learn them when he gave the catechism.

I did not see Father Chevrier do extraordinary things, but I know of him no word and no act that was not inspired by a motive of faith. He painted himself in his *True Disciple of Jesus Christ*, and I found that book so beautiful that, as far as I could, I always read it on my knees.

The Father often told us: “Everything in a church ought to speak and instruct. What is the good of those ornaments that say nothing?” It was so that everything should lead to God that he wished to represent, in a manner so simple and so within the reach of all, the mysteries of the Annunciation and of the Birth of the Child Jesus. For the same reason he placed round the chapel little pictures which represented some ceremonies of religion or which explained some truths of the faith. “The walls must speak,” he often told us.

He had a very great delicacy of faith. He avoided, for himself and for his own, occasions of coming into contact with people, even with ecclesiastics, whose doctrines could lend themselves to exaggerations opposed to the perfection of faith. That is why he wanted his young clerics to go to Rome to complete their theological studies. He had a great fear that they would receive impressions unfavourable to papal infallibility, not yet defined. A priest saying in his presence, at the time of the Council, “I am preparing my act of faith in infallibility,” he replied: “A Christian, by his baptism, always has his act of faith prepared.”

Thoughts on Faith

> *When faith and love possess a heart, it is capable of anything. I call rich those who have faith and who find in it the consolations that make life less bitter and make it meritorious for heaven. Faith and love: that is what Jesus expects of us for all His benefits; faith and love, that is what we must render to Jesus in gratitude for all that He has done for us.*
>
> *In the eyes of faith, nothing is small, nothing is unworthy of a Christian; and it is the mark of a great soul to appreciate things only at their real value and not by their mere appearance. Faith knows how to ennoble everything. There is nothing but misery on earth; we must change our evils into goods, by faith and love. A little less devotions and a little more faith in Jesus Christ. [Fr. dévotions: here the multiplied particular devotional practices.] The spirit of faith gives life to all our actions. A religious soul must look at everything in the light of faith.*
>
> *We should often say: Lord, give me a great faith in You. Let us accustom ourselves to treat our affairs with the good God.*

The Holy Trinity

Father Chevrier's devotion was great and strong, addressing itself to what is most essential in religion. He rendered great honour to the Holy Trinity; every morning, before the prayer and the meditation, he would say, extemporaneously [Fr. *d'abondance*, "out of the abundance (of the heart)"], a few words to honour each of the three Persons: the Father who created us, the Son who redeemed us, the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us.

In reparation for the blasphemies against God and the Most Holy Trinity, His Holiness Pius IX recommended to the bishops who were at Rome on the occasion of the canonization of the Martyrs of Japan [1862] the recitation of three *Gloria Patri* in honour of the Most Holy Trinity after the prayer of the Angelus. Bishop Dubuis [Claude Dubuis, then Bishop of Galveston, Texas], returning from Rome, passed through the Prado and made known the wish of the Holy Father. The good Father, happy to enter into the intentions of Pius IX and to honour the Most Holy Trinity, from that day had three *Gloria*s recited in his Work after the Angelus of morning, noon and evening, and they have always been recited since. He always bowed while saying these words and recommended us to do the same, out of respect for the names of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

He made great signs of the cross, well accentuated. I do not remember ever having seen him make one mechanically, although at times I had the thought of observing him at one of those moments. The faith with which he performed this act of religion struck all who witnessed it. People speak of the signs of the cross of Father de Ravignan [the Jesuit preacher Xavier de Ravignan]; I wonder whether he could have made them better than Father Chevrier.

The Father spoke often and at length of the mystery of the Holy Trinity; he did so in such a manner as to be understood even by minds little accustomed to going deeply into the great mysteries of religion. He explained it himself to the children, following the work he made of it, which is found at the beginning of the *True Disciple*. During a retreat to the Sisters he spoke of it for three days in succession in a long instruction. Minds and hearts were penetrated by this great mystery. He insisted much that the children be taught the five things that exist in this mystery: the unity, the trinity, the equality, the distinction, the inseparability. When the Father had explained the mystery of the Holy Trinity, one understood that it had to be so for God to be the infinite and perfect Being.

Act of Faith

> *Glory to You, adorable Trinity, incomprehensible, ineffable Trinity. Receive the threefold homage of my faith, of my gratitude and of my love. I believe that in Your trinity of persons there is unity of substance. Glory to You, eternal Father, Creator of all, fruitful Principle by whom all things were made and from whom all things flow. Glory to You, eternal Son, one with Your Father, You who, for love of us, came down from the height of the heavens to make Yourself man and redeem us. Glory to You, sanctifying Spirit, who sanctify souls and whose noble mission is to bear witness to Jesus and to console men on earth. Glory be rendered to You for ever, on earth and in heaven.*

The Holy Spirit

"The Holy Spirit is the bond of union of the Father and the Son, He is the sap of the Church, it is He who makes all the virtues germinate."

The Father often told us: "The Holy Spirit is little known in the world; few people pray to Him, and yet we have such need of His light. Oh! my children! you must pray well to the Holy Spirit!" He also told us: "When the good God gives His spirit to a man, it is a great gift that He makes to the earth, and men understand it and go to him. See the poor Curé of Ars, how the crowds went to him to have a counsel, a blessing."

Father Chevrier had an extraordinary devotion to the Holy Spirit. I was always struck by the great and lofty knowledge he had of the Holy Spirit, of His role and of His operations as sanctifier in the Church and in

souls. He expressed on this subject, in his instructions and in his conversations, ideas so luminous, so just, so practical, that one felt that he was himself filled with that divine Spirit of whom he spoke so well. Besides, he prayed to Him ceaselessly, in order to say nothing and do nothing except by His lights and counsel. Each day, about nine in the morning, he recited the *Veni Creator* and seven *Hail Marys* to ask for the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. He established the practice of this devotion for his priests, his religious and the pupils of the Clerical School, and it continues to be done as in his lifetime. Moreover, very often during the day, he said and said again his familiar prayer: "My God, give me Your spirit!" The spirit of God was truly the precious treasure which he desired above everything and which he asked for without ceasing.

According to the good Father, devotion to the Holy Spirit is a devotion that every Christian must practise in order to make progress in virtue and to become a saint. But, if every Christian must love and pray to the Holy Spirit, the priest above all must devote himself to living by that Spirit, who alone must and can vivify the world and make souls live the true life. He insisted much that, in the major seminaries or on holidays, we should be faithful to the devotion to the Holy Spirit. Bishop Guillermain, our former fellow-student, whom I saw again after he had spent three or four years in Africa, told me that he had not let a day pass without reciting his *Veni Creator*, as Father Chevrier had taught him.

The feast of Pentecost was particularly dear to Father Chevrier's heart; he celebrated it with an extraordinary faith and piety. Each year, to prepare himself for it and to prepare the members of his Work, he wished the week preceding this feast to be a week of prayer and recollection, and every day, after the singing of the *Veni Creator*, he explained to his community gathered in the chapel one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in order to make well understood their nature, their necessity and their happy effects in the soul. With what love he asked for these gifts!

> *"Very dear children," he wrote to his seminarians, "I will not let this beautiful week of Pentecost pass without saying a little word to you. It is the week of the Holy Spirit, and you know how much we need this Spirit to live the life of God: That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Our Lord says to us again: Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. [John iii, 6, 5.] We must therefore receive this new life and bring about in us this second birth of the spirit which alone brings us near to God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and we all feel in us those covetous desires, those miseries, which are the baneful consequences of Adam's sin. It is the Holy Spirit who comes to destroy in us this old man, by His grace and His power, and to put in us this spiritual and divine life which makes us like our Creator. We were made to His image and likeness; it is the Holy Spirit who will re-establish this image and likeness, unhappily effaced by sin. Oh! let us pray well to the Holy Spirit, we have such need of Him!*
>
> *"To make us understand His necessity, Jesus Christ said: It is necessary that I go away, to send you the Holy Spirit [cf. John xvi, 7]. It is that the three divine persons have an operation to exercise upon us, to make of us perfect men: the Father creates us, the Son shows us the truth, the way, He is our light; but the Holy Spirit gives us love, makes us love; and who loves, understands; who loves, feels; who loves, can act; the Holy Spirit therefore completes what Jesus Christ began. The Father gives us existence, the Son discovers Himself to us and shows us God and the way, and the Holy Spirit makes us understand it and love it. Of what use is it to hear if one does not understand what one hears? Of what use again is it to understand if one does not love? May you therefore understand well this operation of the Holy Spirit, in order to ask Him to act upon you and to put no obstacle to His action.*
>
> *"Let the Holy Spirit then be your light and your love, let Him make you understand and love the Father and the Son, and then you will be truly the children of God, who are not born of the flesh and of blood, but who are born of God by the Spirit. Ex Deo nati sunt." [John i, 13.]*

When the encyclical on the Holy Spirit appeared [Leo XIII, *Divinum illud munus*, 1897], we all said to ourselves: "Behold, Leo XIII confirms and imposes all Father Chevrier's particular devotions." It must be added that we had begun to say this word on seeing the Pope recommend so earnestly, and almost every year, devotion to the Rosary with meditation on the mysteries, as it is done at the Prado from the beginning.

In the retreats that the Father gave to his Sisters or to the other members of his Work, the instruction at nine in the morning, every day, was on the Holy Spirit. The Father counselled praying quite specially to the Holy Spirit in the thanksgiving after holy communion. He had a representation of the Holy Spirit placed above the altars of the Prado, of Saint-Fons, of Limonest. It was out of love for the Holy Spirit that he devoted himself to procuring the benefit of the sacrament of Confirmation for all the children and all the grown persons who make their first communion at the Prado.

In the writings of the Servant of God one finds admirable things on the Holy Spirit and His divine operations in souls. The Father said:

> *"It is the Holy Spirit who will make you know many things. Oh! those who have the spirit of God, how many things they see in themselves! The good God makes them see even their slightest faults.*
>
> *"The spirit of God, oh! let us ask for it always and every day, let us not cease to ask for it: this is the recommendation I make to you all, men and women; let us work to acquire the spirit of God and all will go well. Make every day, with faith and humility, the devotion to the Holy Spirit, that the spirit of God may come upon you. To have the spirit of God is to think like God, to think like Jesus Christ, to think like the Church.*
>
> *"If one has the spirit of God, one has all that is needed to be wise and pleasing to God and useful to one's neighbour."*

Prayer for the third glorious mystery [of the Rosary: the Descent of the Holy Spirit]:

> *"O sweet Jesus, send Your Holy Spirit, and all things shall be created, and the arid earth of my heart shall be entirely renewed. Send that mighty breath which comes from on high, and let it shake to its very foundations this house of mud and stone built by the hand of men, and inhabited by the spirits of darkness and by the idols of the world. Send that fire from heaven, that it may consume my poor heart, after having fashioned it according to the model which You showed on the mountain of Calvary. O Jesus, send Your Holy Spirit, and may that Spirit of strength and light sustain the tottering steps, heal the poor sick, make the paralytics walk, restore hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind—alas! always so numerous in this world of darkness and miseries! And You, O divine Mary, chaste spouse of the Holy Spirit, pray to your royal Spouse, so rich, so magnificent in His largesse, to grant us His gifts, which will make of us entirely new men."*

Jesus Christ

It is above all with regard to the person of Our Lord Jesus Christ that the faith and piety of Father Chevrier were manifested in a more striking manner. Jesus Christ ravished his soul and possessed it fully. He was his light, his life, his treasure and his all. After the example of St Paul, he wished to know only Jesus, and Jesus crucified. [1 Cor. ii, 2.] Thus Jesus Christ was the continual object of his thoughts, of his meditations and of his studies. The numerous writings of the Servant of God almost all treat of Jesus Christ, of His divinity, of the mysteries of His life, of His doctrine and of His virtues.

He had taken Jesus Christ for his Master and his only Master, a word he often repeated: "*Magister vester unus est Christus*" ["For one is your master, Christ." Matt. xxiii, 10], and he kept himself at His feet as the humblest disciple, the most docile and the most eager to receive the teachings of his divine Master, to nourish his soul on them and to make them the rule of his life:

> *"O Christ! O Word!" he said in a prayer composed by himself, "You are my Lord, my only and sole Master. Speak, I wish to listen to You and to put Your word into practice… Speak, I wish to listen only to You!"*

This extraordinary faith and devotion of the Servant of God toward Our Lord found expression in those words or cries of admiration which frequently escaped from his soul: "To know Jesus Christ is everything! He who has found Jesus Christ has found the greatest treasure! How beautiful Jesus Christ is! O Word! O Christ! how beautiful You are! how great You are! Grant, O Christ, that I may know You and love You!"

He was truly filled with Jesus Christ and with His doctrine, and it was remarkable to see how, in his conversations and in his actions, even the simplest, he knew how to find the word or the example of Our

Lord that inspired him in what he had to say or to do. His occupation, during his retreats, was to study Our Lord, above all as model of the evangelical priest, in particular in the mysteries of the Crib, of Calvary and of the Tabernacle. He left beautiful pages on the divinity of Jesus Christ, on His titles. I heard him develop these thoughts, but the one which was more familiar to him, and which came back, so to speak, ceaselessly to his lips, was this: "Jesus Christ is our Master!" Very often he called Him: My Master, the divine Master, the good Master, or even simply: the Master. I very often heard him place himself in the presence of God at the beginning of his meditation by words such as these: "O my God, I acknowledge You as my Master. You have at Your feet Your disciple. Speak to me, I listen to You."

I heard him comment on his *True Disciple*, in particular in the retreat of 1878 at Limonest. He had spoken to us at very great length, although his health was at that time greatly shaken. We were already standing to leave when, carried away by his love for Jesus Christ, he resumed the finished talk and ravished us with his admirable words. We said to him: "Father, we are going to withdraw, it tires you to speak so much." "Ah! my children!" he answered, "one does not tire of speaking of what one loves!" On leaving that conversation we had nothing more pressing to do than to look in our *Novum Testamentum* for the word of the disciples of Emmaus, to apply it to ourselves: *Nonne cor nostrum ardens erat in nobis, dum loqueretur?* "Was not our heart burning within us, whilst he spoke?" [Luke xxiv, 32.]

He had a great faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ and wished that at catechism one should insist much on this important article. He held to it and repeated it to us often. He made of it the basis of Christian life. "We do not know Our Lord enough," he said; "we do not believe enough in His divinity, or only very superficially; the world is not convinced of it. The children learn this vaguely at catechism, and after their first communion they forget everything: they have no strong, firm faith in the divinity of Our Lord. People admire, people respect Our Lord as a great personage; but they do not see, or not enough, in Him the divine character, the God-Man. We must absolutely bring the world to believe in Jesus Christ, to acknowledge Him as true God! This is the fundamental truth that must be put into the soul of our children!"

To Father Duret, who said to him two days before his death: "We must believe well in the divinity of Jesus Christ; you have taught it well during your life," the Servant of God answered, in my presence: "Oh! I should like still to teach it; it was one of my great occupations. I desire that you do as I did." And a little later he repeated again: "It must be well taught!"

Our Father was not content to admire Jesus Christ, but he sought ceaselessly to reproduce Him in His poverty, in His humility, in His charity and above all in His unalterable gentleness. He told us: "If the priest is another Jesus Christ by his powers, he must necessarily apply himself to being another Jesus Christ by his virtues."

The Father imitated Our Lord; this is the aim he set himself from the beginning of his priestly life, as can be seen by these lines, written before the foundation of the Prado:

> *"Jesus, I take You for my Master and my Model.*
>
> *I wish to be Your disciple and Your image. Enlighten me, strengthen me. — To study Jesus Christ in His mortal life, in His Eucharistic life, that will be my whole study. To imitate Jesus will be all my desire, the sole aim of all my thoughts, the end of all my actions. — Jesus was poor. — Jesus was a victim of expiation by prayer and sacrifice. — Jesus died of love for men. — Jesus gives Himself to us entire in the holy Eucharist. — There is my Model. — The life of Jesus was a life of renunciation, of expiation and of charity. I must do the same."*

The Father did what he wrote: his life was a continual study of Our Lord, and it is true that he resembled Him as far as it is possible for a creature. This is what he wrote:

> *"I wish to be like You, O my divine Saviour. What surer Model could I take? Make me so like, so conformed to You, that I may be but one with You. May I be truly and worthily Your representative upon earth, both as to powers and as to virtues."*

If Father Chevrier studies Holy Scripture, the holy Gospel, it is to know Jesus Christ; it is to love, preach and imitate Jesus Christ. He studies St Paul because in that apostle he meets Jesus Christ. Whom does Father Chevrier wish to make known in his instructions, at the catechism, in the Way of the Cross, in the meditation of the holy Rosary, if not Jesus, always Jesus? He would like to preach Him in the public squares, in the streets; everywhere he would like to make the name of Jesus Christ heard. He wears a crucifix [Fr. *un Christ*] on his person, so that this Christ may speak for him when he cannot preach Him by his word. In his letters, of whom does he speak? Of Jesus Christ, always of Jesus Christ. There is nothing else in all those I received from him, as in our conversations.

"Believe well," he said, "that there is nothing so beautiful, so powerful, so rich as the words and the actions of Our Lord."

"Are we not here for this, and for this alone: to know Jesus Christ and to make Him known to others? Is that not beautiful enough, and have we not there what will fill our whole life, without going elsewhere to find something to occupy our mind?"

He wrote to his seminarians:

> *"My very dear children, I have been at Saint-Fons for some time. There I pray and learn to know our divine Saviour, our Master and our Model. I think very often of you, because it is for you in particular that I offer to God my prayers, my thoughts and my actions. May this blessed place become for you all a place of sanctification, of joy and of heavenly blessings, and one day make you priests worthy of Him who was the first priest and who gave His life for the glory of His Father and the salvation of all who have faith in Him and who hope in His resurrection.*
>
> *"St Paul placed the knowledge of Our Lord Jesus Christ above all other knowledge, and he glorified in knowing nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. That is, in fact, the knowledge which is above all the others and which alone can make us true priests, worthy of Him.*
>
> *"To preach Jesus Christ, must one not know Him? To imitate Jesus Christ, must one not know Him? And how shall we be able to know Him if we do not study Him? It is therefore important for a young seminarian to study Our Lord, whom he must preach later and whom he must imitate above all in his conduct, to be the model of the peoples, as St Paul said: Imitatores mei estote, sicut et ego Christi ["Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ"]; the priest must be 'the form of the flock,' as St Peter says: forma gregis ["being made a pattern of the flock"], the model, the form that the flock must look at and reproduce… How little we do, relatively to what we have to do!…*
>
> *"How few people are converted! How few keep the faith, the love of God, because we ourselves are slack and speak only very little of our Master, and do not know how to make pass into souls the love of Him whom we preach! Oh! my children! work then with ardour to become good priests, and that not for yourselves, for your glory, to please your parents, but only for the glory of Jesus Christ, our God and our Saviour. Purify well your thoughts and the affections of your heart in your studies, seeking only the glory of the one and only Master, Our Lord Jesus Christ. I embrace you with all my heart and I pray for you."*

The subject of the meditation was, according to the time of year, either a mystery or a teaching of Our Lord. One felt that the Father was tending to holiness, but always taking Jesus Christ for his model. In a meditation he said: "By following Our Lord we are in the light. It is He who is the great saint. It is upon Him that all the saints were formed." He ended a meditation thus: "Oh! that all our life long we may know how to live in poverty, like Our Lord in the crib; with the cross and suffering, like Our Lord on Calvary; and that at last we may know how to love Him and give Him all our heart, as He Himself does in the holy sacrament of the altar."

"When one knows Jesus Christ and loves Him, one looks at the virtues that are in Him and practises them out of love, to resemble Him, and that without trouble and without pain. Love Our Lord above all things and let Him alone fill your heart."

I said one day to the Father: “I find that such-and-such a Sister is very much a religious; I try to act as she does.” He answered me in an imposing tone: “Jesus Christ alone is your model; you must look only at Jesus Christ, it is He whom you must imitate.”

The Father liked one to bow the head on hearing the holy name of Jesus pronounced. He took care to recall from time to time the fittingness of it and to exhort the faithful, and especially the personnel of the house, to keep up this devotion. He himself gave the example, and one saw with great edification all the children respectfully bow the head in the chapel when the adorable name of Jesus was pronounced in some sermon. It is by these little outward practices that he worked to maintain and develop faith and piety.

On the day of the Epiphany 1878 the Father, who was ill, said with an expression of pain: “Ah! if I could preach today! what things I should have to say on the kingship of Jesus Christ!” He liked very much this title of Our Lord: “Jesus Christ is our King!” He said admirable things on the kingship of Jesus Christ, begun on earth by the holy Church, and on His eternal reign in heaven.

“Let the study of Our Lord Jesus Christ be a study dear to your hearts. Let all your desire be to conform your life to that of the Master.”

“We must think more of Our Lord than of ourselves and our own miseries. If a painter looked always at himself instead of looking at his model, he would never succeed in copying it.”

Thoughts. [Chevrier’s own:]

> *Jesus Christ is the foundation of everything. All rests upon Him. Nothing solid can subsist without Him. Our Lord is for us, as in a tree, the life-giving sap that communicates to us the spiritual and divine life. Jesus Christ is the end toward which everything must tend. He must be the end of our thoughts, the end of our desires, the end of our actions, the end of our life. Jesus Christ is He toward whom we must tend with all the strength of our soul. He who does not go to Jesus Christ goes to death. Our union with Jesus Christ must be so intimate, so visible, that men can say on seeing us: “There is another Jesus Christ.” To resemble Jesus Christ, that is our continual work, the constant attention of our mind and the sincere desire of our heart. Our rule is Jesus Christ, His words, His examples.*

Prayer. [Chevrier’s own:]

> *O Word, O Christ! how beautiful You are, how great You are! Who will know how to know You, who will be able to understand You? Grant, O Christ, that I may know You and love You! Since You are the light, let a ray come upon my poor soul, that I may be able to see You and understand You. Let me cast a glance upon You, O infinite beauty. Dim a little Your great light, that my eyes may be able to contemplate You and see Your perfections. Open my ears to Your divine word, that I may hear Your voice and meditate on Your teachings. Open my mind and my understanding, that Your word may enter my heart, and that I may be able to taste it and understand it. Put in me a great faith in You, that all Your words may be for me so many lights which enlighten me and make me go to You and follow You in all the ways of justice and truth. O Christ, O Word, You are my Lord, my sole and only Master! Speak, I wish to listen to You and to put Your word into practice, because I know that it comes from heaven. I wish to listen to it, meditate on it, put it into practice, because in Your word there is life, joy, peace and happiness. Speak, You are my Lord and my Master, I wish to listen only to You.*

The Incarnation

Father Chevrier loved especially the mystery of the Incarnation, the meditation of which had led him to a more perfect life. He inscribed, in the exercise hall of Saint-Fons, at the head of all his other mottoes: “*Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis*” [“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” John i, 14]. When he recited these words at the end of Mass, or those of the Creed, “*Et homo factus est*” [“and was made man”], he had a look on his face which showed his interior feelings of adoration, of confusion and of gratitude. He told us that in heaven and on earth everything refers to the Incarnation of the Word: from Adam to John the Baptist, all the figures, the promises, the prophecies refer to the promised Messiah; everything in the Church refers to the Messiah come. He said: “O my children! Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word, is the

living letter that God has sent to the world, and the world does not know it, and the world does not read it, does not wish to read it! Oh! you must read it on your knees, with great respect, you, my children; you must study Jesus Christ and love Him. Ah! if you knew!"

It is impossible to express what he felt when he thought of the Incarnation or spoke of it. I remember having seen tears of love in his eyes when he spoke to us of this mystery and of the abasements of the God-Man! He greatly loved the feast of the Annunciation and desired that the pupils of the school should communicate on that day.

As a corollary of his love for the incarnate Word, Father Chevrier was bound to love the feast of Christmas. In fact, when one has seen the Father celebrate this feast at the Prado, one can no longer forget it. He arrived in procession, in the midst of torches and canticles, by a side door at the back of the chapel, crossed the whole assembly carrying in his arms the little Child Jesus, on whom his gaze rested with love, and advanced as far as the choir, where he laid his precious burden in the little crib prepared to receive it. What beautiful instructions he gave that day! I remember in particular a sermon he gave on that occasion. The chapel was full of people, they were crowded even on the stairs. He drew his exordium from this circumstance: "What have you come to see here? Why this so numerous crowd? What does this eagerness mean, hurrying thus to the churches in the middle of the night? You have come to see a little child lying on straw, in the manger of a stable. Who then is this child, to be the object of so much homage?" And he spoke of the grandeurs of this God-Child with a sublime eloquence.

Abbé Joly, canon of the Holy Sepulchre, proposed to Father Chevrier to procure for him an Infant Jesus blessed on Christmas night in the stable of Bethlehem; the Father accepted this offer with joy. The holy Infant Jesus that one sees today at the Prado under the altar of St Joseph was carried to Bethlehem by Abbé Joly, who had it blessed on Christmas night and then sent it back to Father Chevrier, who received it with very lively gratitude.

For Father Chevrier one of the three great lessons to be studied was the crib. In the chapel of the Prado he had a crib made which attracts a great number of visitors. It was his desire to see the mystery of the birth of Jesus Christ frequently represented in his Work. At Moulin-à-Vent he made a crib as at the Prado. At Saint-Fons he wished to preserve the crib of the stable, and had an Infant Jesus placed in it.

"It was in meditating," he said, "on Christmas night on the poverty and the humility of Our Lord that I resolved to leave everything and to live as poorly as possible. I said to myself: The Son of God came down upon earth to save men and convert sinners; and yet what do we see? Men continue to damn themselves. Then I made up my mind to follow Our Lord Jesus Christ more closely, to make myself more capable of working effectively for the salvation of souls."

"It is before the crib that the Prado was born. The crib, that is the beginning of every work of God."

Act of faith in the mystery of the Incarnation, composed by Father Chevrier, which he himself had the children and the Sisters learn:

> *"I believe that the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, came down from heaven, that He took a body and a soul like ours in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Spirit. I believe that in Jesus Christ there are two natures: the divine nature and the human nature, and that these two natures, united together, form only one single person, which is the divine person. I believe that the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived without sin, that she became Mother of God by the operation of the Holy Spirit and that she remained always a Virgin."*

And to honour this mystery he recommended reciting the Angelus well.

The Eucharist

Father Chevrier consecrated his life to the glory of the Eucharist. By the work of First Communion he prepared not only Christians but living tabernacles for the Eucharist. By forming priests he prepared ministers for the Eucharist. It is with a view to the Eucharist that his two greatest works were created. For it is there, in fact, that Jesus Christ is within our reach, it is there that He lives to nourish us, to instruct us, to heal us, to sanctify us, to transform us into Himself. Father Chevrier repeated it to us often in commenting on his third picture: the Tabernacle.

It was enough to see him kneeling at the foot of the altar, his gaze directed to the door of the tabernacle, to know his faith and his love for the holy Eucharist. It was enough even to see him enter a church, seek immediately with his eyes the Guest of our altars, and make a slow and deep genuflection in that direction. I shall always remember the impression I had the first time I saw him. He was coming from the confessional and crossing the chapel to go to the sacristy and say Mass. My mother said to me, pointing him out with her eyes: "There he is." I was immediately struck by his air of grandeur and nobility; but when I saw him genuflect, stay a few seconds with one knee on the ground and adore Our Lord, I had at once the impression that he had a great faith, a lively piety, and that truly he was a saint, as I had been told.

There are, in his sermons, several acts of faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the holy Eucharist. Here is one:

> *"Yes, Jesus Christ is there. I believe it, and I adore You, O my God; I believe it as firmly as if I saw You in person. How does this come about? What is the mode of Your presence? By what miracle are You found enclosed alive in this little host which appears lifeless? How are You found there entire? I do not know: but what I know is that You have said it, and I believe it."*

"Our Lord desires that we unite ourselves to Him as two pieces of wax unite together.

"We are like those trees which produce only wild fruit. Our Lord must be grafted in us by holy communion, in order to bear good fruit.

"We must fear making null communions, by routine. It is very unfortunate for us when Our Lord passes through our soul as along a road. We must stop Our Lord, beg Him to stay with us. Communion must change us into Jesus Christ and not change Jesus Christ into us, which however takes place when, having communicated, we continue to act by ourselves instead of letting Jesus Christ act in us."

Father Chevrier's first thought on entering a church was of the Eucharist. Thus he blamed persons who go to make their first visit to the Most Holy Virgin or to another saint, or again go to make their Way of the Cross, without having first greeted Our Lord. The first prayer that the children and the persons of the Work of the Prado say when they enter the chapel is this prayer to the holy Eucharist, composed by the Father:

> *"Divine Jesus, I believe that You are here present, I adore You, I praise You, I acknowledge You as my Creator and my Saviour. I unite my humble adorations to those which the Most Holy Virgin, the angels and the saints render You in heaven, and I offer to the most adorable Trinity those which You render to It in the most holy Sacrament of the altar for ever. Amen."*

In the refectory, after grace, one says in honour of the holy Eucharist: *Praised, adored, loved and thanked be for ever Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar.* The Father thus united spiritual nourishment with bodily nourishment. The Father wished adoration of the Most Holy Sacrament to take place at the Prado several times a year. He told us:

"Oh! how happy one is when one has faith in the holy Eucharist. One has everything, since one has Jesus Christ. In the Eucharist we find the crib, since at the holy sacrifice of the Mass Our Lord is born again, so to speak, in a mystical but real manner, in the hands of the priest. We have Calvary, since every day Jesus immolates Himself mystically in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. And the mystery of the holy Supper is renewed at the holy table. Oh! no! we have nothing to envy the apostles nor the disciples; we have only a few steps to take and we find Jesus who awaits us."

The Father strongly recommended frequent communion: the Sisters of the Work communicated not only on Sundays and feasts, but also frequently during the week and even every day. As for the children of the Clerical School, they communicated on Sundays and feasts and at times also on certain days of the week. “Father Chevrier,” says Bishop Chassagnon, Bishop of Autun, “was one of the first promoters of frequent communion. For my part, a little pupil of the Clerical School, I communicated at the Prado every Sunday; then, at fourteen or fifteen, three or four times a week, which was not usual at that period.”

A lady had received from a person the commission to ask the Father for counsel for a painful situation; he answered her simply: “Let her communicate; communion will teach her everything.”

The Father desired that we should all make holy communion on the feast day of his patron saint. One year, when the recreational celebration of the evening before had doubtless absorbed too much of the time or the attention, to the detriment of the religious feast, only a few Latin students [Fr. *latinistes*: pupils in the Latin classes] presented themselves at the holy Table. The Father gently reproached us: “My children, do not forget in future, as you have done today, that the true way to celebrate feasts, to sanctify them, and consequently to be pleasing to me, is to approach Our Lord and receive Him in holy communion. All the rest is only accessory.” We kept the lesson.

On Holy Thursday, under the direction of Father Chevrier, a beautiful altar of repose [Fr. *reposoir*] was made, and in the evening, when the workshops let out, the chapel was invaded by the crowd who came to visit it. It was a very mixed audience. Father Chevrier knew nevertheless how to take hold of it, make it pray, inspire it with a few good resolutions. He preached on the Eucharist, he recited the beads, explaining the mysteries of the Rosary in such a way as to bring into it the thought of the Eucharist. Above all he had this crowd, which kept coming without cease to the communion rail, kiss his crucifix. He took occasion of everything to slip a word of religion into the ear of those poor workmen. He wanted one to keep Our Lord company all night, and we spent that night of Holy Thursday in praying and singing.

I have a very lively memory of the edifying manner, touching to tears, in which he performed the ceremony of the washing of the feet. This exercise took place at three o’clock. The chapel, long in advance, overflowed with people. The Father, in a few words which impressed the faithful, explained the meaning of this ceremony, and said clearly enough, by his whole exterior, the contentment with which he was going to reproduce the example of his divine Master. The boys whom he was preparing for first communion were arranged in a square before the altar of the Blessed Virgin. The Father, girded with a large linen cloth, knelt before each of them, washed their feet, dried them and bent down to kiss them, with a humility and a charity that recalled Our Lord; so that the crowd, standing on the benches, let escape a murmur of astonishment and admiration. In explaining to the children the Gospel which refers to this event, the Father insisted on these words of Our Lord to His apostles: “You are clean, but not all.” [John xiii, 10.] He said: “O my children! I hope I shall not have to address to you this same word on the day of your first communion; for if I knew one among you who had the design of making the communion of the traitor Judas, I would throw myself at his feet and kiss them with more love, in order to touch his heart and bring him to repentance.” Those who were present at this ceremony were impressed and said: “How can you expect the children to make a bad first communion in this house?”

The Father, having heard the confession of a sick man one day, sent a young man to the parish to give notice that the good God should be brought to him [Fr. *apporter le bon Dieu*: idiom for bringing Holy Communion/Viaticum to the sick]. The young man, through lack of attention, gave a wrong address. The curate came immediately afterwards and reproached them for having made him search for the sick man while carrying the good God. The Father was greatly afflicted by it and promised that another time it would not happen again. He imposed a heavy penance on the young man for having been the cause of this want of respect toward Our Lord.

During the Father's last illness, holy communion was brought to him every day. One morning, when he had awakened only a few minutes before the usual hour of Our Lord's visit, he said to those who had come to warn him: "You think one can receive the good God just like that!" And he asked for half an hour to prepare himself.

One Christmas eve I told him that I was not receiving communion that day, because I found that communion too close to that of the midnight Mass. He said to me: "Well, then! you will communicate in a spirit of preparation for this great feast, and you will say: O Jesus! be my feet, be my hands, be my eyes, be my tongue, be all my senses. Act in me, so that it may no longer be I who live, but You, my Jesus, who live in me." [Cf. Gal. ii, 20.]

If one had caused the least pain to anyone, he wanted one to ask pardon of the offended person before approaching the holy table.

The Father readily multiplied his visits to the Blessed Sacrament and prolonged them as much as his occupations or circumstances permitted. Having come to see me at the minor seminary of La Côte-Saint-André, I went out for a few moments with him, before the hour of his departure; having proposed to him to go and pay a visit to a person withdrawn in the convent of the Visitation, he answered me that it would be only a vain satisfaction, and he drew me in the direction of the parish church, saying that there was more profit in visiting Our Lord in His tabernacle.

"It is to Father Chevrier's love for Jesus in the Host that we owe the Eucharistic Congresses," says Archbishop Servonnet of Bourges in his deposition at the process of Beatification. "I have at Issoudun a diocesan, Miss Tamisier, who was directed by him. Very pious, she was seeking to know God's designs for her. In the course of her many journeys she had consulted a good many priests. She came to Father Chevrier and consulted him also. They had together a rather considerable correspondence. 'You are seeking your way,' he said to her, 'I am going to point it out to you. Your way is to promote Eucharistic worship, Eucharistic works. You have relations with persons having influence; try to obtain that Eucharistic works be spread more and more, and that there be Eucharistic congresses.' This person communicated this thought of Father Chevrier, among others to Bishop Doutreloux, Bishop of Liège, who put it into execution."

The Holy Mass

One may say that Father Chevrier's preparation for holy Mass was habitual: his life was a permanent preparation and a perpetual thanksgiving. But from the morning he let appear more the perfection of the dispositions of his soul, as the hour of the celebration drew near; one felt that, from the first minute of his waking, he was with God and in God, and wholly occupied with the holy mysteries he was about to celebrate. He did not speak, or spoke low, avoided talking of extraneous matters, of busying himself with business. I do not think I ever saw him speak in a loud voice or at length before holy Mass; he turned no one away, but one felt that the hour was not for chats, nor for conversations even useful; it was curt. [Fr. *c'était le couper-court*: "it was the cut-short"—i.e. he cut conversations short.]

When the hour came, he went to the lavabo without slowness and without haste, even when he was a little late through circumstances, above all because of the confessional. He cast a last glance at his clothes and his shoes, to see if everything was clean and in order in his person. It happened to me to render him the service, at his request, of wiping his shoes with a cloth, or, with a brush, of removing the dust or traces of dried mud; it seemed to me that I was rendering this office to Our Lord. When I had finished, he thanked me with a little fatherly smile, or made a sign of the cross on my forehead, and went to the credence table.

At the credence table of the sacristy he behaved as at the altar, consequently no conversation; a great spirit of faith, a great piety in reciting with attention all the liturgical prayers. He went to the altar with a noble dignity, a perfect recollection, without slowness or haste, and began the holy mysteries with his great sign of

the cross, recited the prayers slowly, distinctly, in a moderate tone of voice. The parts of the Mass in which he impressed me more by his devotion were the *Dominus vobiscum* ["The Lord be with you"]—he had a manner of his own of reciting this prayer—the recitation of the Gospel, the *Mementos*; solemn at the consecration, he was ravishing and angelic in saying the *Pater* and in the three prayers which precede communion. At the moment of communicating, he remained a few short instants, holding the holy host in his "holy and venerable" hands [words of the Canon of the Mass], and seemed absorbed, lost in God. He was majestic in giving holy communion, which he distributed with great piety and dignity, and the sign of the cross which he traced with the holy host was perfect. He returned to the sacristy with great recollection, like a veritable living ciborium.

Formerly, after the customary salutations in the sacristy, the two Mass servers knelt at his side, the Father blessed them and gave them his crucifix or his hand to kiss; this practice was in use several years. After the celebration of holy Mass, during the moments immediately following, he kept the same interior and exterior recollection as before Mass, and it was only in a low voice and briefly that he answered, out of charity and with gentleness, the persons, sometimes importunate, who began to invade him from that early hour, at which one was sure to meet him. This good Father would have much preferred that he be left with God to finish his thanksgiving; he must have suffered from it, but he did not let it appear; he contented himself with remaining under the impression of a greater piety, a holy reserve, an exemplary religion.

As soon as he was free, he went into the choir, noiselessly. He ordinarily knelt on a wooden prie-Dieu placed on the side of the altar of St Joseph, where the statue of the Sacred Heart now stands, or else on the one next to the pulpit; there, his hands resting lightly on the surface of the prie-Dieu, his head straight, he remained motionless in fervent prayer; at other times, when he had been delayed in the sacristy, he contented himself with kneeling on the altar step, on the epistle side, or on the ground, in the little corner of the pulpit. He did not prolong his thanksgiving too much beyond ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, at least when he celebrated at the Prado, no doubt out of charity, so as not to make people wait, above all the poor folk, and to begin sooner his life of devotedness and charity.

Explanation of the Mass by Father Chevrier

> *When I say Mass, I represent to the world the mysteries of Jesus Christ, and when you come to Mass, it is to recall to yourselves these great mysteries, to maintain your faith and your love toward Jesus Christ. How are these mysteries represented to us?*
>
> *The mystery of the Incarnation is the mystery by which the Son of God took a body and a soul in the womb of the Virgin Mary; He raised this flesh to the dignity of the Son of God, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, with the consent and the word of Mary. Well! the same things are reproduced at the Consecration. There is on the altar the host which is raised to the dignity of the humanity of the Son of God, with the word and the consent of the priest, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, for it is the Holy Spirit who works this miracle, as in the Incarnation; a secret operation which is signified by the laying on of hands that the priest makes before the accomplishment of the mystery: The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. [Luke i, 35.]*
>
> *At the Birth, the Blessed Virgin brought the Child Jesus into the world, wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, laid Him in a manger and presented Him to be adored to the shepherds and the magi; and the angels went to announce His birth to the shepherds. At the consecration, the same mystery: the Child Jesus is born between the hands of the priest; His body, His soul and His divinity are really there, hidden under the appearances of bread. The corporal serves as swaddling clothes, the wooden altar as the cradle on which He rests. The bell represents to us the angels who go to announce His birth to the shepherds; the little altar boy [Fr. le petit clerc], St Joseph who arranges the stable; the children, the little shepherds; the grown persons, the magi kings; and the priest, the Blessed Virgin who presents Him to adoration.*
>
> *At the Presentation, the Blessed Virgin goes to the temple to offer the Child Jesus, to present Him to God, and He receives the adorations of the faithful souls who recognize Him. At Mass the priest raises Him after the Consecration and offers Him, presents Him to God the Father and has Him adored by the faithful present at holy Mass. The Child Jesus offers Himself to God by the ministry of the priest, as He offered Himself to God by the*

ministry of the Blessed Virgin.

The Supper. The priest does exactly all that Jesus Christ did at the last Supper, where He instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist and gave to His apostles the power to do what He had done Himself.

The Passion. It is what the priest says immediately after the elevation: Unde et memores passionis ["Wherefore, O Lord, we also remember the passion…"]. The passion is represented to us from the elevation to the communion. The priest praying, profoundly bowed over the altar, represents to us Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives; the different signs of the cross, the sufferings He endures at Caiaphas', Herod's and Pilate's. The priest, striking his breast, represents to us the scourging. The five signs of the cross represent to us the five wounds of Our Lord. The raising of the Pater represents to us Jesus raised on the cross. The Pater said aloud represents to us the prayer and the seven words of Jesus Christ on the cross. The whole passion is therefore represented in this moment of holy Mass.

Death is represented to us from the moment of the consecration to the communion, by the state in which Jesus Christ is on the altar. One sees His body and His blood separated from each other, which necessarily indicates death. Death is further represented to us by the division of the host into three parts and by the communion. One does not eat the flesh of the living, but of victims immolated. In eating Him, one therefore announces His death, as St Paul says: As often as you shall eat this bread, you shall announce the death of Jesus Christ. [1 Cor. xi, 26.]

The Burial. After His death He was buried in a new tomb. The heart of the priest, of the faithful, is the new tomb in which He is laid after His death on the altar. The tabernacle is moreover the tomb in which He dwells after His death, that we may come and weep over ourselves and over Him. The altar ordinarily has the form of a tomb; the cloth, the winding-sheet; the candles, the cross.

The Resurrection. After the Consecration, the material bread becomes a living bread. Before Mass Jesus is not in our midst, at least in a sensible manner; after the consecration He is in our midst. Another kind of resurrection which concerns us is the spiritual resurrection of our souls. By communion we recover or increase life in our souls. Another resurrection is that Jesus Christ lives in us. Our members are the members of Jesus; He takes possession of us to take up life again, and He acts through us. Jesus Christ therefore takes a new life in us, and this resurrection is the more visible and sensible as we resemble Jesus Christ more perfectly after communion.

The Ascension. Jesus Christ departs blessing His apostles. At the end of Mass the priest blesses the people and goes away from the altar.

Act of faith after the Consecration:

Jesus, divine Saviour, I believe that You are really present on this altar. I believe that there is Your body, Your blood, Your soul and Your divinity; that there is the same Jesus who was born in a stable at Bethlehem, the same Jesus who suffered and died for us on the Cross. I unite myself to all the angels and to all the saints to adore You and bless You in this great Sacrament. Praised, adored, loved and thanked be for ever Our Lord Jesus Christ in the Most Holy Sacrament of the altar.

The Father said: "The children who serve Mass are either very good or very foolish [Fr. *bien sages… bien sots*]; very good, if they acquit themselves of this pious exercise with faith and love; but those who do it with negligence, distraction, without taste, become wicked because they abuse great graces." The Father desired that the Mass servers should acquit themselves of their functions with piety and recollection, and sometimes complained of the thoughtlessness he noticed in some of them. He could not bear, for example, that one should answer the *Kyrie* with too much volubility and inattention.

The Father pointed out to the children, with much love, that Mass is celebrated at all hours of the day and night, throughout the whole world, and that one can always unite oneself to Our Lord, renewing all the mysteries of His life, offering to His Father His passion and His death.

The painter Legrand, who made the canvases that decorate the church of St Peter at Mâcon, had a great veneration for Father Chevrier. He took inspiration from his portrait to paint the priest who celebrates the holy sacrifice in his picture of the Mass for the Dead, which is the most religious and the most remarkable. I have this fact from several persons to whom he told it himself.

Father Chevrier often spoke of the holy sacrifice of the Mass. I remember that he told us it is the greatest action that is accomplished on earth, and that nevertheless there are very few persons who understand it; and he took pains to explain the excellence of the holy sacrifice and of the ceremonies of the Mass. He left numerous writings relating to the Mass, and among others several different methods for hearing it. For many years, on Sunday before the nine o'clock Mass, he came in alb before the communion rail, and there, with great dignity and simplicity, he explained the different parts of the holy sacrifice. He said: "If so many people are bored at Mass, it is because they do not understand the mysteries that are worked in it. I insist that the children should not leave the Prado without this science, so useful to the salvation of their soul."

Sometimes certain persons went up to the Father in the sacristy and said to him: "How much for the Mass?" One heard the Father answer in a rather sharp tone: "The Mass is of infinite price. One does not sell the Mass. Put in the box what you wish and you will have a share in the Mass."

"The Mass," he said, "is the dispatch that earth makes to heaven and that heaven makes to earth. The priest, at the altar, is raised up between earth and heaven; he is charged to present to God the petitions of men, and it is through him that men receive the graces of God. Without the Mass, the world would be annihilated by the justice of God. A Mass has no price, because there is no proportion between the spiritual and the temporal."

While he was ill, he wished a Mass to be said every morning above his room, and he had had an opening made in the ceiling, in order to follow it better.

The Passion

Like St Paul, Father Chevrier never tired of studying and preaching Jesus Christ crucified. He told us that it is on Calvary that the priest learns to be a crucified man. It was there that he drew that spirit of continual mortification which made him perfect, it seemed to us, so much was he master of himself.

He ordinarily made the *spoken* Way of the Cross [Fr. *chemin de la croix parlé*: with the stations preached aloud, not merely recited] every Sunday at six in the evening, on the Fridays of Lent at evening prayer, and on ordinary Fridays at one o'clock for the children of first communion. On Sunday the chapel was so full that we brought benches from the classrooms, which we placed in every direction. The Father said that it was very rare that after the Way of the Cross, or in the week, there was not some conversion. At the last station I often heard him comment on this thought which he was to insert in his Spiritual Testament: God established a law at the beginning: "Thou shalt return to dust" [Gen. iii, 19]; one must submit to it willingly and in advance, to obey God, who is our Master.

He wished also that we should make our Way of the Cross in private, in order to be able to make it later for others. When his first priests returned from Rome, their spoken Ways of the Cross were much appreciated and remarked on. As compliments were paid on them to Father Chevrier, who had formed them, he answered: "When one has made one's Way of the Cross well, as one should, every week for years, one must be capable of making it with fruit for the faithful."

The Father did not pass a day without thinking of the sufferings, of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, but he strongly recommended us to be faithful at least to the weekly meditation of this touching mystery by the exercise of the Way of the Cross. "It matters little," he said, "that you do not finish this exercise on the same day or at a single stretch, provided that within the week you go through all its stations; if you do not always have the benefit of the indulgences, by doing so you will at least have the advantage of nourishing your soul with the sentiments and thoughts which the Saviour's passion will inspire in you and of maintaining in your heart the love of Our Lord."

He related to us how he had introduced the practice of the Way of the Cross. From the first days of his installation at the Prado, he had taken the habit of making his Way of the Cross in the chapel, arms in the

form of a cross and in a loud voice, taking care to leave the door open. He hoped that, attracted by the strangeness of the spectacle, a few good souls would come and join him. And that is indeed what happened. Several times he heard himself called mad; at other times some child or some good woman came up and the Father broke off to invite them to join him, and in a short time his attendance was fairly numerous.

On Friday the Father desired that we should not only meditate on the sufferings of Our Lord in each station, but also that we should apply ourselves to making corresponding acts. “The Way of the Cross,” he said, “is the way to heaven.”

This is what he further said regarding the devotions which are made on Monday at the chapel of the Crib and on Friday at that of the Sepulchre: “These exercises have as their purpose to recall to us unceasingly the mysteries of the life of Our Lord, to excite our faith and our love toward the good God, and to make us pray that these mysteries may be engraved in the heart of our children.”

Every Friday, at the end of the community Mass, the Father joined us at the chapel of the Holy Sepulchre, where we had gone singing a canticle, and there, on his knees, arms in the form of a cross, he had us recite five *Pater*s and five *Ave*s, with a certain number of pious and touching invocations. The faithful joined us, at least as many as the little chapel could contain. Everyone was moved and deeply touched by this pious exercise which the Servant of God performed with a quite particular unction.

Father Chevrier made, and had us make, the Holy Hour each week, in union with Jesus in the Garden of Olives. The hour he chose was, for himself, from ten to eleven at night; for us, an hour earlier. On Holy Thursday he made the Holy Hour publicly at the chapel, between eleven o’clock and midnight. “O my brothers!” I heard him exclaim one evening in one of his familiar instructions, “O my brothers! how good it is to pray in the silence of the night and to think of the mystery of the agony of Our Lord! If you knew how advantageous it is for the soul to unite itself thus to the inner sorrows of Our Lord. How well one is with Him! Oh! I recommend this devotion to you!” And he inserted this practice of the Holy Hour in the rule of the Prado week.

The Father sought to inspire souls with this great devotion to the Passion, and he succeeded in it. To us especially he recalled that “the priest must be a crucified man,” that great graces of conversion and salvation are brought about in souls by this character of suffering, that the divine Master Himself teaches it as a true power of attraction: “When I shall be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself” [John xii, 32]; that sinners must, in some manner, be bought by suffering. “All redemption is made by blood.” [Cf. Heb. ix, 22.] Thus, at our profession in the Third Order of St Francis, he gave us a large crucifix, on the model of his own, to carry constantly on our person. Every morning, after the example of our Father, we must kiss it, recall the love and the sufferings of Our Lord for us, and say interiorly: “My God, I accept Your cross, the cross of the day, I wish to carry it with love. In advance I submit to all the crosses of the day, and I shall strive to be in this a true disciple.”

It was in 1867, toward the end of the year, that the Father recommended to me for the first time the devotion of the Holy Hour. One of my fellow-pupils offered to be my guide in the first attempts at this devotion, new to me. We agreed to make the Holy Hour together the following Thursday, at eleven at night, in the chapel, with the Father’s permission. What was said was done. We tried not to fall asleep while waiting for the appointed hour. Huddled under our blankets, we dozed lightly. At five minutes to eleven we left the dormitory noiselessly to go to the chapel, each provided with one of the blankets from our beds, for it was winter, and so wrapped up and kneeling on the floor, we set ourselves to pray, now mentally, now reciting in a low voice a few vocal prayers. The hour seemed short to me. We went back to bed, arranging to meet again the following Thursday. We were fairly faithful to these weekly meetings, except of course when, sleep overcoming us, we had the confusion of waking on Friday morning at the same point as on Thursday evening, for one sleeps well at fifteen and, quite often, the outing took place on Thursday. Then fatigue, sleep

and sometimes the devil, we thought, combined to hinder our pious projects, and the good Father laughed and consoled us when we confided to him our ill luck and our failure.

After a few weeks a third companion joined the party; it was the beginning of a little association. By turns, one of the three was charged with waking the other two noiselessly. It is to be noted that the good God favoured us with His protection, for we stayed less asleep, and we became more regular. It must have been a singular sight to see us cross the corridors of the house, silent as shadows, wrapped in a blanket under which each of us disappeared entirely; we should certainly have been taken for ghosts. The idea never came to us to be amused at it, and this devotion was always practised quite seriously. The ease, the very satisfaction, with which the Father granted such a permission to pupils still young shows well enough what store he set by this practice and what fruits he hoped from it.

A year later the little association counted seven members. We then stopped meeting in the middle of the night. The Father assigned a day to each of us. It was later permitted to make one's Holy Hour from half-past eight to half-past nine, at the regulation bedtime, and since then this custom prevailed to the exclusion of every other and was the only one conceded. This tradition has been kept up and constitutes one of the privileges of the little clerics of the Prado.

The Father greatly loved the seven words of Our Lord on the cross; he meditated them to the faithful on the evening of Holy Thursday. During his illness he liked to repeat them often, and he had them repeated to him when it was no longer possible for him to pronounce them. He wished them to be taught to the children of the catechism. He told us: "One must make one's Way of the Cross in action." He considered life as a long Way of the Cross.

We find in one of his sermons this beautiful prayer:

> *"O blessed cross of my God, accompany us always in the course of our life. Be our faithful companion, be our strength in combats, be our consolation in our misfortunes, our wealth in our poverty, our glory in our ignominies, our joy in our sadnesses, our pleasure in our pains, our support in our weaknesses."*
>
> *"May the cross be the love of our heart, the study of our mind, the rule of our will."*

The Blessed Virgin

Father Chevrier had a very great confidence in the Blessed Virgin, and he applied himself to honouring her and imitating her virtues. He liked to invoke her under the title of Mother of Sorrows; and that is another corollary of his special devotion to the Passion of Our Lord, a sorrowful Passion whose ignominies and tortures the Virgin Mother so heroically shared. He honoured in her the accomplished model of devotion to the Passion of her Son; he venerated the martyrdom which made her heart an ocean of compassion and mercy for all the afflicted and a sure refuge for all sinners. Thus he wished that his little chapel, open by preference to sinners, to the poor, to the little ones, to those who suffer, should be under the title and protection of Our Lady of Sorrows, and that one of its three altars should be dedicated to her. He gave a formal refusal to a person who offered him a considerable sum to change the title of his chapel to that of Our Lady of the Angels.

The Father introduced the tradition of honouring the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin every day. Hence this invocation which closes all the public prayers of the Prado: "O Mary, Mother of Sorrows, pray for us who have recourse to you!" Each evening, when all was in silence, the Father recited seven *Hail Marys* with arms in the form of a cross before the altar of the Blessed Virgin, to honour her seven Sorrows and to ask, through her powerful intercession, the spiritual and temporal graces necessary for his Work. When someone came to recommend to him a favour or a grace to be obtained, he counselled addressing oneself to Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, and had a novena made in her honour.

The Father insisted greatly that the children be taken to Fourvière on the day after their first communion, to consecrate themselves to the Blessed Virgin. He chose 8 September to draw up himself the plan of the Sisters' Novitiate, and he made the opening of it on a Saturday, a day consecrated to the Blessed Virgin. To the children of the catechism he spoke above all of the privilege of her Immaculate Conception and of her purity. Never did a child leave the House without being invested with the scapular. He gave us the Most Holy Virgin for model in our religious life at the Prado and also in the manner in which we must work for the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbour. He told us that we must serve as instruments of the good God, after the example of the Most Holy Virgin.

The Father often made meditation for us on the Most Holy Virgin. One felt that he loved her much, that he admired her, that he desired to make her known and loved by all creatures. He knew how to say ravishing things about her, as can be seen in his sermons on the *Magnificat*, preached for a month of Mary.

"Mary," he said, "did not make herself admired by dazzling actions, by deeds capable of drawing the eyes of men; she did not astonish the world, nor those about her, by the brilliance of her miracles, the pomp of her virtues; but leading a common and ordinary life, hidden even from the eyes of the world, all her glory and all her splendour were enclosed in her heart. Her heart was the sanctuary of all the virtues and the tabernacle in which the divinity took delight."

For the feast of the Immaculate Conception, which he loved much, he always had the Prado illuminated. In the beginning of the Work, as long as circumstances permitted, he had canticles sung that evening in the streets and on the quays in honour of the Blessed Virgin. He recited the Litany of the Blessed Virgin every day after Mass and every evening at prayer, and had it sung every Saturday and on feast days. No manner authorized by the Church of honouring the Blessed Virgin was foreign to him. He encouraged pilgrimages to the principal sanctuaries: Lourdes, La Salette, Fourvière; he himself had had the happiness of visiting them and of praying there.

The Father strongly recommended to the children to say their beads privately when they are silent in the ranks or when going to the chapel, and he often asked to be given an account. He would say: "My child, how many decades of the rosary did you say yesterday?… And you, my child? And you?…" He had us recite the beads every day; he added to it a little meditation on the mysteries of the Rosary before each decade. Moreover, the clerics of the Clerical School had to recite two decades of the rosary each day, so that the whole Rosary should be recited by each of us in the week, according to the method of the Living Rosary. He often said to us: "In going from one exercise to another, say a few decades of your rosary. It will be of great profit to you." At the Sunday meetings, we drew lots for the mystery which we were to meditate on in particular and the virtue we had the task of putting into practice during the week. Finally, he recommended us to recite the whole rosary on the feast days of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin, and I know that he himself followed this practice.

He composed, from the Gospel, an account of the mysteries of the Rosary which everyone in the house had to learn by heart and which he himself explained in part every day before the recitation of the beads. This is what he wrote about it:

> *"I should much like to be able to finish my works, which are to serve my little world. The work I am doing is not the rule of the house, but it is the foundation we must lay to instruct the children and also give them piety. The Rosary, the Way of the Cross, the holy Mass: these are the three foundation stones of our personal instruction; it is from them that we shall draw the faith and the piety that we must give to others; I should like all those who are with me to have a copy of this work and to read a few lines of it every day, to be penetrated with it and to draw from it all the treasures enclosed in it; believe well that there is nothing so beautiful, so powerful, so useful as the words of Our Lord who said: 'My words are spirit and life' [John vi, 64]; and it is indeed the truth. In order to teach to each and every one the virtue and the life contained in these mysteries, every day before the beads and the Way of the Cross I shall explain something of them to the children and the grown persons; in this way I shall be able to instruct them and teach them to instruct others; it is thus that I composed the instruction which I must*

give to all, and which they must receive for others. That is the first work that the Lord made me understand I had to do for His glory and the salvation of souls. I have still many other works to do; I hope that the good God will give me the time and will communicate to me a little of His spirit, of which I have great need."

The Father had us recite the mysteries particularly on Saturday, and, in place of the meditation, there was a report on the meditations of the week and an explanation of the method of mental prayer. After the recitation of the mystery, he never failed to ask us for the teachings of that mystery, which he then developed himself. He recited the beads with us with a piety that impresses me when I think of it again. It seems to me that I still see him before us, casting from time to time a glance toward Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows. How content he would be, if he were still alive on earth, to see with what solemnity the month of the Holy Rosary is now celebrated, at the recommendations of the Sovereign Pontiff.

He seized every occasion to recommend this devotion to us. One day, finding myself in his room, I noticed a large rosary near his work table, and it made me covetous. I said to him: "Father, I would like to ask you for a rosary." He looked at me smiling and said: "You would like that rosary that is there; I am very attached to it, however, it comes from Lourdes, it has touched the rock of the apparition; nevertheless I am going to give it to you, and I recommend you to recite it, meditating on the mysteries, each week, in private, without omitting on that account the beads of each day."

He told us very often: "The mysteries of the Rosary must so much form part of the priest's science that he must be able to speak of them at the slightest invitation."

He liked to explain the words of the *Magnificat*:

"Et exsultavit spiritus meus in Deo salutari meo. ["And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Luke i, 47.] Mary, in her gladness, thought of us Christians. She saw in the future that deliverance which would be granted to us, that Church which her divine Son was about to found, those sacraments which He was about to institute, and the love of Jesus for men rejoiced her heart. She said: 'I carry in my womb Him who is to work the salvation of the world; O my soul, leap for joy.'

"Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies. ["And his mercy is from generation to generations." Luke i, 50.] Behold a thought which consoles the tender heart of Mary. Her joy would not be pure, her happiness would not be perfect if all her greatnesses and privileges ended in herself alone, if her felicity were not to become also the inheritance of the human race.

"What rejoices Mary is to know that the times of divine justice are accomplished, that the time of mercy has at last arrived. What rejoices Mary is not so much to be Mother of God, but to give a Saviour to the world. What rejoices Mary is not so much to see heaven opened to let the Son of the Eternal descend into her womb, but to see heaven opened to all men by the Incarnation of this same Son; to know that hell is about to be closed, that the demon will be conquered, sin expiated and the world delivered from its captivity."

He commented thus on the *Hail Mary*:

"When I say: Hail Mary, I recall to this blessed Virgin that gracious and solemn salutation which the archangel brought her from heaven on the day of her blessed Annunciation. What a memory of honour for this holy Virgin, and what happiness for us to be able to repeat the language of the angels. When I add these words: full of grace, I recall to Mary those immense favours with which God loaded her on the day of her Immaculate Conception. I recall to her that she was formerly the spouse of the Holy Spirit and that she conceived the Author of all graces. When I say: blessed art thou among women, I recall to her that incommunicable glory which made her the mother of God and the mother of us all. Now, how could I honour you more worthily, O Mary, than by recalling to you the memories of your glory? And what smile of love and of joy must you not have at this prayer?"

"The good God chose the Blessed Virgin because of her purity and her humility. In the same way, when the good God sees purity and humility in a soul, then He chooses it to work at His Work, He raises it, He unites it to Himself."

"This rosary which many despise, which some call the devotion of the simple, contains all that is greatest, holiest, most glorious to God, most pleasing to Mary. In reciting our beads we associate ourselves with the

faith of the apostles, we address to God the prayer which is most agreeable to Him and to Mary the finest eulogy that she can receive from mortals. Now, to have faith, to please God, to honour Mary: is that not the whole Christian?"

The Holy Angels

Father Chevrier honoured the holy Angels, above all the guardian angels. He spoke of them often and recommended honouring them and praying to them; morning and evening he had an invocation in their honour recited in community. He chose the feast of St Raphael to open the Novitiate. In the meditations he pointed out all the circumstances in which the angels had some ministry to fulfil with regard to Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin, or some other person. He gave them as models in religious life. He said: "The angels do not cling to the earth, they do not even touch it. The religious must live on earth like the angels."

At catechism he led the children to respect their good angels and pointed out to them every time they are mentioned in the holy Gospel. Every day he had them invoked at prayer. The Father had great confidence in their protection, and made us notice that they often draw us from great dangers. He spoke to us of the duties we owe to our guardian angels. "We must," he said, "respect them, love them, be docile to their inspirations, pray to them, have confidence in them and thank them." Every Tuesday, after Mass, he had us sing a canticle in honour of the holy angels. When he died, on 2 October, the day on which the Church honours the holy angels, I heard persons draw a connection between this event and his devotion toward the guardian angels.

"Come, go, I lend you my good angel," he would say at times, smiling. "I shall send, or I send you my good angel," he wrote. He saluted him, commended himself to him, entrusted to him certain important errands. He urged us to have great devotion to our guardian angel, to use his intercession in the various ministries which might be entrusted to us; for example, in regard to the sick and to sinners, he counselled us to invoke their good angel. He spoke to us of the guardian angels of the Prado, of the angels who surround the altar during the holy sacrifice. In speaking to us of little children, he recalled to us that so touching word of Our Lord: "Their angels always see the face of my Father." [Matt. xviii, 10.]

The Saints

Father Chevrier honoured all the saints as friends of God, our intercessors and our models. I noticed the fervour of his devotion toward them, above all for All Saints and during the whole octave of that feast, as also when he recited the litanies of the saints, in accordance with the prescriptions of the liturgy. But he had a particular cult for some among them, whose special virtues or character corresponded more to his aspirations or to the aim of his works, and he drew inspiration more willingly from their conduct for the regulation and direction of his life. Let us cite among these:

St Joseph, because of his title of spouse of Mary, of head of the Holy Family, of which he was the provider and defender. He called him the father of the poor; he proposed him as model to the workmen, to interior souls. He entrusted to him his dear Prado family, and each evening, before going to take his rest, he addressed a little prayer to him to this intention, in the last visit he made to the chapel, humbly asking him to guard and protect the souls and to obtain the daily bread. Above his statue, in the chapel, he had these words inscribed: "Father of the Poor." All around he had seven large medallions placed, recalling the most memorable circumstances of his life. In his spiritual testament, Father Chevrier thanks especially the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph for their protection of his Work.

St Francis of Assisi, the seraphic poor man, whose son he wished to be. He had himself received into the Third Order on a journey to Rome and took on that occasion the name Brother François-Marie. When he founded the Prado he had his Work affiliated to the Third Order. He had much zeal to have the rule of the tertiaries observed. He made a pilgrimage to Assisi in 1861. Here are the sentiments which the expectation of

this pious visit inspired in him:

> *"We leave Rome tomorrow morning to go to Loreto and Assisi; these are two beautiful pilgrimages that I am going to make with great pleasure: to visit the tomb of St Francis in order to obtain his poverty and his love for God; I should so like to bring back something of his virtues!"*

St Paul, because of his love for Jesus Christ. I heard him say: "Oh! how St Paul loved Our Lord!… What a great missionary he was!… What ardour there was in him!…" The Father studied the epistles of this great apostle in a special manner and often quoted his words to us in his instructions.

Father Chevrier honoured also specially **St Peter**, because of his generosity and his dignity as Vicar of Jesus Christ. He liked to quote to us the words of Our Lord to St Peter and those of St Peter to Our Lord, as we find them in the Gospel.

He had placed in his chapel a reproduction of the statue of St Peter in the Vatican and had inscribed on the pedestal the following words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it." [Matt. xvi, 18.] I often saw him piously kiss the foot of St Peter. At Limonest he likewise put up a similar statue.

St Benedict-Joseph Labre, whom he loved in a quite particular manner because of his great poverty. When we were at Rome, he counselled us to go often to pray at the tomb of this great servant of God; he himself accompanied us there, and he wished to bring back a notable relic of him, today kept in the chapel of the Crib at the Prado, with a large picture of the saint, likewise brought back from the Eternal City.

St Cajetan of Thiene was one of the saints dear to Father Chevrier; he recognized in him a model to follow in order to put into practice his ideal of the poor priest and apostle in parish ministry.

St Justin, martyr, whose relics, with the authentication, were given to Father Chevrier by a young lady of Les Éparts [sic], near Bourgoin. These bones, enclosed in a modest reliquary, rest under the altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin in the chapel of the Prado. I remember that the Father organized a beautiful ceremony on this occasion. He had had decorated the altar destined to receive these venerated remains and, as it was a Sunday, at the close of vespers he addressed to the audience a touching exhortation on the cult due to the relics of the saints; he explained the origin of those which we possess, and the reliquary of St Justin, carried in procession by four little clerics, was accompanied by the clergy and the children into the courtyards of the Prado. Canticles were sung and prayers recited; and, on the return of the procession, the reliquary was placed under the altar of the Blessed Virgin; the ceremony ended with the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

He honoured also particularly the saints who had some relation with the Passion: namely **St John the Evangelist and St Mary Magdalen**. At the end of the Way of the Cross and of the devotion to the Passion, he always had us invoke them. The seal which he had adopted for his house represents Our Lord on the cross with the Blessed Virgin and St John the Evangelist at the foot.

The Father went several times on pilgrimage to La Louvesc to honour **St John Francis Regis**. Finally, he much loved **St Francis Xavier**, because of his zeal for souls; **St Francis de Sales**, because of his gentleness; **St Vincent de Paul**; **St Anthony the hermit**, who was his patron saint.

Father Chevrier recalled to us on occasion that we must often invoke the saint whose name we bear, and strive to reproduce his virtues; for at holy baptism he was given to us specially as protector and also as model. "Instruct the children well in this double duty by explaining to them the origin and the meaning of the baptismal name. They must be taught early that there is communication between heaven and earth; that we are not, here below, abandoned, isolated; that we have good protectors and fine models to accomplish our journey and reach heaven."

He liked us to ask him permission to communicate for the feast of our patron saint, and he hastened to grant us this permission, which he ordinarily accompanied with a kind word, a promise of prayer and sometimes a

holy picture or a little friendly caress. In his instructions, his catechisms, his little words, the Father much liked to quote some edifying traits from the Lives of the Saints, and he wished souls to be initiated into the knowledge of the actions of the saints.

"My dear children," he wrote to his seminarians, "we must become saints. Today more than ever saints are needed to work usefully for the conversion of sinners, for the glory of God and for the triumph of our holy Mother the Church. Oh! how beautiful were the things the saints did on earth! How pleasing they were to God and useful to their neighbour! The saints are the glory of God on earth! They are the living expression of the divinity here below! They are the joy of the angels and the happiness of men. A saint is a man who is united to God, who is one with God, who asks of God, who speaks to God and whom God obeys! He is a man who has all the powers of God in his hand! He is a man who moves the whole universe when he is well united to the Master who governs all things. The saints are the most powerful men on earth: they draw everything to themselves because they have the charity and the light of God and the fruitfulness of the Holy Spirit. They have the riches of God which they distribute to every creature: they are the stewards of the good God on earth. And you must, my children, become saints! You must become lights to lead men on the right road; fire to warm the cold and the frozen; living images of God on earth to serve as models to all Christians! Oh! dear children, work to become saints. One does not become so at once; one must work at it a long time and from the very beginning of life: it is a great task to fulfil, a very high goal to attain, but it must be reached. A priest who is not a saint does much less good among souls. And you above all must work more and more to become saints. And how, my children? By asking it each day of the great saint above all others who is Jesus Christ our model, who made Himself a saint on earth to teach us to become one.

"Begin to become little saints by remaining well united to God by prayer, by fulfilling your rule well, keeping silence exactly, exercising above all charity, that beautiful virtue which is the particular character of the saints: charity among yourselves, charity toward your masters, superiors and professors, servants and all; exercising also that gentleness, that goodness which was the distinctive character of Jesus Christ! Obedience in all the smallest things, remembering that our Master was obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross! [Phil. ii, 8.] If you begin early to practise these things, you will by that very fact begin to walk in the way of holiness which must be yours. Courage, dear children. May my words reach your souls and give birth there to some sentiments of love for Our Lord Jesus Christ and a holy desire to imitate Him. I embrace you and bless you."

The Propagation of the Faith — Catechism

Father Chevrier kept all his life a sort of pious jealousy toward those who, happier than he, could work for the conversion of the heathen. It was with visible emotion that he spoke later to his children of the missionaries, of their labours, of their death, of the instruments of their torture. He had known M. Jean-Louis Bonnard [of the Paris Foreign Missions, a Lyonese, beheaded in Tonkin, 1852] very intimately. When the latter died a martyr, Father Chevrier let escape from the pulpit moved accents which we find again in one of his sermons for the day of the Epiphany:

"Faith," he cried, "still finds martyrs among our brothers and even our compatriots. What touching memories! What motives of zeal and ardour for us Christians! The blood of the children of Lyons flows on foreign soil in witness of our faith and of their devotedness. We knew him, that young martyr whose head fell only a few months ago under the executioner's axe. He is a fellow-student, a friend; he took the better part and is already in heaven; scarcely two years of labours and already the so glorious crown! How happy you are, dear friend! Remember now those whom you knew on earth."

Father Chevrier had an ardent zeal for the propagation of the faith. He even seemed at times to regret not having followed the attraction which, as a young seminarian, drew him toward the Foreign Missions. But God evidently destined him to propagate and defend the faith in our own country, so unhappily worked upon by impious sects and perverse doctrines; to struggle against the error which gains more and more ground in our towns, in those great industrial centres given over to human respect and to all the prejudices which flatter the passions, blow hatred and division and make so many victims.

"We must bring faith back into souls," he said; "there alone is salvation for society and for individuals. — We must consecrate our life, our strength, our health to this great mission: to instruct the ignorant—and how

numerous they are in the world, today especially, when everything is being done to extinguish faith! To evangelize the poor, that is the mission of Our Lord, it is that of the apostles, of every priest, ours in particular; it is our lot, to go to the poor, to speak of the kingdom of God to the workmen, to the humble, to the little, to the forsaken, to all who suffer. Oh! that it were permitted us to go like Our Lord and like the apostles, publice et per domos ["publicly, and from house to house," Acts xx, 20], in the squares, in the factories, in the families, to carry the faith, to preach the Gospel, to catechize, to make Our Lord known. To go to all these workmen, to all these poor, to the people who no longer come to us, to speak to them of God, of religion, to talk with them of the sacred interests of their souls, to revive their hope, to console their heart embittered by suffering or by false doctrines."

This zeal of the Servant of God to instruct and put faith into souls was exercised in a more particular way in favour of poor children, or more or less abandoned, who, through the negligence of their parents or for any other cause, remained deprived of the benefit of religious instruction and of the grace of the sacraments. It is for them that he established that so useful and so beautiful work of first communion, in which, from the origin, thousands of children have been prepared to receive the graces of the sacraments and afterward to lead a Christian life.

The good Father took very special care to give these dear children a religious instruction as solid and as complete as possible. Besides the two hours devoted in the day to making the children learn the catechism in their classroom, Father Chevrier established that four catechisms should be given each day by the priests, at the chapel. In the first, which is given before Mass and lasts half an hour, the principal prayers and the holy sacrifice of the Mass are explained in great detail; in the second, which lasts from nine to ten for the boys and from eleven to noon for the girls, all Christian doctrine is explained; in the third, which takes place at half-past one, before the beads, the mysteries of the Rosary are explained, and on Friday the Way of the Cross; finally, in the fourth, which the public attends and which takes place in the evening at eight o'clock, the different parts of the doctrine, the parables of the holy Gospel and the miracles of Our Lord are explained in succession. By this short account one can see how much the Servant of God had at heart to put into the soul of his children an enlightened and solid faith.

It was, moreover, on every occasion and by every means that he applied himself to showing Jesus Christ and giving Him to souls. In his direction in the confessional, in his counsels in the sacristy and in the parlour, in his letters, in his conversations, he was preoccupied with one thing only: to make Jesus Christ known and to form Him in souls.

I heard Father Jacquier say that Father Chevrier had thought for a moment of giving his society the name "Work of the Catechist Priests." He greatly esteemed this vocation of catechists and liked to say that it was "our lot." In spite of our young age, he trained us to give catechism, either to the children of first communion once a week, or to the little street children who came to the Prado on Thursday.

Father Chevrier was himself an excellent catechist. He left a great number of notebooks on the catechism, which shows that he had worked much, in order to have a complete whole of Christian doctrine, according to a reasoned plan and in a form perfectly accessible to children. He wished that one should busy oneself early and in every manner with gathering materials: historical traits, documents, observations, in order to become later good catechists.

"As one reads," he says in his True Disciple, "or as one studies a question, one writes in one's notebook what one has learned in a reading, in an instruction, in one's prayers, studies or conversations, and thus you enrich yourselves each day without effort; and at the end of a certain time you find that you have on all religious questions a complete work; and it turns out that one is thus preparing, ten years in advance, the instructions which one has to give throughout one's life."

When the Father spoke to us at recreation, he always brought out some point of Christian doctrine, so that one could enrich one's catechism notebook on leaving a conversation with him. In spite of the surplus of occupations that daily fell upon him, the Father liked to give the catechism himself and never dispensed

himself from it without a major reason.

At the evening catechism, intended for everyone, and which took the form of a course of religious instruction, the Servant of God applied himself in every way to provoke and sustain the attention of his audience. He did not shrink from a serious and written preparation of his lessons. In 1873, during the winter, the subject of his talks was the creation and the description of the works of the Creator. Each evening, before beginning, he had us repeat publicly the lesson of the evening before. To make this easier for us and to render this repetition interesting and useful to the audience, he gave us in advance, and in writing, an outline or summary. Such was his zeal to instruct us; such was one of the devices to which he had recourse in order to do good.

Father Chevrier was not content with giving catechism at the Prado; he went also to give it at the house of a workshop mistress to twenty little working girls; and these went in turn to the Prado to give Father Chevrier an account of what they had done and to receive direction from him.

Father Chevrier writes, in the rule of his priests, in the article entitled “Catechism to the Faithful”:

> *“We would wish that it were permitted us to go and give catechism in the workshops, in the villages, in the factories, in the houses, to go and seek so many souls who today are straying from God and from the Church.”*
>
> *“Dear children,” he wrote to his seminarians, “I grant you what you ask in your last letters, to go to Ars; you will pray much at the tomb of this holy curé, to obtain his virtues of humility, of modesty, and the grace of becoming good catechists, for it is in this that this good priest excelled. Ah! to catechize men, that is the great mission of the priest today. One must instruct, not with great discourses which do not go to the bottom of the heart of the ignorant, but in very simple instructions within reach of the people.*
>
> *“In our day one ought to go and catechize everywhere, to speak simply, for we must return to the first instructions, tell men that there is a God and teach them to love Him and serve Him. How sad it is today to see the rage of the impious, the work they do each day to destroy in men every notion of God, of their dignity and of their greatness! What can we become if we keep walking in this dreadful road of incredulity? Ah! let us pray, dear children; work, in prayer and humility, to become priests according to the Lord, full of zeal, of faith and of love for men. We shall be able to revive this incredulous and perverse generation only by great acts of virtue; we must astonish the world today by acts of virtue opposed to the vices that show themselves in our days. May the Lord make saints of you, may He make you feel in your heart the holy desires to catechize the world, to instruct the ignorant, to devote and sacrifice yourselves.*
>
> *“I think sometimes of the permission you asked of me to wear the cassock during the holidays. If your desire were to go and give catechism at the Hospital, at the Charité, if you really had this desire to make God known to those poor suffering people—for it is again upon these suffering souls that good can be done most easily—if such were your intention, I would permit it to you for the long vacation, so that you might thus begin to exercise the ministry of the word which it will be given you to exercise later upon the crowds.*
>
> *“Yes, dear children, work, work much and pray above all, for it is by prayer and work that you will attain the goal that God proposes in bringing you to the priesthood. I think sometimes of your little conferences at Alix; if in your letters you gave me the subject and the little summary, you would give me great pleasure; I unite myself to you and I take pleasure in all that you do, and above all in what must one day contribute to the glory of God.*
>
> *“Farewell, dear friends; I prayed to St Joseph yesterday for you, that you may fulfil toward the children the same office that he fulfilled at Nazareth toward the Child Jesus. May the Holy Spirit communicate Himself to you, may the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you. I embrace you with all my heart.”*

Father Chevrier repeated the same things up to three or four times in his catechism explanations and in his instructions, and that in order to make the truth penetrate better into souls. He gave this reason for acting so: “When one gives an instruction,” he said, “one must repeat the same things several times, because, the first time one says a thing, three quarters of the persons present have not heard it or have not understood it; it is only the third or fourth time that one can hope that the audience has heard and understood.”

He often said this word: “He hath sent me to evangelize the poor; it is for this that I came.” [Cf. Luke iv, 18.] He did not wish to be disturbed during the time of his catechism; it was his favourite work. One day he showed much pain that someone came to fetch him, and although he never kept anyone waiting, that day he said: “Answer that I am giving my catechism and cannot come to the parlour.”

He esteemed the love of catechism a great grace. He said: “Thank the good God for having given you this attraction to speak of Him… Make of your little catechism your favourite work. Make Jesus Christ grow in those little souls. What a consolation for you to see them love God and to cast into their minds a ray of faith which will save them, a feeling of love which will strengthen them. Courage, work at this task and persevere.”

He wrote to a Sister:

> *“Lift your eyes a little upward, look at Our Lord, study His divine word, His divine examples, fill yourself with Him, feed yourself on Him. Let Jesus Christ then be your life, let Jesus Christ be your love. See in your children creatures redeemed by Our Lord and soiled by sin, and do for them what Our Lord would do Himself. Fulfil your employment well, it is the most beautiful that Our Lord can entrust to you. It is a great honour to share in His divine mission, which is to instruct and to heal. Count yourself happy and never think of leaving your post.”*

The Father ardently desired to find souls who would love God only and devote themselves to the salvation of their neighbour. He said: “One thing only is necessary: to love God well, to be useful to one’s neighbour. We must serve as instrument to the good God for the salvation of souls: to instruct children, to give catechism, is the most beautiful vocation.” He desired to give a more complete formation to the Sisters whom he destined for catechism. He wanted them more virtuous, more united to God, more renounced to themselves, that they might be more worthy of their vocation and capable of doing more good to souls.

Here is an extract of a letter to one of his Sisters:

> *“I ask of Our Lord for you and for all those of the house only the spiritual attraction to give catechism well. If we can grow in this attraction and in the love of Our Lord, we shall have gained everything. That too is all my desire, to have Sisters and Brothers who are catechists. I work at it myself with joy and happiness.”*

The Father was so penetrated with the necessity and the love of catechism that he told us: “See, my children, I should like you to give catechism in all employments. The Sister portress should profit by every occasion to say a word of the good God. To the children one must know how to put a few questions of catechism, teach them their prayer, tell them the respect and obedience they owe to their parents. Rays of light must go out from the Prado to enlighten the whole Guillotière.”

He taught us to give catechism, he wished that we should pray before doing it, that each of us should have our catechism written by ourselves. He recommended us to pray before giving our catechism, in order to have the grace to do it in a manner that profits the children. The Father said: “To give catechism well one must pray, reflect and make holy communion often; otherwise one does only a little spiritual good to souls. The first thing to do is to enlighten the intelligence; so long as we have not put the knowledge of Our Lord there, we have done nothing. Through knowledge comes love, and love makes the will act.”

The Father, in giving catechism, explained so well the great mysteries of the Holy Trinity, of the Incarnation, of the Eucharist, that after having heard him one could not relish any other manner. It is impossible to put out of one’s mind the explanations he made of them, and, after long years, one feels one’s heart throb with happiness and love in repeating them. There was life in his word, and a special grace was attached to it. Not only did he make the truths known, but he gave the love of them.

He told me, regarding the children, that he applied himself to teaching them God by every means in his power; that he sought to make Him penetrate into them through the eyes, through the ears, through every pore; and that, having done that as much as he could, he left to God the charge of providing for their needs of food and clothing.

The Father said: “Our work is to instruct souls. One must have in one’s heart the desire to instruct, to teach others what one knows: we are here for that. Our work is like the missionaries who set out for far-off places to instruct and save souls. Your vocation is great, the work is wholly spiritual, all that we do is to save souls, and those who do not feel the desire to instruct and save souls are not in their vocation.”

The Father said, regarding the persons who presented themselves to enter the house and work at the Work: “What I desire above all are souls capable of giving catechism.”

Often he chose the most intelligent children to charge them with making the more ignorant repeat the lessons of the catechism. He knew, by a few words full of charm, how to make them appreciate and love this little mission.

The Father himself presented me to the first chaplain of the Charité, to obtain authorization to give catechism to the little sick girls in the wards of the Hospice. After some time, not meeting with great attention and great satisfaction among these children, I complained of the uselessness of my pains; he answered me with a very penetrated air: “My child, if you had worked for years among these children and had succeeded only in making them avoid one mortal sin, you would still have employed your time admirably.”

The Father said to his Sisters: “You are not called to stay together. You will be separated, for I shall send you wherever it is necessary, to work at the work of God. I do not wish to put you one on top of another like a heap of stones. Our Lord sent His apostles, He dispersed them through the world; that is what I shall do for you. I should like to see you two or three at the corners of streets, in the poorest quarters, having only a hut to shelter you. There you would gather the children to teach them the catechism, you would console those who suffer, you would make the good God known and loved.”

For several years, every Sunday after vespers, the Father spent an hour or two receiving the children who came to him in crowds. The Father stood in the sacristy, said a few words of catechism to these children, then blessed them and sent them away, recommending them to say their prayers well.

The Father wrote to his seminarians:

> *“I ask the good God for one thing only, that He teach me to give my catechism well, to instruct the poor and the children well. To know, to speak of God—how beautiful that is, my little friends! Apply yourselves to establishing your beautiful vocation of catechizing the poor, for it is the most beautiful of all and the most worthy of envy. Ah! to catechize men, that is the great mission of the priest!”*

Thoughts of Father Chevrier. [Chevrier’s own:]

> *The catechism is the highest philosophy, it is religion, it is theology, the science of God, the queen of the sciences; there are enclosed all the treasures of the wisdom of God, the wisdom of the Church and the wisdom of the centuries. Man is barely sketched at his birth; to have the complement of his being he must, according to the expression of the Gospel, be born again, but by a wholly spiritual birth; one must graft, so to speak, upon the purely material being the moral, religious, social being, and what will work this new creation, this new birth? It is the catechism, religious teaching.*
>
> *Faith, love and action: these are the three effects that must be sought to produce in every instruction: to give faith through knowledge, reasoning, the sight of things; to give birth to love for the truth that one teaches; and to move to actions in conformity with the truth known and loved. You know that we must not pretend to become great scholars and great orators, but only good catechists.*

Preaching

Father Chevrier, pressed by the hunger and thirst for preaching to the little ones and the poor, often repeated, to apply it to himself and to us also: “*Evangelizare pauperibus misit me.* He hath sent me to evangelize the poor.” [Luke iv, 18.] He said:

“The priest earns his bread by showing Jesus Christ to the world. The priest must always be ready to speak of Our Lord. The priest must preach Jesus Christ, that is his great mission: to preach to the faithful the holy Gospel, the word of God and not a human word. After the example of Our Lord, the priest must preach with simplicity. One ought to be able to preach every day, several times a day. What one ought to be able to teach everywhere is the Gospel, the commandments of God and of the Church, the Rosary, the Way of the Cross. Let the mysteries of Our Lord be so familiar to you that you can speak of them as of something that is your own, as people know how to speak of their trade, of their business.

“When the priest appears in church, he ought always to have something to say to the faithful who come to Mass, to vespers, or to some ceremony or other. The priest must say a few words of the good God to them. When one goes to a person’s house, it is to speak to him and to hear him. At church it is the priest who takes the place of Jesus and who must say to those who come to visit Jesus what this good Saviour wishes to say to them and what He asks of them.”

When Father Chevrier spoke at the chapel it was with an admirable simplicity and unction; he was like a father in the midst of his children, putting the loftiest teachings within their reach. On Sunday, at holy Mass, one was ravished to hear him explain the Gospel: the Good Shepherd finding his sheep again, the resurrection of the widow’s son at Naim. The Father appeared moved when he preached on one of these facts of the life of Our Lord. One listened to him with attention, not one of his words was lost; he preached to make himself understood, not to make himself admired; but also, how many conversions! how many resolutions taken to advance in the spiritual life! God alone could count them!

One day, in explaining the Gospel of the multiplication of the loaves, the Father appeared as if carried away with love for souls. He insisted on this word of Our Lord: “I have compassion on this people” [Mark viii, 2], and he called all souls to him. Showing them the holy tabernacle, he said to them tenderly: “Come all to me [Matt. xi, 28]; I have the word of God to quench your thirst and the Eucharist to satisfy your hunger.”

Once, on Christmas night, the Father had just been hearing confessions. It was a few moments before the midnight Mass, a person went to the sacristy to speak to him. He said to her: “Pray for me, I must go and preach to you in a moment and I have not been able to prepare anything.” Never did the Father preach a more beautiful sermon; I still keep the memory of it. He gave us a dialogue between the Son of God and the Angels. They said to the Word: “Where are You going, Lord? You are going on earth, but men are going to make You suffer!” “No matter, I wish to save the world.” “See, Lord, men are preparing for You whips [the French text reads *rouets*, “spinning wheels”: a slip, evidently *fouets*], thorns, a heavy cross; do not descend upon earth.” “No matter, I wish to save the world!”

Father Chevrier preached much, and his preaching was never dull or commonplace. On Sunday he preached up to four times at the chapel, namely: before the nine o’clock Mass, on the holy sacrifice; then, after the Gospel, on the Gospel of the day; at vespers, before the recitation of the beads, on a mystery of the Rosary; and finally in the evening, he made the spoken Way of the Cross, or else gave a sermon on the feast of the day for the great solemnities.

I remember that for a year he preached, or had someone preach, even at the seven o’clock Mass on the Sunday epistle. During the week, not counting the catechisms and the instructions given specially and exclusively to the children of the house, he preached every evening; it was a series of continuous instructions on religion, the Apostles’ Creed, the commandments of God and of the Church, the sacraments, the miracles of Our Lord or the parables of the Gospel: in a word, it was the catechism useful to all, to the children of the house and to the faithful from outside who came in great numbers to hear it. He told us sometimes that a priest must always have something to say to souls on God, on Our Lord, on the duties of the Christian, on the Gospel. That is what he did himself. At the Clerical School we had come to find this quite natural. By dint of seeing him inexhaustible, we thought that the gift of speech was a grace attached to the priesthood. I have

since recognized, by experience, that it was not altogether so; I concluded that Father Chevrier really had a great talent, that he must have worked much, and that he had known how to make the knowledge acquired fruitful by prayer and grace.

His language, very sober, was also very simple though very dignified. He did not aim at effect, either in his preaching or in his conversations, but one always listened to him willingly; he had a wholly evangelical simplicity, whether in his catechisms or in his instructions, which always kept the character, the genre, of familiar instructions, although he sometimes rose to sublime heights and attained the true and powerful eloquence that moves hearts and converts souls.

The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, by order of the Sovereign Pontiff, published under date of 31 July 1894 a circular letter on sacred preaching. It is addressed to the Bishops of Italy and to the Superiors of Congregations and religious Orders. I wish to quote several passages from it which seem to me to suit absolutely the spirit and the manner of acting of our venerated Father: which will prove once more how much he was, in his conduct and in his sentiments, in perfect harmony with the Catholic Church and her infallible authority, the true interpreter of the doctrine and sentiments of Jesus Christ.

> *"In the divine word, we ascertain with sorrow, there have crept in for some time certain abuses which often render the preaching of today either contemptible, or at least sterile and unfruitful."*

After having indicated the principal qualities of the sacred orator: piety, love of Jesus Christ and of souls, a conduct that is not in contradiction with the teaching, knowledge and a serious preparation, the Most Eminent authors of the letter recall

> *"that the Creed and the Decalogue, the commandments of the Church and the Sacraments, the virtues and the vices, the particular duties of the various classes of persons, the last ends of man and other similar truths, must form the matter of preaching. But these most weighty subjects are today unworthily neglected by many preachers who seek their own interest and not that of Jesus Christ: Quaerentes quae sua sunt, non quae Jesu Christi ["Seeking the things that are their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's"; the French reference given, "1 Cor. XIII, 5," is wrong, the words are Phil. ii, 21]. Knowing well that these are not the matters most apt to win them that popularity which they covet, they leave them entirely aside, chiefly in Lents and on other solemn occasions. One must banish absolutely from the pulpit those pompous dissertations which treat of subjects more speculative than practical, more profane than religious, more made for show than to produce fruit, and which would perhaps be in their place in the press and in academic precincts, but which certainly do not suit the Holy Place.*
>
> *"But if numerous abuses are noticed in the choice of subjects, others no less grave are to be deplored in the manner of treating them. On this point, St Thomas Aquinas teaches excellently that to be truly the light of the world, the preacher must fulfil three conditions: firmness, in order not to depart from the truth; clearness, in order not to instruct in an obscure manner; and usefulness, to seek the glory of God and not his own. (Comm. in Matth., v.) Unfortunately, by their form, a great number of sermons of today are not only far from that clearness and that evangelical simplicity which ought to characterize them, but they lose themselves in a heap of obscurities and abstract matters, above the common capacity of the faithful, and they bring to the lips this lamentation: The children have asked for bread, and there was none to break it unto them. (Lam. iv, 4.)*
>
> *"Another abuse of which these modernized preachers make themselves guilty is to abandon Holy Scripture, that fountain of living water, for the corrupt cisterns of human wisdom. Hence the little fruit of their preaching. But what matter fruits to those of whom we speak? That is not what they chiefly seek, they seek to please their hearers. Provided that they see the churches full, they are not troubled that souls go back empty. For this they never speak of sin, never of the last ends, never of the other gravest truths which might save by disquieting; they have only words that please, verba placentia ["pleasant things"; Is. xxx, 10]. To this end they use an eloquence which is more of the platform than of the pulpit, which is more profane than sacred, and which draws to them applause already condemned by St Jerome when he wrote: When you teach in the church, do not excite praises but groans; let the tears of the hearers be your eulogy. (Ad Nepotian.) Whence it results that all their preaching appears enveloped, in the church as well as outside, in a certain theatrical atmosphere which takes from it all sacred character and all superhuman efficacy. Whence it results again, in the people and, let us say it, in a part*

of the clergy, the depravation of taste for the divine word, the scandal of all good people and little or no profit for the strayed or those who have no faith: who, although they sometimes run in crowds to hear these agreeable words, the sonorous words of progress, of modern science, after having vigorously applauded the orator, go out of the church such as they had entered: Mirabantur sed non convertebantur (St Augustine): they admired but were not converted."

It is thus that St Philip Neri, of whom Father Chevrier spoke to us sometimes, understood preaching and prescribed it to his disciples. It is thus that all the saints and the truly apostolic souls have understood it; it is thus that our Father understood and practised it: so, what fruits he produced in souls! The word of God, simply announced and expounded, carries with it a grace, a better efficacy. "My words are spirit and life," says Our Lord. He spoke simply, clearly, often employed comparisons to render and explain his thought better. He repeated himself a little; one saw that he spoke from the abundance of the heart, that he was full of his subject and had not been able to prepare the form of his instructions; but these repetitions in his mouth were not tiresome and let one guess his intention of insisting on the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

His preparation consisted above all in his habitual union with God, in his spirit of prayer, in the continual meditation of the mysteries and of the evangelical truths. How could he have done otherwise, he whose life was so busy? He fed on the word of God, it was familiar to him, and before distributing it to souls he recollected himself for an instant at the feet of Our Lord and, after the example of the divine Master, "opening his mouth, he taught." [Matt. v, 2.] St Paul said to the Corinthians: "I came not in loftiness of words. And my speech and my preaching was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in shewing of the spirit and power." [1 Cor. ii, 1, 4.] That is the manner of acting of our Father. He sought in no way praises nor applause, nor the esteem, nor the homage of creatures; he did not seek himself, he sought Jesus Christ and tried to win hearts for Him: "Everything for God and souls! Nothing for myself."

He recommended simplicity to us urgently in our preaching. He recalled to us how simply Our Lord proceeded when, standing on the shore of the sea of Tiberias, or mounted in a boat, or going along through the villages, or seated on a mountain, He instructed the multitudes who had run to hear Him and were grouped around Him. "Let us be like a father in the midst of his children," he said, "like a shepherd with his flock; let us speak simply and with our heart, and let us announce the kingdom of God. Let us not aim at effect; the only one we must expect and desire is the glory of God and the salvation of souls! We are the missionaries of the poor and the little, consequently we must be very simple and very clear that our language may be within reach of all."

Faith and love are given rather by the spoken word than by books: books help, but a man is worth more than a book.

The Holy Books — The Gospel

Father Chevrier had a very great respect for the Holy Books. His teachings and lessons were drawn from Sacred History. He recommended the reading of it, he wished it to be taught to the children. He studied Holy Scripture all his life with a religious respect. A work by Nicolas Le Paulmier, *Scriptura sacra in formam meditationum redacta* [Holy Scripture reduced to the form of meditations], in which the great truths and the Catholic dogmas are brought to light by a learned assemblage of texts of the Holy Books—this work, I say, having fallen into his hands, he gave a copy to each of us, recommending us to study it and to nourish our mind and heart with the thoughts and sentiments of Holy Scripture. It is with the same aim that he put into our hands early a copy of the catechism of the Council of Trent, Latin text. He insisted that we draw our teaching from the true sources, that we be solidly instructed, in order to become good, excellent catechists.

He possessed above all the holy Gospel thoroughly. He had made it the basis of his life. It is in the holy Gospel and the Epistles of St Paul that he drew that deep knowledge of Our Lord.

“Jesus Christ is the foundation of our life, He is our Master, our Model, He is the ideal of our priesthood, He is the great book in which we must read a few pages each day. We must study Jesus Christ every day of our life.”

As soon as the hard and painful labours of his ministry left him some respite, he profited by it to read and re-read the New Testament. In his retreats at Saint-Fons and elsewhere, the time he did not give to prayer he spent in the study of Holy Scripture to learn to know Jesus Christ better. His letters say it, and each time the good God gave me the grace to make my retreat with him, I was able to verify it; every time I went to visit him when he was alone, I was able to convince myself of it also. Never did I catch him at any other study. When he preached a retreat to the members of his Work, he did nothing but comment on Holy Scripture, the holy Gospel, St Paul. His subject of meditation, like that which he gave to others, was always a passage of Holy Scripture and in particular of the holy Gospel.

Did he wish to study a virtue, for example poverty; he studied it first in Our Lord, and for that he read attentively the whole Gospel, noting carefully the examples or lessons of poverty that Our Lord gives us. This reading finished, this first study ended, he took another virtue, for example charity, and he began again the same reading and the same work, and so on for each of the virtues or truths that he wished to explore in depth. Thus his work on the Divinity of Jesus Christ and the more complete one of the True Disciple of Jesus Christ are the result of his studies, his researches and his meditations on the holy Gospel and on St Paul.

He had given us *The Gospels United* of Mastai Ferretti [the family name of Pius IX; the work is identified here only as printed], translated by Bishop de Léséleuc, and in entrusting this book to us he said: “My children, it is a treasure that I give you, it is the most beautiful gift I can make you. Study the holy Gospel, read and re-read this divine book unceasingly. You will find in it holiness and life for yourselves and for souls.”

The Father made me go four times through the entire Bible to pick out everything that referred to four subjects: the Holy Spirit, the angels, sin and man. He recommended to us the reading of the holy Gospel, and he liked us to have a copy of *The United Evangelists* by Bishop Mastai Ferretti. One cannot understand how, with a life so filled with ministry and devotedness, he had time to read so much and write so much on the holy Gospel. We have an idea of it because it was one of our Sisters who copied out his work. I believe he gave her up to twenty-five notebooks at once.

I believe I can say in all truth that our venerated Father knew by heart the holy Gospels and the epistles of St Paul. These two books, at the end of his life, were, so to say, with the breviary, the only ones I saw in his hand. He read them and meditated on them constantly; he noted down as he went along, in his notebooks or on sheets pinned to boards against the walls of his room, the words that struck him and the application that could be made of them. Thus he had come to give all his decisions, whether in the pulpit, in the confessional or in the parlour, from a word or an example of Jesus Christ. This explanation came so naturally that one was astonished not to have found it oneself. It is also this continual meditation of the Gospel which gave his talks so much life and abundance that one never grew weary of hearing him, although one heard him preach every day.

He leaned on the word of God which alone gave him confidence, as he says in a letter:

> *“If I did not know that I must find everything in the holy Gospel and the epistles of St Paul, I would not wish to begin this work—it concerns the instruction and the formation to be given to his clerical school—for I am very ignorant, I have read little, I do not know the authors who have treated the great questions of religious and priestly life; but with the holy Gospel, it seems to me that I am stronger, that I can hope, for, after all, it is not I, it is Jesus Christ: with Him one is not mistaken, with Him one has authority; it is therefore on Him that I shall lean and in Him that I shall hope.”*

The Father often told us: “When you want to know what you ought to think of a thing, consult the holy Gospel: we must form our judgment according to the Gospel. The Gospel is the book that formed the saints. One finds in the Gospel an answer to everything.” When I asked him for a book of piety, he said to me: “Take the holy Gospel, everything is there!” The Father often said: “One must know one’s Gospel by heart; it is there that one learns to know Jesus Christ. People who do not know Him do not love Him! Give me a soul that loves to read the holy Gospel, and I answer for that soul.”

One can say of our venerated Father that his life was the Gospel in words and in actions. It was to make the holy Gospel known that Father Chevrier established at the Prado the catechisms and the so numerous instructions that are given there. He wished the most intelligent among the children of first communion, boys and girls, to learn by heart the most important passages of the holy Gospel. The Father wanted to make the Gospel known to the world, but the Gospel as it is, entire, taken literally, without weakening and veiling it by human explanations and attenuations. He wrote:

> *“Reasoning kills the Gospel and finds the means of arranging things and keeping the natural life. Reasoning destroys in the Gospel all that is lofty, great, spiritual in the precepts and counsels of Our Lord, as for poverty, charity, detachment, penance. It is reasoning that takes from the soul that impulse which would carry us to follow Jesus Christ and imitate Him in all His evangelical beauty. The saints did not reason so much, and it is because there are so many reasoners that there are so few saints.”*

Father Chevrier, by dint of studying the word of God, had so assimilated it that his ordinary language visibly had the savour of the language of Our Lord and of St Paul. When one pays very close attention to the boldest, most original words of Father Chevrier, one perceives that they are only the reflection of those of the New Testament. This was visible in his talks and in his conversation, it is still visible in his correspondence and in all his writings. I would even say that by dint of studying the Gospel he had so assimilated it as to give, in all his conduct, the impression of another Jesus Christ.

I have always explained to myself in this manner the supernatural lights or the marks of extraordinary power that Father Chevrier sometimes showed in his life. Our Lord mingled prophecies with His ordinary discourses, without anything seeming to distinguish the one from the others. Perhaps Father Chevrier, who studied to be another Jesus Christ, obtained as reward the gift of mingling with his talks prophetic words which were to be fulfilled. In other terms, by dint of wishing to identify himself with Our Lord, he spoke and acted like Him; as priest, he knew himself to be the representative of Our Lord, and by a permission of God a power went out from him when, in the exercise of the priestly ministry, he gave to souls the counsels and consolations they came to seek of him. That was the reward of his spirit of faith.

He wrote to M. Jaricot, on 20 March 1858:

> *“My dear brother and friend, I am at present with the Carmelite Fathers, to pray to the good God a little and to study the poverty of Our Lord. I read the holy Gospel. How well everything that Our Lord said is said! and how we must try to put it into practice. Oh! my very dear brother, let us always study this beautiful book, it is our rule, you know it. The Crib, Calvary, the Tabernacle: these are our three stations for arriving at the perfection of our vocation. When I see that I am still so far behind, I groan before our Master and ask His pardon for having lost so much time. But courage, with the grace of Our Lord we shall walk in His footsteps in perfect poverty, death to ourselves and charity.*
>
> *“You speak to me of your meditations. You know our very simple method: the rosary, the Way of the Cross, the holy Mass. Know these three things well and you will know everything. It is the doctrine of St Thomas and of St Bonaventure. Let the mysteries of Our Lord be so familiar to you that you can speak of them as of something that is your own, as people of the world know how to speak of all that concerns their profession.*
>
> *“Take as the foundation of your meditations the history of the mystery, study each word, each action, each virtue; note the things that strike you most, you will recall them better and in this manner you will use them on occasion.*

"When you make your Way of the Cross, if some station pleases you, if the Holy Spirit enlightens you, stop, taste the grace of God, accept the light that comes to you, for one must neglect neither the graces nor the lights of the moment. It matters little that you do not finish your Way of the Cross; one must seek grace and light before all, and not the great number of prayers.

"Pray for us at Rome, near the holy apostles, that we may become true apostles and that later we may all be united by the bond of charity, of poverty and of sacrifice."

"The spirit of God is in the holy Gospel.

"All the spiritual life is enclosed in the thought of God which is found in the holy Gospel.

"The spirit of God is spread in the holy Gospel, it is there sown like flowers which must be gathered one by one to take as large a quantity as possible."

One cannot say how much the Servant of God loved the holy Gospel. He lived by it. At the Prado, he applied himself above all to imitating Our Lord in all that He did during His public life: to instruct the crowds, to cast out demons, to heal the sick, to console the afflicted and relieve every suffering. He even brought back to life persons condemned to die that very day. He wished, after the example of Our Lord, to form priests to continue His work after he himself should be in heaven. He did all his actions as perfectly as possible, always seeking to do them in the same manner as Our Lord, continually studying the holy Gospel in order to discover all its beauty and to follow all its little details to the letter. He said: "People think that the Gospel is not for us and that it is impossible to practise it, but they are mistaken. Our Lord said: *I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also.*" [John xiii, 15.] He said again: "One must know one's Gospel by heart and find at every instant, in all one's actions, the means of imitating Our Lord or of putting into practice one of His counsels, of realizing in oneself one of His words."

The Servant of God made use of the maxims of the holy Gospel habitually, and one may say always and for everything. He strove to make souls act in the light of the holy Gospel. One can verify it in his numerous writings. After having read extracts from them, Bishop Déchelette, who died Bishop of Évreux, said: "It is pure Gospel!"

The Holy Place

Father Chevrier was penetrated with a great respect for the holy place, and his respect was expressed in his whole person, in his gait, in the tone of his voice. If everything in him was dignified, great, holy, his faith and his love appeared still more in the holy place. He suffered there no disorder, no dissipation. It is certainly to his holiness, to the examples of virtue he left and to his prayers that we owe that atmosphere of piety which seizes one in the chapel of the Prado, that tradition of recollection and discipline which one remarks there, even and above all in our children of first communion, and which astonishes everyone. In spite of oneself, one undergoes its beneficent influence.

"A Christian who believes," he said, "ought, it seems to me, to appear in church only in the most respectful attitude. How I love to see the humble religious of St Francis kiss with respect the footstep of the altar each time he passes before the tabernacle. There is in this act of humility something that recalls the grandeur of God dwelling among us and also our unworthiness and our misery, an act that can only be very pleasing to Him who, present in the tabernacle, sees the depth of our hearts and our thoughts."

I remember that the Father recommended us not to pass through the chapel when we were carrying objects, not to use it as a thoroughfare to shorten our way. The Father insisted much on the cleanliness and decency of the holy place. "Let us be poor," he said, "but let us be clean, above all in what concerns the service of the good God and what relates to it." Any stranger who has visited the Prado in detail, the sacristy included, must have been surprised by the contrast between the poverty and dilapidation of the house on one hand and, on the other, the irreproachable condition, the absolute cleanliness of the sacristy equipment: linens, vestments,

various objects destined for sacred worship. On this article the Father was of a severity that admitted no excuse.

His piety entered into the smallest details. He wanted altar cloths, corporals, purificators, amices, hand-towels [Fr. *manuterges*], communion cloths in perfect cleanliness, and he required that they be renewed frequently; he could not bear that these linens be creased or stained by some spot of wax or candle, or blackened by time or use. All desirable precautions had to be taken in this respect. As for the vestments—chasubles, copes, benediction veils [Fr. *écharpes de bénédiction*], etc.—he cared less for their splendour, their richness, their brilliance than for their cleanliness; it mattered little to him whether they were beautiful or very simple, provided they were very clean and in good condition. Here too he recommended to his sacristans great care, great delicacy to keep the vestments in order and to avoid creasing them or letting them take false folds, and he himself taught them how to fold them. “A priest must know how to do all this,” he said; “it is he who has the guard, the oversight and the principal responsibility of worship and of all that relates to it.”

The Father did not tolerate the least dust in the sanctuary, and God knows at the price of what care and what vigilance that result could be attained! He waged a pitiless war on spiders, and his gaze, though so modest, picked them out very quickly in the chapel. He entrusted to his Latin students [Fr. *latinistes*] the care and upkeep of the chapel and the sacristy. “There is,” he said, “in the ecclesiastical hierarchy a minor order specially destined for the upkeep of the equipment of churches [the order of porter/doorkeeper], and it is good and necessary that an aspirant to the priesthood should be initiated early into all these details, that he bring to them great zeal and a great spirit of faith. The eagerness or the negligence he puts into acquitting himself of them is often the indication of the dispositions he will bring later in the exercise of the holy ministry and in the care of his church. It is so sad, so deeply regrettable to find at times the state of abandonment in which certain churches or sacristies are left!” And he accompanied this reflection with a few edifying thoughts on the faith, piety and devotion of the priest.

He gave us the example by setting to work himself for the sweeping and cleaning. “It is an honour for the priest to do this, and zeal for the house of God must be one of his great solicitudes.” He did not consent that we should discharge this office on the children of first communion: “It is not their function, it is yours.” At most he tolerated that, during the holidays, being fewer, we should get a little help for the sweeping.

Here is a trait that recalls the holy indignation with which the divine Master was animated toward the sellers in the Temple. The sacristan needed a table for the ceremony of the washing of the feet on Holy Thursday. A young employee chose, among the furniture in reserve, the table he judged most suitable. Now it was a gaming table which displayed a magnificent green cloth. All the flotsam of house removals flows to the Prado; this explains by what title this poor table had come to be stranded at the Prado and end its days there. The Father happened to cross the chapel and noticed the offence. He entered the sacristy hurriedly and, with a stern face, ordered that this table be brought to him; he seized it and with an energetic gesture, a sharp blow, he made two parts of it and threw the pieces into the courtyard. He left us dumbfounded, pointing out in a tone of reproach that one must not thus fail in respect for the holy place nor scandalize the faithful. We understood later the reason for this act, which bore witness to a profound virtue of religion.

I remember having heard, one evening at prayer, the Father reprove with calm and coolness, but with energetic severity, some young men of twenty to twenty-five who were fooling around at the back of the church and disturbing the respect of the holy place. They left the chapel noisily, everything returned to order, and the Father, slightly moved, found in his heart words of pardon and the occasion for a touching exhortation to the spirit of faith and the virtue of religion.

The Father was passing in the street one day; some children came to say good morning to him. He caressed them and gave them medals. All triumphant, these little ones carried the medals to their father, who was

standing at the door. The latter, in anger, took the medals and threw them into the mud. The Father went and picked them up very respectfully, wiped them, and put them back in his pocket.

The Ceremonies of Worship

Father Chevrier performed with fidelity all the liturgical ceremonies of Holy Week. If he strove to make the events of the life of Our Lord sensible, all the more must he apply himself to performing well the liturgical ceremonies, which are the officially recognized symbol of the truths or duties of religion. The time did not seem long to us during those long offices of Holy Week. To interest the children, canticles were sung and the lessons of Holy Scripture were read in French. The mere sight of Father Chevrier while he officiated was capable of occupying the mind and carrying it to God.

The Father was dignified in everything and everywhere, but he excelled in majesty, in holiness, in the ceremonies of worship, through his faith, his piety, his recollection. He insisted much that ceremonies be performed worthily and piously; he required that they be prepared, that one practise serving holy Mass well, and that when one had some function to fulfil during an office, one do so with decorum and a great spirit of religion. He always made a deep genuflection, never by routine or in haste. One saw that he was penetrated by a sentiment of profound adoration. His countenance was transfigured when he was at prayer or fulfilling some sacred function: going to the confessional, administering the sacraments, catechizing; the supernatural spirit dominated in him in the smallest details of the ceremonies.

He often exhorted the faithful to unite with the singing and the public prayers of the Church. He himself presided at the singing of canticles, he explained the ceremonies of the Mass. “People are very often in church like statues,” he said, “and remain completely foreign to all that goes on, because they are not sufficiently initiated into the holy mysteries. One must instruct the faithful, awaken their faith, enlighten their piety; otherwise they are bored or they fall asleep. One must translate to their mind and to their heart the meaning of the ceremonies. People are at times ignorant of things, even the most elementary.”

He liked the responses to be made to the prayers and strongly urged those present to do so with piety. He did not like prayers that were gabbled or got through like a long confused murmur in a recitative tone. When the children prayed too loud, too fast, he interrupted them to put them back in the right tone. The prayers were always recited piously and religiously, to the point that strangers were in admiration and spontaneously said: “How well they pray at the Prado!”

To occupy the children and the faithful usefully during Mass, a simple and easy method, composed by Father Chevrier, was read at the community Masses, in which the prayers, explanations and hymns alternate in such a way as to keep the faithful continually united to the celebrant without ever wearying their attention. The Father had popular canticles sung that were easy to retain, even the “Our Father” and the commandments of God and of the Church. One day, a choirmaster had had prepared, without his permission, a piece of music in parts, which was to be sung by only a few standing and arranged in a circle before the altar, while the whole assembly was to remain mute and kneeling. At the very first notes of the piece, Father Chevrier had the pupils go back to their places and ordered that it be sung in unison. I saw the scene with my own eyes.

The chapel of the Prado is a veritable sanctuary; everything there leads to prayer and piety. One prays much there and one prays well: everything there speaks of God, of Jesus Christ and of the saints. The method established by Father Chevrier for hearing holy Mass, which the whole community attends every day, greatly favours piety. Now it is an explanation of a part of the Mass, now a prayer recited together or else a hymn. At certain moments all the faithful answer the priest’s prayers. When there is prayer, the whole assembly of the faithful prays aloud. A true family spirit reigns in the chapel of the Prado: everyone is at home, one does not pay for one’s place, the rich man is beside the poor man.

Each feast of the Church takes on the character proper to it. The altar or the little chapel which recalls the mystery of the day is decked in its festal dress and has its little pilgrimage after the community Mass. In the evening, before prayer, there is an instruction on the feast of the day. All these things constitute the exterior of worship and necessarily suppose interior devotion, otherwise it would be a body without a soul; that is why the Father held above all to the sanctification of feasts by piety and interior dispositions.

"To sanctify feasts worthily one must pray, receive the sacraments and draw inspiration from the mystery of the day, from the sentiments it must produce in our soul. Hence we must instruct the faithful, explain well to them each mystery which is the object of the feast, teach them the advantages to draw from it, the virtues to practise." It was for this motive that he wished one to speak very simply and to treat frequently the subjects of the mysteries of Our Lord.

For a certain time, on Sunday, before the community Mass, at ten minutes to nine, a priest addressing the audience from the communion rail gave a short catechetical instruction on holy Mass, its name, its various parts, the principal ceremonies, the meaning of the vestments, etc., and at nine precisely the priest who was to celebrate left the sacristy to go to the altar and the holy sacrifice began. The Father would certainly have continued this practice if he had been able; he had to interrupt it, overcome by fatigue, for, alas! his strength betrayed his courage, and then there was a shortage of workers!…

It was also with the aim of making it easier for the faithful to sanctify feasts that he urged us to hold ourselves more at the disposal on those days of penitents who might wish to approach the holy tribunal.

> *"One could, for example, appoint one, if need be in turn, who very early in the morning on feast days, as soon as the chapel is opened, would have to fulfil the function of penitentiary and wait for the souls that might need his ministry, like a servant who stands at his master's orders. Experience has taught that such a soul, touched by grace, has not, alas! followed up the movement, or has put off its conversion from delay to delay, because it has not had, in some way at hand, the occasion or facility to confess. And then, we owe ourselves to the poor, to the workmen, to those mothers of families who have to reckon with time and who would be disposed to take from their morning rest, on feast days, to fulfil their duties, if they were sure of meeting a confessor. They have even come once or several times, they have waited, asked, then finally had to leave without confessing. How regrettable this lacuna is for souls, and what advantages they might find in the contrary practice!"*

"Christian feasts on earth are a ray of sunshine for our soul, they sustain us, console us, revive our hope and make us think of and aspire to the eternal feasts of heaven. They are the only true joys of earth, very pure joys which refresh and give rest; they are all the joys of the poor man."

The Breviary

Oh! how well the Father recited his breviary! One felt that his great heart delighted in this office, that his beautiful soul rested in it! He prayed as the saints know how to do: *digne, attente ac devote* [worthily, attentively and devoutly]. One saw that he was penetrated with the function he was fulfilling. The priest prays in the name of the whole Church and in union with her; the priest speaks to God, he must forget the earth in some way; like the angels and with the angels he praises, he blesses God, he celebrates His glory and His benefits, and, if he is filled with these sentiments, he must be animated by a perfect religion. This is what was remarked in the Father, everything in his exterior: his bearing, his dignity, his recollection, revealed his interior religion.

He was absorbed in this reading and did not interrupt it easily, nor above all uselessly; he followed it very attentively, seemed no longer to be troubled by his thousand solicitudes and remained a stranger to what was going on around him. He applied himself to observing faithfully all the rubrics, as he moreover recommends in his *True Disciple*, performing all the prescribed ceremonies, making as always the signs of the cross with much piety and bringing neither slowness nor haste to this reading. His soul took delight in the meditation of the sacred text, whose thoughts and sentiments were for it a precious food. One appreciates this piety and

devotion the more as one knows by experience the efforts that must be made to avoid distractions and hurry in the recitation of the holy office and not to fall into routine.

Occupied, pursued, hunted, so to speak, as he was at every hour of the day, the Father said his breviary when he could, when he was given the time and, in a certain sense, on the sly [Fr. *à la dérobée*], and in spite of that he was immediately recollected and under the divine action. Often he recited it in the chapel of the Sepulchre after having given us the morning meditation, and before entering the confessional, or in some corner of the sacristy and, according to the season, by the light of his modest little lamp. His habitual cough indicated that the Father was there; one waited for him, one avoided disturbing him, making noise, one respected his presence and his conversation with the good God; or, if one had a word to say to him, one approached discreetly, he answered with a little nod of the head, with a good smile, and resumed his reading. Sometimes, in the course of the day, one saw him use a few moments between hearings in the confessional or the parlour, and walk gravely and religiously, his breviary in his hands, preferably in the little St Joseph courtyard, or else he hid for a moment in some cell of the dormitory.

It was in one of these cells that the porter, good Brother Jacques, who had uselessly searched the whole house, finally found him one day: “Father, you have been awaited for some time now in the parlour and in the confessional.” “But, my poor friend,” the Father answers gently, “will you not leave me one minute to speak to the good God and say my breviary? I have so much need to pray!” “Ah! Father! I am sorry, but what would you have? One is a Christian for oneself; one is a priest for others.” “It is true, my friend, I beg your pardon and I thank you; I am going.” A ravishing colloquy in which one does not know what to admire most, either the humility and obedience of the Father, or the naive faith and piety of his interlocutor! The Father retained this word as a lesson of Providence, as a recall to order, and he often quoted it to us in commenting on his dear motto: *The priest is a man devoured.* [Fr. *un homme mangé*, “a man eaten”: Chevrier’s famous formula—the priest is consumed, given as food to others, as Christ in the Eucharist.]

It also happened that the Father recited the breviary in common with a few of the priests of the house, above all Father Jaricot, in the evening at the Sepulchre, after the closing of the chapel, when he had the facility and circumstances allowed it. He would have wished to recite it thus regularly, for he liked to pray in common. Besides the graces promised to common prayer, he found a particular charm in it. Thus, when we were young priests, and even from our subdiaconate, he recommended us to say our breviary all together, and he wished that this practice might be established as a community exercise among the priests of the Prado, if not for the whole office, at least for some designated part, for example Matins and Lauds, waiting for better.

One may affirm that the time consecrated to the recitation of the sacred office was for our Father one of his good moments, a time of rest, joy, true consolation; that he never recited it by way of discharge, as when one pays a debt, when one performs a chore, or rather in order to be no longer burdened or embarrassed by it; but it was for him truly a time consecrated to the most fervent prayer, to the purest praise of God; his soul and his heart had need of the breviary.

The Holy Church

The Father rejoiced at the triumphs of the Church, at the glorious struggles of her apostles, at the successes the missionaries won among the infidels; his heart leapt when he learned of some good conquest or of the return of some soul to the bosom of the Church. It suffices me to recall here the joy he showed on the occasion of the accession of Marshal MacMahon as President of the Republic [1873], considering in him the Christian who would make God and the Church respected. M. Lamy, the eminent deputy of the Jura [Étienne Lamy], had a particular place in the Father’s heart, for the fine words spoken in the Chamber in favour of religion. In 1879, when the Father was at Limonest, during his last illness, he received a visit from M. Lamy. I had accompanied the illustrious visitor and I was witness of this quite cordial interview. The Father embraced him, congratulated him on his speech and thanked him effusively for having thus defended the

interests of the Church and of souls.

Everything that concerned the interest or the honour of the Church lay close to his heart and he felt ready to defend them with the same zeal and the same devotedness as the glory of God Himself. He did not read the newspapers, he had not the time, but he liked to have an account given him at times of such and such articles treating the major interests of religion, of faith, of the Church, and he willingly listened to their reading. How his heart sank at the account of the progress of impiety and error! His eyes filled with tears, as formerly Jesus weeping over guilty Jerusalem, and his soul grew sad over the fate of the multitudes.

He wrote to his seminarians a few days after the scandal of a lecture given at Lyons in favour of materialism:

> *"How sad it is today to see the rage of the impious, the work they do each day to destroy in souls every notion of God, of their dignity, of their greatness! What can we become if we keep walking in this dreadful road of incredulity! Ah! let us pray, dear children! work, in prayer and humility, to become priests according to the Lord, full of zeal, of faith and of love for men. We shall be able to revive this incredulous and perverse generation only by great acts of virtue."*

The Father spoke much of the persecutions of the Church and of her glories, and explained this word: *The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* At catechism he spoke of our duties toward the holy Church and reduced them to four: attachment, submission, love and gratitude. His catechisms on the Church were magnificent. The Father said: "The Church may be compared to a tree: the sap is Our Lord, the trunk is the Pope; the big branches, the bishops; the small branches, the priests; the leaves, the faithful; the flowers, the religious orders; the fruits, the good works." He said again: "Attach yourselves to Jesus Christ and to His Church as the ivy attaches itself to the tree on which it lives."

Father Chevrier's former confessor, the Rev. Father Bruno, Procurator General of the Capuchins at Rome, wrote some years ago:

> *"The Roman Church has over the souls that the Holy Spirit possesses to the degree of holiness the attractive power of the magnet over iron. No other reason could explain Father Chevrier's irresistible attraction for Rome and her doctrines. In his supernatural instinct, Father Chevrier showed himself, from the beginning of his ecclesiastical vocation, the docile and loving child of the pure teachings of Rome. In the exercise of his first ministry, he had no occasion to manifest well the attraction of his soul. Grace held it there, as in a latent state. Scarcely had the first gleam of the apostolic life to which divine wisdom was calling him appeared to him when, profiting by a providential circumstance, he gladly seized the opportunity offered to him to make the journey to Rome. It was in 1858. His emotion was great at the visit of the sanctuaries of the Holy City."*

The Servant of God had a profound respect for the laws of the Church and the decisions of the Holy See. The mere wishes of the Sovereign Pontiff were for him orders.

Thus he hastened to adopt for his Work, with the approval of his superiors, the Roman liturgy, happy to feel himself thereby in more perfect harmony with the holy Roman Church. In controverted questions he always at once placed himself on the side that Rome favoured. He wrote in the preface of the *True Disciple*:

> *"May there be in all that it contains nothing but what is conformable to the holy doctrine of the Church, to her holy canons and to the rules established for the conduct of priests. If there is found in it anything opposed, I reprove and condemn it."*

The Pope

Father Chevrier had devotion to the Pope. It was this filial cult which made him establish, from the beginning of his foundation, the custom of reciting publicly, at morning and evening prayers, a special *Hail Mary* for Our Holy Father the Pope. He was Roman in the depth of his soul. This appeared in every way, in the manner in which he spoke of the Pope, of the Roman Church, of the holy apostles Peter and Paul. Rome attracted him: it is the centre of the faith and of catholicity. He would have desired to make us study all our theology there. "All the priests of the Prado," he said, "ought to be able to spend at least a year or two at Rome, to

draw there the true Catholic principles, the true spirit of the Church, the Roman spirit."

It was out of respect for the wishes of the Holy Father that he had three *Gloria Patri* recited in his work after the Angelus, a practice that Pope Pius IX had recommended to the bishops present at Rome on the occasion of the canonization of the Martyrs of Japan. It was out of love for the Holy See and the Pope that he made the journey to Rome whenever it was possible, in order to receive a blessing for his work and for himself. He liked to recall, and to recall to us often, the blessing of Pius IX given to his project of the Priestly Work. He also remembered with pleasure that other blessing given by the Holy Father to his first deacons: *Benedictio pauperibus* ["A blessing to the poor"]. Blessing to the poor! It was out of love for the Holy See and the Pope that the Father wished to send from Rome his little rule to Cardinal Caverot, so that His Eminence might deign to bless and approve it. It was again out of love for the Pope that he sent to Rome, to spend a whole year there, his first four deacons. Whenever Father Chevrier spoke of Rome and of the Pope, it was with emotion. At the Prado, prayer is made every day for the Holy Father.

This love for the Pope and for Rome led the Father to take the Roman breviary and follow the Roman liturgy at Mass as soon as it was permitted him. Out of respect for the holy liturgy, Father Chevrier said holy Mass in conformity with the *Ordo*. He dispensed himself from it only when charity or justice ordered him to act otherwise, and it is the practice he counselled to his disciples.

He was very happy to have seen the Holy Father Pius IX; he spoke of it at Mass, the first Sunday after his return from Rome. He said: "Oh! my brothers! how happy one is to see the Pope! In seeing him, one sees Our Lord Jesus Christ!" He said again: "Our Holy Father the Pope is the Father of us all, he carries us all in his heart and we must love him. Pope means Father. We must love him and pray for him; it is our duty and he needs it because he has many burdens, annoyances, cares. The more miseries are made for him, the more we must love him and pray for him; it is the duty of his children."

Father Chevrier had a statue of St Peter, similar to that of the basilica of St Peter at the Vatican, placed in the chapels of the Prado and of Limonest, in order to teach his children and the faithful to love the vicar of Jesus Christ. He had the greatest respect for the teaching of the Church and the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff, and, at the time when the dogma of infallibility was still being discussed in France, he openly separated himself from those who refused the Pope the infallible magisterium.

The Bishops

Father Chevrier always showed himself very attached to their Lordships the Archbishops of Lyons, regarding them as his superiors and never going outside the obedience he owed them. He did not buy the Prado until after he had obtained the authorization of Cardinal de Bonald. He wanted to have the consent of Cardinal Caverot to send his first four deacons to Rome. He would not present to the Pope his priestly ideal—he repeated it several times—without having submitted it to His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyons. Father Chevrier never allowed himself the slightest criticism of the administrative acts of the diocese.

For a long time he desired and solicited the joy of the archiepiscopal visit, less for the honour that would result from it for him and his dear Prado than for the benefit of the paternal blessings brought to his dear children. This favour was granted to him for the first time, on 25 January 1878, by His Eminence Cardinal Caverot. In spite of our young age, he sometimes confided to us the paternal encouragements he received from the venerable Cardinal de Bonald, and I still remember the profound sadness he let appear at the news of the death of this illustrious prelate. He was at the altar, he was about to begin holy Mass; turning toward the faithful, he addressed to the audience a few moved words:

> *"My brethren, the Church of Lyons has just lost her first pastor; Bishop de Bonald is dead. It is a very great loss, we are in mourning and our heart is full of sadness. Oh! how many memories important for us are attached to his venerated memory! It is from him that I received the priestly anointing; it is he who blessed the first labours of*

my ministry; it is he who sustained, directed, counselled, encouraged me in the foundation of the Prado, in trials and difficulties. It is thanks to him that I have the happiness today of evangelizing your souls, of giving them life by the sacraments. It is from him that I received the mission, and, if any good is done here, after God it is to him that we are indebted for it."

And in saying this he had eyes wet with tears. He asked the prayers of the whole assembly for the dear departed: it is a duty of gratitude, of justice and of filial piety. A bishop has great responsibilities and the charge of so many souls in his diocese!

The immediate successor of Cardinal de Bonald, Bishop Ginoulhiac, held Father Chevrier in high esteem and showed him all the tenderness of a Father. I accompanied the Father several times to the Archbishop's house; he waited humbly, among other visitors, his turn of audience in an anteroom salon. As soon as His Lordship caught sight of him: "Oh! here is good Father Chevrier!" he cried, and taking him by the hand, he drew him to himself and embraced him with effusion of heart. Bishop Ginoulhiac was timid and fearful; he did not know that the Guillotière is better than its reputation, he dreaded it a little, above all after the events of 1871. "I should willingly come to see you, my good Father, in your Prado, but I dare not venture into your quarters." Thus, when necessity obliged the Father to have recourse to His Lordship to have his children confirmed, His Lordship ordinarily received them in his chapel. It even happened to him once to administer this sacrament during the pastoral retreat, in a little apsidal chapel of the major seminary, and I remember, on that occasion, a trait which surprised and edified at the same time the priests who witnessed it. The Father had just entered the sacristy of the major seminary where His Lordship was; as usual and according to custom he knelt at the feet of His Lordship and respectfully took his hand to kiss the episcopal ring. His Lordship did not let him: "Rise, dear friend, it would be far rather I who ought to kneel and ask you to bless me!" I was present, I heard these words, and my heart said very low: Bravo, Monseigneur! What a trial for the humility of our good Father! How confused he was at such a word!

The Father made a deep genuflection before all bishops, in witness of his great respect for their dignity. He did not know how to express his gratitude and his veneration for those illustrious visitors whom divine Providence successively sent to the Prado, whose poor walls they honoured. Mention must be made first of their Lordships de Charbonnel, Archbishop of Sozopolis, and Dubuis, former Bishop of Galveston, who behaved as true intimate friends of the Work, accepting with a wholly evangelical simplicity the hospitality of the Prado and sharing our meals. It is they who administered most frequently the sacrament of Confirmation in the chapel. Bishop Dubuis even took pleasure in being called the bishop of the Prado, and he gave us, in memorable circumstances, proofs of a truly apostolic devotedness and an exceptional affection.

The bishops who besides visited the Prado during our Father's lifetime, according to my personal recollections, are: Bishop Thibaudier, auxiliary of the Archbishop of Lyons, who died Archbishop of Cambrai; Bishop Clut, Bishop of Mackenzie; and after the Father's death: their Lordships Gouthe-Soulard, Archbishop of Aix; Servonnet, Archbishop of Bourges; Jolivet, Bishop of Durban; Jourdan de la Passardière, Bishop of Rosea; Bouvier, Bishop of Tarentaise.

Bishop Viard, a Marist, was invited to give Confirmation at the Prado. The charitable bishop, thinking perhaps that he found himself in the midst of the savages of the Prado as in the midst of his savages of Oceania, kept on his arrival a reserve which made everyone say: "How terrible this Monseigneur is!" But little by little he thawed and finally he was carried in triumph at his departure, as far as his carriage, by the children. His Lordship was touched by it and delighted with happiness; he could not stop shaking hands [the printed text reads *il n'abondait pas à donner des poignées de main*, literally "he did not abound in giving handshakes"; the sense is doubtful—possibly a misprint for "il n'en finissait pas"]. It was a father and a friend to whom these children were saying farewell, and whom they would not have wished to leave.

When His Eminence Cardinal Caverot came to the Prado on 25 January 1878, to bring the rule of the priests of the Prado, I came out of the Latin students' study room at the very moment when the Cardinal and the

Father were passing the door. I tried to efface myself, but the Father called me and made me kneel at the feet of the Cardinal, who gave me his ring to kiss. I noticed on that occasion the humble and respectful attitude of Father Chevrier.

I remember also that a foreign ecclesiastic had come to receive the hospitality of the Prado for a day or two. He allowed himself an insolent criticism against the Cardinal. Someone then said that, if Father Chevrier had been there, he would not have kept him in the house. I say this to mark the conviction people had of his respect for diocesan authority and the episcopal character.

Bishop Dubuis said to me one day: “I had many dealings with him, for the departure to Rome of his first four deacons, for the ordinations and above all for the confirmations. Never did I have to complain of him in the slightest.”

On the eve of his death, Father Chevrier, who could scarcely move or stir his lips, was in extreme weakness. Bishop Dubuis and I went to see him in his very modest room. On seeing us, he painfully drew his great emaciated arms from his bed, uncovered his head himself, and would not cover himself again as long as His Lordship stayed by his bed. I shall never forget that indefinable something of holiness reflected by that forehead, that face, dried up with suffering.

The Priests

Father Chevrier honoured the priesthood of Our Lord in all priests. He said: “The priest is another Jesus Christ; he has all the powers that Our Lord Jesus Christ had on earth. The priest is above the angels. He is great, the priest; he is rich, he has treasures, he has the keys of heaven! What are your gold and your silver? It is dust; but the priest has riches, spiritual riches, he leads souls to heaven.”

“I thank God for having chosen me to make a priest of me, poor and wholly unworthy as I was.”

It was to honour the priesthood that Father Chevrier composed the *True Disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, and also to render the priest more worthy of his mission. It was out of love for the priest that he established his priestly work and created the Clerical School at the Prado. Out of respect for the priestly dignity he asked priests for their blessing. He showed this respect above all at Rome, when after the ordination of his four young priests he went immediately to the sacristy of St John Lateran where I was with them, to receive, on his knees, their first blessing. Whenever he could, he hastened to render service to the priests who applied to him.

Father Chevrier passed no unfavourable judgment on his confrères; he always had a word of excuse for those whom their conduct or actions seemed to render reprehensible. He knew very well that certain confrères did not approve his work and openly blamed his conduct and way of life. I never caught on his lips the slightest disobliging word regarding them; never did he let the least bitterness appear. In ecclesiastical gatherings, where he went only by necessity or duty, he effaced himself, ordinarily took the last rank and kept much reserve and discretion. With the confrères placed under his authority, he never took the tone of command, always spoke to them with amiability, humility even, respectfully asked of them such or such a service, took their advice, received their complaints without ever departing from the rules of the most amiable gentleness and cordiality. Never abruptness, curt words, anything that could make one suspect impatience or displeasure. He always put great delicacy into making observations when duty imposed on him the painful obligation of reproving, pointing out or correcting certain abuses.

From the day we were clothed with the ecclesiastical habit, he ceased to address us with the familiar *tu* and recommended us to do the same among ourselves. [Fr. *tutoiement*: the familiar “thou” form of address.] The *tu* between confrères did not seem to him sufficiently dignified or respectful, nor above all sufficiently edifying for the public. Immediately after our priestly ordination, he humbly gave us the title of brothers,

especially when he had to write to us, which edified us much while saddening us a little. He kept for us nevertheless, in intimacy, the so sweet name of child. “O my child! Courage, dear friend!”

The humility with which he asks pardon, in his spiritual testament, of his “venerated confrères” likewise bears witness to his profound respect and consideration for the priest. Finally, no one better than he practised all his life, especially toward ecclesiastics, the admirable maxim of the apostle St Paul: *Honore invicem praevenientes*, “with honour preventing one another.” [Rom. xii, 10.]

Father Chevrier recommended to the faithful always to be very respectful toward priests, to salute them in the street: “Every time someone salutes me,” he said, “I bless him.” He wished above all that no one should ever speak ill of them. “There are persons,” he said, “who busy themselves with talking about priests: they would do far better to do their own work.

Do not judge the priest, my brethren; the good God will judge him severely enough. It would be better never to speak of the priest, neither well nor ill, because in speaking well of one priest one seems to depreciate the others.”

Letter of Father Chevrier to his first priests during their ordination retreat

Rome, 22 May 1877.

Dear friends,

The altar you designated to me at St Peter’s is reserved for a cardinal who is to officiate on Trinity Sunday. I believe therefore that it is far more fitting to follow our first thought, which is to say your first Mass at the Mission [probably the Vincentian house in Rome where they were lodged]; you will be much more tranquil, and the Fathers having granted all the permissions, you will be treated as children of the house, whereas elsewhere you will always be only strangers; and then, regnum Dei intra vos est [“the kingdom of God is within you,” Luke xvii, 21]. When one has Jesus Christ, it is everything. You will have more with Jesus Christ, if you really possess Him, than with anything else. Let us seek no satisfaction on earth. Pius IX wished to say his first Mass in a hospital. Let us also seek what is most humble, most hidden; that must be our lot. Provided we have Jesus Christ with us and His spirit, that is all we must seek. On the following days you will be able to satisfy your little devotions, but the first time, the thought of Our Lord must absorb all your heart and all your mind. To God, to Jesus Christ!

How great you are going to be when you are priests! But how small you will have to be at the same time to be truly new Jesus Christs on earth! Remember well that you must represent the Crib, Calvary and the Tabernacle; that these three signs must be like the stigmata that you will have to bear continually upon you; the last on earth, the servants of all, the slaves of others by charity, the last of all by humility. How beautiful it is! but how difficult! Only the Holy Spirit can make us understand it. May you receive Him with abundance! You will have everything if you receive Him in your ordination, and I shall really have done a work agreeable to God in making you priests; and I shall have at least children who will pray for me and who will ask grace and mercy when the good God calls me to Him; and I shall have children who will continue His work on earth, the work of evangelizing the poor, which was the great mission of Jesus Christ: Evangelizare pauperibus misit me. May you understand it well and not depart from this beautiful mission. It was that of St Vincent de Paul, the apostle of charity.

Confidence, courage, love, joy, peace and consolation on this beautiful day which is to make of you the angels of earth, the messengers of the Most High, the advocates of sinners, the stewards and dispensers of the gifts of God, the true friends of God and of men, new Peters, new Pauls, new apostles in the world: quam pulchri sunt pedes! [“How beautiful are the feet…!” Rom. x, 15.] If the feet are beautiful, how beautiful will be the hearts, the hands, the head and all the rest that does not touch the earth! I pray for you and reserve for myself your first blessing. All yours. Tomorrow we shall truly be brothers.

Extracts from Father Chevrier’s sermons on the priest

“All the sacraments have a character of grandeur and nobility which distinguishes them; but one may say that Orders surpasses them all by the immense benefits it confers. By baptism we become the children, the servants of God; by Orders the Christian becomes His friend, to be but one with Him. I will not now call you servants… but I

have called you friends [cf. John xv, 15]; you will be but one with me, as I am but one with my Father. In the Eucharist it is a God who comes to us; in Orders He gives us the power to make His body and His blood descend upon the altar. Penance effaces sin and makes us holy; Orders consecrates us and divinizes us.

"The priest is, like Jesus Christ, a man stripped, a man crucified, a man devoured [Fr. un homme mangé]; but to be eaten by the faithful one must be good bread, well baked by death to oneself, well baked in poverty, in suffering and in death, like the Saviour our Model, and then everything in us serves as nourishment to the faithful: our words, our examples—and we consume ourselves as a mother consumes herself to feed her little children."

"The priest is the man chosen by God to be the instrument which He uses to accomplish His great mysteries. He acts in the name of God to work the greatest miracles. He presents himself to God with Jesus Christ to obtain what he asks; he is but one with Jesus Christ, who is the only and true priest for eternity. He presents himself to God in the name of the faithful; he offers their requests, their petitions, their prayers. He is another Jesus Christ [several words are illegible in the copy used; the sense seems to be "…for the faithful, and he is merged with the true Jesus Christ…"] [text missing in the copy used] to pray together and be but one with Him. How holy he must be, and how he must pray, that this union may be perfect! He fulfils at the altar the same functions as the Blessed Virgin: it is through him that Jesus Christ is born on the altar, it is he who presents Him to God and to the people. Like Mary, he stands before the victim immolated on the cross and receives it into his hands to offer it to God. He is the intermediary between Jesus Christ and the faithful. It is he who distributes the graces to them by the prayers he makes for them and the communion he gives them.

"He is a man who, addressing himself every day to the Master of the world, says to Him: 'Come down upon the altar.' And He by whom all things were made, obeying this voice, comes to make Himself victim and immolates Himself in his hands. He is a man before whom the sinner comes to kneel and say to him: 'Reconcile me with God, be my mediator, forgive me in His name.' And this man, armed with heavenly power, says to him: 'I forgive you, in the name of God, be in peace,' and the sinner rises healed and saved."

"God established the priest on earth to be the man of prayer. That is the great function of the priest: to pray to God for the people. While the battle is fought in the plain, the priest is there, like Moses on the mountain, to ask for victory. There must be on earth a man to pray; there must be on earth a man to appease the wrath of God, so often irritated against us; there must be on earth a man to offer Him sacrifices; there must be on earth a man who puts us in relation with God our Creator.

"When you wish to communicate with heaven, it is through the priest that you must go; it is to the priest that you must bring your errands. The priest is the messenger [Fr. commissionnaire: errand-man] of the faithful for heaven and the messenger of the good God for the faithful. That is what this elevation on the steps of the altar signifies, where he stands during Mass, to show that he is between heaven and earth.

"While sinners offend and forget their God, his duty is to be found between the tabernacle and heaven to appease the justice of God and stay His wrath.

"The great function of the priest on earth is to pray to God for the people; it is to interpose between God and man to obtain on the one side and to pour out on the other: a sublime function which places the priest in a lofty region. Does it not seem to you that you see him placed between heaven and earth, offering with one hand the prayers and offerings of mortals, and with the other receiving the graces and favours to pour them out on the world?"

Thoughts on the priest. [Chevrier's own:]

God established the priest on earth to be the man of prayer and the man of sacrifice. The priest, that is he whom God has established to be your guide, your father, your friend. The sinner must always find in the priest a father's heart, a saviour. To flee the priest is to begin to be lost. The more the virtues in our days fade and disappear in the world, the more they must shine in the priest. The good priest brings with him all reforms, all conversions, all that is needed for souls. When you receive an invitation, if you see that you do not have the place that your ministry requires, never accept. A fault carried to a certain degree can paralyse and even annihilate a whole ministry: You are the salt of the earth. The holiness of the priest is a lever that raises souls and draws them to God. See the Curé of Ars, what he produced in a poor little unknown parish. To sanctify souls, therefore, there is no need to have great positions; holiness is needed, and that suffices.

> *The priest is another Jesus Christ, therefore a man of obedience and submission. A priest is a man of devotedness who knows how to forget himself, who knows how to sacrifice everything for the Gospel. There are forty thousand priests in France and the faith is being lost. Why is that? It is not priests that are lacking: it is holy priests, but how rare they are! It is the holiness of the priest alone that can today regenerate the world. We must glorify God and consume ourselves by our preaching, by our labours, by our sufferings.*
>
> *The most beautiful ornament of a church is the priest. The most beautiful chandelier of a church is the priest. The most beautiful bell of a church is the priest. The priest is a soldier who stands sentinel and must always be vigilant.*

We cannot better end this article than by reproducing the priestly ideal which the Father wished to trace himself, in large letters, on the walls of his dear house of retreat, and which for that reason is called the Picture of Saint-Fons. It is the striking summary of his doctrine on the priest according to the Gospel, it is the résumé of all his admirable work on the True Disciple of Jesus Christ.

The Picture of Saint-Fons

SACERDOS ALTER CHRISTUS [The priest, another Christ]

Verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis. [The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.] — *Exemplum dedi vobis, ut quemadmodum ego feci, ita et vos faciatis.* [I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. John xiii, 15.]

[The pairing of this three-column table follows the order of the items and is a reconstruction.]

THE CRIB — POVERTY	CALVARY — DEATH TO ONESELF	THE TABERNACLE — CHARITY
Poor in: lodging, clothing, food, goods, work, service. **Humble**: in spirit, in heart, toward God, toward men, toward oneself.	**To die / to immolate oneself**: in one's body — by silence; in one's mind — by prayer; in one's will — by work; in one's reputation — by penance; in one's family — by suffering; and to the world — by death.	**To give life**: one's body, one's mind, one's time, one's goods, one's health, one's life — by one's faith, one's doctrine, one's words, one's prayers, one's powers, one's examples.
The more one is poor, the more one lowers oneself, the more one glorifies God, the more one is useful to one's neighbour. **The priest is a man stripped.**	*The more one is dead, the more one has life, the more one gives life.* **The priest is a man crucified.**	*One must become good bread.* **The priest is a man devoured.**

The Commandments of God and of the Church

Father Chevrier was faithful in keeping well the commandments of God and of the Church. It is the zeal he put into observing them well and making them observed that pushed him to establish a special catechism for teaching them. In the first years of the Prado, at evening prayer, he moreover made the examination of conscience on a commandment of God or of the Church. He had also composed an explanation of these commandments which the children had to learn by heart. It is to favour the faithful observance of these commandments that he wished to establish his Work of Catechism of the Prado, and also to obtain reparation for blasphemies by the recitation of three *Gloria Patri* after the Angelus.

After the war of 1870, Father Chevrier worked actively to promote at Lyons the work of the sanctification of Sunday. He even yielded to the pressing instances made to him and preached on this subject in the church of La Charité, filled with a crowd that it could scarcely contain. He could not be induced to go up into the pulpit; he spoke from the communion rail. He also preached the new crusade in the chapel of the Hôtel-Dieu, but refused, out of humility, to be heard in the great churches of the city. With his practical spirit, he counselled ladies of good will to present themselves to merchants and manufacturers, to gather their adhesions and ask of them the engagement to close their shops and factories on Sunday. It was after hearing one of these sermons that M. de Cissey decided to consecrate his life to the work of Sunday.

The Father himself strictly observed Sunday rest. He did not wish provisions to be brought on that day. One of his Sisters attests that, during all the time she spent at Limonest before the Father's death, that is, for some six years, he had the carriage harnessed on a Sunday only once: it was to take a sick man to the hospital, in an urgent case.

Indulgences

The Father profited for himself by the benefit of indulgences and led others to gain them, inspiring in them the sentiments that must be in the soul to fulfil the required conditions. He told us to make acts of faith, hope, love and contrition, and that thus we should be in the necessary dispositions. It was with indulgences as with everything he explained: after having heard him one understood and acted with a simple and clear knowledge of the truth. He urged people to gain indulgences, but he thought that love supplies for them and is still more desirable. He was asked one day whether it was better to make the Way of the Cross before stations to which indulgences were attached; he answered: "It is love above all that is necessary." His esteem for indulgences is further marked by the care he took to procure for his houses the Portiuncula indulgence.

Confession

At the Prado, weekly confession is general for all the members of the Work and the children of the Clerical School. Father Chevrier therefore willed and established it. Personally, he confessed as often as circumstances and his work allowed. In one of his retreats he makes the resolution to confess every Friday. His ordinary confessor was not of the Prado and more than once he had to give up going to seek this spiritual help from him; he was not left the materially necessary time; but rather than be deprived of it, it happened to him several times to apply to one of us, the first to hand, and ask this service of him. He was regular certainly as much as he had the facility and according to the leisure at his disposal. He recommended to us the practice of weekly confession and saw to it that we were faithful to it.

The insistence with which he asked pardon of God reveals well his profound spirit of penance and the regret he had for his faults or imperfections.

> *"Pardon, Lord Jesus, pardon, O my sweet Saviour, for having so many times betrayed You like Judas and abandoned You in the time of temptation and trial! How many times I have afflicted You and made You sad even unto death because of my sins! O Mary, Mother of sorrows, obtain for me from your divine Son the gift of tears to weep for my sins, compunction of heart to groan over them unceasingly and the firm resolution to die rather than ever offend a God so good and so worthy of being loved."*

Chapter II. Hope

Chapter II. Hope

Confidence in his eternal salvation. — Exhortations to confidence. — Contempt for the things of the world. — Confidence in God and recourse to prayer. — Hope solely in Providence. — Everything for God and souls. — Joy in suffering and in fulfilling his ministry. — Consolation at the thought of death. — Hope rewarded by extraordinary graces and helps.

Confidence in His Eternal Salvation

This virtue of hope, solidly established upon the so perfect faith of the Servant of God, constantly sustained and fed by it, was no less perfect in him than faith itself. With the great knowledge he had of the infinite goodness and mercy of God, with the so lofty and so just ideas he had of the Mysteries of the Redemption and of the salvation wrought by Our Lord, how could he not have had the most entire confidence in the divine goodness? Persuaded of the power and goodness of God, resting on the promises and on the merits of Our Lord, Father Chevrier held himself assured of going to heaven and of receiving here below all the graces necessary to attain salvation.

In his spiritual testament we read these touching words: “I have confidence, O my God, in the infinite merits of the Passion of Jesus Christ, my Saviour and my Master, who paid for me and for the sinners of the earth and whose redemption is infinite.” At the end of his Testament he returns to the same thought: “May God be pleased to show me mercy and grant me the happiness of being in heaven one day. I know that I do not deserve it, but I have confidence in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, my Redeemer, who suffered and died for me, who bore my sins and by whose merits alone we can be saved. I shall pray for all in heaven, which I hope for from the mercy of God. If I have any power in heaven, I shall pray to God for my children whom I leave on earth, for those above all who are to continue the work of God, and for all who are to help them.”

Exhortations to Confidence

In his public instructions and private talks he often came back to this fundamental point of Christian doctrine, and one saw that he loved God with a respectfully filial love and placed all his confidence in Him. “One must not do things from fear,” he said, “one must do them from love; it is much more perfect and more pleasing to God.” In all circumstances he exhorted to confidence. If he had a profound respect for the divine Majesty, and a salutary fear of the judgments of God, he had above all a filial confidence and a complete abandonment to the divine goodness and mercy. These sentiments, which strengthened and consoled him at the moment of appearing before the sovereign Judge, animated him throughout his life; he often expressed them in his prayers, his instructions and his counsels.

He spoke admirably of the goodness of God, of all the testimonies God has given us of His love, above all of the ineffable gift of His divine Son, of the immense desire He has for our salvation, of all that the divine Saviour did and suffered to save us, and of that beautiful heaven which He merited for us by His death on the cross. He set forth these great motives of hope in a manner so persuasive and so touching that he easily penetrated the souls of his hearers. All persons who had the happiness of attending his instructions, of talking with him of their pains, their trials, their spiritual needs or even simply of some temporal affair, testified that one never left his presence without being consoled, encouraged, more animated with confidence and ardour for good. His mere sight sufficed to produce in souls those graces of peace, confidence and courage which radiated around him. Many persons told me that when they could not speak to Father Chevrier, too busy or too besieged by the crowd, it sufficed them to have seen him to go back consoled and strengthened. It is impossible to say the number of tried, troubled, bruised, discouraged, despairing souls into whom the good

Father brought back peace and confidence.

One of his rules, which I often heard him express for the conduct of souls, was this: “All that tends to remove us from God is not from Him; on the contrary, all that inclines us toward Him and leads us to confidence in Him comes from God.”

“Your faults, your miseries,” he said, “cast them into the ocean of the mercy of God. Love God and be little troubled about the rest. Say: my God, I love You, and be without fear; go with love and be without anxiety, because God is a good Father and knows well how to have compassion on our weaknesses and our miseries.”

The good Father Chevrier expanded souls by his confidence in God, by a profound sense of His goodness and His mercy: “Open your soul to a wholly filial confidence,” he said to me; “you are the good God’s little child. He loves you well, and this love excites the anger of the devil, who does all he can to discourage you and make you abandon your exercises of piety. One must always pray, even when one thinks one prays badly. One might do no more than kneel down to say an Our Father, and one would be pleasing to God, because one would have the merit of good will and intention. One does like a poor workman or an apprentice who earns much less than a skilled man but who, in the end, earns something and finds himself much richer than if he did nothing on the pretext that he earns too little.”

In the last visit that I had the consolation of paying him, he gave me, for one of my relatives, this sweet commission: “Tell her that she fears the good God too much.” He also said: “When it is a question of heaven, it is permitted to be ambitious, and the last place does not content a generous heart.”

He wrote to a Sister: “I can tell you only one thing, that God loves you, and when God loves us, we must be happy and walk with courage and perseverance.”

On the eve of Corpus Christi the Father said to one of his Sisters that our heart ought to be like a flower-bed always enamelled with flowers, where at each feast of Our Lord we could pick a bouquet to offer Him. This Sister having answered him that her heart was like a rock, the Father replied: “What rock does not produce its flower? The flowers of rocks are no less delicate.”

He led us to the practice of virtue in a gentle and agreeable manner, and if at times we were sad or inclined to discouragement, he then found a word which raised our courage by filling us with confidence. I remember that he said to us once when some had behaved badly: “I am not astonished at what has happened. It is the earthly man who shows himself every time one does not take care to pray God to put in us, in place of our bad nature, the heavenly man. When one asks for the Holy Spirit as one should, one always obtains Him.”

He repeated to us often that one goes to the good God, one goes to heaven, only through suffering.

> *“One must love one’s cross well and never wish to change it. It seems sometimes that one would carry another better; it is an error. Let us take all the pains God gives us in the place where He puts us and sanctify ourselves by doing the will of the good God; it is there only that we have the grace for it.”*
>
> *“A soul that has good will must fear nothing, and it must walk with confidence.*
>
> *“Nothing of what we suffer is lost, when we endure it with faith and love. Reflect sometimes on the stations of the Way of the Cross: the sufferings of Our Lord help us and strengthen us. Courage then, at the end of this life we shall find a better one and we shall see Jesus Christ our Saviour: have this certainty in your soul, because God has loved you much.*
>
> *“God never abandons a soul that wishes to love Him and has confidence in His mercy.”*

To a Sister he wrote: “If a traveller stopped at all the stones, at all the thorns he meets on his road, he would never reach his goal. So with us: let us have a goal, let us walk toward this goal, let us go there in spite of everything, and then we shall be the true disciples and workmen of Our Lord. See the divine Master, did He not walk on in spite of the Pharisees, in spite of His apostles who often hindered Him? It is also indeed my resolution to go always, to walk on, to catechize. Do not be discouraged. I know better than anyone how

difficult it is to do the work of God, and never have I understood better than now how holy one has to be to do anything."

Answering a letter in which I had told him of some contrarieties I had met with at the minor seminary, the Father encouraged me, as well as one of my fellow-pupils, saying: "Courage then, dear children, do not be bored by the little contrarieties that may arise; one must grow used to them; it is sufferings and humiliations that make true men. A man who has suffered nothing and endured nothing knows nothing and is good for nothing. Those who are always flattered, caressed, are only 'wet paws' [Fr. *pattes mouillées*: milksops, spineless folk]. The more you are despised, insulted, humiliated, the greater, the stronger and the better you will be in the service of God."

He said to a person, to help her suffer by thoughts of faith: "Suffering makes us expiate many sins and prepares us for heaven; it is a time which the good God ordinarily gives us to prepare ourselves to go to Him and to make ourselves worthy of presenting ourselves before Him."

"Let us not be slack in our duties," he wrote to his seminarians; "we have a master who will know well how to repay us for the smallest sacrifices we make for Him. Courage then, dear children, grow in virtue and wisdom, become good priests, prepare yourselves well for the great battles of the Lord; for they will be great for you, if you become priests one day, all the greater as the world is worse. Have confidence, strength and perseverance."

"Always profit by your sufferings, they are the treasure of the good Master; it is to make you conformable to Him that He puts you on the cross; it is to make of you a stone that is to enter into the structure of His spiritual and heavenly edifice that He makes you suffer; there was so much to take away from that stone! And you did not suspect it, and yet it was true. In suffering you practise humility, patience, charity, submission to God, and all that purifies and perfects. Courage, let the good heavenly workman do; he knows where to strike and he strikes just right the piece to be removed. You know that certain stones need to be cut more than others; you are one of those stones; accept and let him do. I ask for you humility, patience and the humble acceptance of all that God will wish for His glory and your salvation. May Our Lord Jesus give you His peace, His grace and His blessing."

"Let nothing trouble us or stop us on the road. Jesus Christ is the only goal of our life, the rest is nothing; provided we love Jesus Christ and go to Him, it matters little what else. Know how to sacrifice to Our Lord all your pains of mind and heart. The earth is nothing, the world is nothing, Jesus Christ is all, and especially for a soul that has given itself to Him."

"Courage, lift up your heart, dear child: let the miseries of others not discourage you, but let us work like good soldiers and busy ourselves above all with doing all the good we can. We have much to do, but I hope, with the grace of God, that we shall get to the end, because we are doing the work of God and God has loved us too much until now to abandon us.

"Everything that happens happens to us only by the permission of God, either to punish us for our sins or to make us practise virtue. Let us therefore place our greatest confidence in God our Father, and know how to glorify Him in everything, in good as in evil. God does not do evil, it is we who do it, and it is evil, that is to say sin, which is the cause of all the evils that are in the world. Hence we have only to accept the consequences of the causes that we ourselves have set up."

"My very dear child in Jesus Christ,

"May the blessing of the good God be upon you and upon all yours; it is the first wish of my heart, because I know that you greatly need it to pass through this time of life so painful for you, and which can be so meritorious if you know how to profit by it.

"Let us therefore have well in mind that life is short, that the present time is a trial that must be gone through, that all that happens to us can turn out well for us, and that our smallest acts of virtue, done with faith and love, will merit for us a great glory in heaven. Oh! how beautiful faith is, and how it consoles us in our pains and afflictions!

"Make all your tribulations and all your ills turn to the good side, then, by faith and the love of God. You always desire to die, but death is a penance, and it becomes a good only because it brings us nearer to God and puts us in possession of God. I would wish it to be for you the means of reaching God more surely, as you ask; but for

that the love of God must prevail over every earthly and human thought; that would then be perfect love, although, however, I judge that an act of submission to the holy will of God still outweighs the desire for death.

"I shall ask God for what you desire; but for myself I would rather see you live to glorify God and work for the salvation of your neighbour than die, because there are so few souls who work to make God loved on earth that one is happy to find them to fulfil that beautiful task.

"Courage then, dear child, God will grant you a grace, for prayer is always heard in some manner.

"I bless you again. May your good angel accompany you on your journey."

"We must understand," he said, "that the evils on earth are sometimes more useful than the goods, when one has faith, since it is by the cross that God wishes to sanctify us; God is infinitely just and good, and all that happens to us can only turn to our greatest good and our happiness. The good God takes account of everything and will repay us everything."

Father Chevrier always showed Our Lord and gave Him as model to souls. To those who suffered interior pains he showed Jesus in the Garden of Olives; to those who were very ill, Jesus on the cross or at another station of the Way of the Cross. He had a gift for consoling souls afflicted with doubts about their salvation and for reviving their hope in the infinite mercy. Unceasingly he excited to confidence in God, to loving resignation to His holy will, whatever it might be. He said to me: "Our Lord in the Garden of Olives underwent great trials and He cried out: *Not my will, but thine be done, O my Father.* [Luke xxii, 42.] One must unite oneself to Jesus Christ as a victim abandoned by the Father. His humble submission merited for us all the graces of strength to make our sufferings meritorious. So then, confidence; the good God sees you with pleasure struggle and pray. See again Our Lord on the cross; He uttered this cry: *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* [Matt. xxvii, 46.] He is the model par excellence of souls that undergo great trials. It is a very painful state, very hard, but also there is none in which one can acquire more graces for oneself and for others. And then, in heaven, everything is rewarded."

Scrupulous souls found in the good Father a truly compassionate heart, and several still like to recall, in their troubles, this consoling word which fell from the lips of the Servant of God: "Go in peace, be troubled no more, I take charge of everything. Love the good God and do not fear Him so much."

The Father led souls to wait and to put their confidence in God, however great their pains might be. He also pointed to heaven and quoted the words of Holy Scripture to encourage. He led souls to suffer with joy for Jesus Christ. He said: "You will be blessed when they hate you. Woe to you when they flatter you, when they praise you. [Cf. Luke vi, 22, 26.] Thank the good God for making you pass by the way of the cross. Let people talk and let us do well. Time passes, eternity draws near."

He urged much to prayer and showed Our Lord praying in the Garden of Olives as the model to imitate in pains and sadnesses. This is what he writes to one of his seminarians: "I recommend to you especially prayer, which is the basis of all spiritual graces: he who prays obtains everything from God, and as it is difficult to become a good priest, one must pray much to obtain the grace of it."

One day a person said to him: "Oh! how I fear to appear before God!" The Father answered her: "When one has worn out one's life in the service of God, one may well have confidence in this good Father."

Bishop Dubuis told me one day that in Father Chevrier hope in God, confidence in Providence, were admirable: "He did me immense good in this respect; and if, in my career as a missionary, I trusted fully in Providence, I owe it in great part to Father Chevrier."

He recommended to us urgently mercy and kindness toward sinners:

"These poor souls who have had the misfortune to offend the good God gravely and to withdraw from Him are very unhappy; we must receive them with great charity, raise them up, dress their wounds, encourage them, take good care of them, speak to them of the goodness and mercy of Our Lord. We must revive their confidence and

hope, raise their heart and mind toward heaven. Let us not forget that God will use toward us the same measure that we have used toward others. Let us forgive as many times as is necessary. Our Lord has no limit to His mercies. He said: Be ye merciful, as your Father also is merciful. [Luke vi, 36.] It is not by abruptness that one attracts and brings back souls. Let us be imitators of Jesus Christ and let souls profit abundantly by His infinite merits."

Contempt for the Things of the World

This virtue of hope, so perfect in the Servant of God, appeared in his complete renunciation of the world, its goods, its pleasures, its honours, in his absolute contempt for false doctrines, for the maxims and judgments of the world, and in the implacable war that he waged in himself and around him against the spirit of the world, so opposed to the spirit of Jesus Christ.

"The priest," he often said, "is the light of the world and the salt of the earth; he must not follow the world and put himself in its tow; his mission is to enlighten it and to lead it. — As for us," he said again, "let us put on Jesus Christ; we are here to enlighten the world and to oppose its maxims and its usages."

He lived only for heaven with a sovereign contempt for the things of the earth; of him one may truly reproduce the words of the apostle: "I count all things to be but loss for the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but as dung, that I may gain Christ." [Phil. iii, 8.] "St Paul," he says, "regarded as filth and mud all that turned him away from Jesus Christ. He who belongs to Jesus Christ must set entirely aside the existence of the world and its glory. Let the world think of me what it will, let it look on me as a madman, little it matters to me, I belong to Jesus Christ."

The Father repeated to us often this word which perfectly translated the sentiments of his soul: "Do I seek my own glory? Do I now desire to be approved by men? If I sought to please men, I should not be the servant of Christ" [cf. Gal. i, 10], and this other: "For me, to live is Christ" [Phil. i, 21]; and he made on them holy and admirable commentaries for us, which showed us how little he cared to have the approval of the world and the esteem of creatures.

The Father already seemed to live in heaven, he touched the earth only with the tips of his feet; one may say that he conversed with God and with the angels; the sight of him or a single one of his words put souls in a higher region. Like Our Lord after His resurrection, he seemed to be on earth only to speak of God, to teach souls to lift themselves up, to do the work of God while leading a wholly supernatural life. One day he made us notice that after His resurrection Our Lord did not stay with His apostles, He no longer lived in the midst of the world, but showed Himself to them when it was necessary for the glory of His Father or for the good of His apostles. "This manner of living of Our Lord," he said, "is the model of our own life; we are dead to the world, completely separated from it; we must live with God, converse with the angels, and leave our house only to procure the glory of God and the salvation of our neighbour. That is how I understand religion and the holy Gospel; I tell you only what the saints did. I know well that the saints passed for exalted, mad, senseless people, and it must be so because nothing is more opposed than God and the world. O world, how vain and small you are!"

And if sometimes his words contained compassion for souls who let themselves be drawn by the world, they expressed only contempt and irony for the spirit of the world, for he judged it according to the holy Gospel.

Confidence in God and Recourse to Prayer

His confidence in God was unlimited. He was too humble to undertake anything whatever from a personal motive, above all a work so full of difficulties as that of the Prado, and this is what kept him from becoming discouraged. Hope in God, confidence in His divine Providence, were for the Servant of God a precious good and treasure which only grew from day to day. He neglected nothing to communicate it to us, to make us

appreciate it at its just value.

He wished the act of hope to be recited several times a day with the acts of faith and charity, above all in the morning during Mass and after the beads. Another practice peculiar to the house was to end each day by reciting in common in the dormitory, as soon as we had gone to bed, the responsory of Compline: "*In manus tuas Domine, commendo spiritum meum. Custodi nos, Domine, ut pupillam oculi. Sub umbra alarum tuarum protege nos.* Lord, I commend my spirit into your hands. Lord, keep me as the apple of your eye. Protect me under the shadow of your wings." [Cf. Luke xxiii, 46; Ps. xvi, 8.]

He kept himself in absolute dependence on divine Providence, totally abandoned to God in the most intimate things and in the smallest details. For all the helps and all the graces that were necessary to him, for all the spiritual and temporal needs of his work, he counted on God alone and expected them only from His divine goodness. He counted not at all on himself; he had on the contrary a great distrust of himself and always feared, as he said, to spoil the work of God instead of doing it well. His confidence in God was without bounds, whether it concerned himself or his work; nevertheless he did not wish one to count on Providence without having merited its intervention by a spiritual labour.

He liked to say to us: "The good God is at the very least as just and equitable as men. Now if the master pays his servant, the employer his workman, how would God leave us without reward, we who have laboured for Him and solely for His glory? It would be to do injury to His justice as much as to His goodness not to have confidence in His good Providence. Let us pray well, let us busy ourselves seriously with our work of evangelizing, of catechizing the poor, of instructing the ignorant, of receiving sinners, of consoling those who suffer; that is our mission. It is by this means that we must earn our bread like the poor. If we give two farthings' worth of spiritual life [Fr. *pour deux liards de vie spirituelle*], God will give us what is necessary for temporal life."

He abandoned himself entirely to Providence, well persuaded that nothing will be lacking to those who serve God faithfully. He often explained to us the passage of the Gospel where the apostles say to Our Lord, who questions them on this, that nothing was ever lacking to them. [Luke xxii, 35.] Often also he made meditation on the passage of the sermon on the mount referring to the recommendation not to be anxious for the morrow, because God, who feeds the birds of the air and takes care of the grass of the fields, cannot neglect His faithful children. He told us that it would be to do a grave injury to God to be anxious about the temporal when one works for Him, since He has promised the surplus to all who seek in the first place the kingdom of God and His justice. How many times did he not repeat to us these words of the Master: *Quaerite primum regnum Dei, et haec omnia adjicientur vobis.* ["Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." Matt. vi, 33.] "Work well, my children, and the good God will give you your bread."

Father Chevrier also repeated to us very often this word of Our Lord: "The workman is worthy of his hire." [Luke x, 7.] He used it to say that the good God's workmen had nothing to fear for their temporal life, for God pays His workmen well. "If He takes care of the little birds, how much more will He take care of us, who are His privileged creatures, His workmen whom He sends to labour in His vineyard. One does not make a workman work without paying him." How many times I heard him say: "Let us be good workmen of the good God, of Jesus Christ, and we have nothing to fear. God is our Master, the good master pays his servants; God is our Father, the good father does not fail to give his children what they need."

"Let us give our catechism well," he repeated unceasingly; "let us abandon ourselves into the hands of divine Providence, not a hair falls from our head without His permission. Let us do the work of God and God will come to our help; He is our Father, we are His privileged children." And he applied himself to doing well all the things of his state; he did them quite simply and quite plainly. He liked to say: "It is for us to earn the bread of the house, by giving our catechism well and by fulfilling exactly all the duties of our employments,

but let us never ask for more than the necessary." I never saw him in fear about the future nor in an exaggerated confidence that trusts only in its own strength; that is why he prayed much while working much.

Father Chevrier avowed: "God likes to be asked, to let us see clearly that all comes from Him and not from us. Patience then, and confidence!" And he often said to us: "One must ask for one's daily bread and ask for it every day. One must think that all comes from God and thank Him for all He sends us."

The bread of his dear children, with what fervour he asked for it every day of the good God! One felt that he was penetrated as he recited the Our Father at holy Mass; he explained to us well how, in saying the Our Father, we must ask not only for the material bread which nourishes the body but above all for the bread of the soul: grace, the word of God, the holy Eucharist. Every evening he prayed, and had prayer made, for the children and the needs of the house: it was at the Sepulchre and in the presence only of the Sisters and the pupils of the Clerical School.

After the closing of the chapel, in the evening, about nine o'clock and even later, he made a last visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament: he went to see the Master, to spend a moment with Him, to converse with Him, and there he renewed his petition for his children. He prostrated himself with his face to the ground to humble himself and to ask pardon of Our Lord for all his faults of the day and for all the sins that might have been committed in the house, in order to draw down the mercies of God and remove the obstacles to His daily graces, that Providence might deign, in spite of everything, to continue its favours and send the daily bread; he then recited, with this intention, seven *Hail Marys* with arms in the form of a cross in honour of the sorrows of the Most Holy Virgin, and, on withdrawing, made a little prayer to St Joseph, the father of the poor. He confided these details to me during his last illness, in answer to certain questions I put to him.

One day I said to him: "Father, how many children have you at the Prado?" He answered me with a heavenly smile: "My child, I should be afraid if I counted them. I leave to the good God, who is charged with feeding them, the care of counting them."

In trials, this virtue of hope showed itself in a heroic manner; however grave the difficulties he found himself in, his calm never belied itself, so much did he count on the help of God. I saw it myself in very painful moments, notably in 1870, with a very numerous personnel to feed and an empty cash-box. "I have," he said to me one day, "only forty francs in my box," and he looked as calm, as serene as usual. Facts of this kind recurred a number of times, and I can affirm that his confidence in Providence was always rewarded by an unexpected help.

I know, for having observed it or having learned it from the Father, that he had familiar recourse to Our Lord in all the material or other difficulties he met. Thus leaning on God he felt strong. He never acted with precipitation or too much natural eagerness. "One must always consult the good God," he said, "before undertaking things, and when one has prayed well, reflected well, consulted well, and has taken a resolution, one must not abandon it because of difficulties but hold to it with energy and firmness."

He also said to us sometimes: "If the bread does not come to you, it is because you do not pray enough; so long as you do the will of the good God, resources will not fail you, I promise you." Each time that bread was lacking, which happened at times, or when he needed an important sum, he had his little family put in prayer and prayed himself with all his heart, arms in the form of a cross, or took the discipline [i.e. scourged himself as penance]. And if the needs became more pressing and Providence made the necessary help wait, he was not troubled, he remained always as calm and as confident, but he redoubled his fervour in his prayers and employed penances and mortifications. "One must buy spiritual and temporal graces, and sometimes," I heard him say, "the good God makes one pay rather dear."

I saw him, one Sunday evening, come out of the sacristy and regain his room leaning against the walls, so tired was he; he had nevertheless a smile on his lips. We went to meet him and he said, with the accent of a

prayer: “Oh! my God, there is a day worth a good thousand francs!”

Abbé Benoît-Grange, in the funeral eulogy of the Servant of God which he pronounced at the month’s-mind service [Fr. *service de quarantaine*: the memorial Mass about forty days after death], related that during a stay which the good Father made at his house to restore somewhat his exhausted health, he surprised him one night prostrate in his room and deeply absorbed in prayer. The next day he thought he ought to reproach him for it in a friendly way, saying that he had come to get well and not to tire himself. The good Father, confused at having been surprised, answered simply: “I must indeed ask for my children’s bread.”

It is in these same sentiments of entire confidence in Providence that the Servant of God did not wish to have assured resources for his work, saying that poverty maintains in humility and confidence in God, whereas riches ruin houses. He often said: “Let us work for the good God and not be anxious about the rest. When Our Lord sent His apostles to preach He recommended them not to take so many precautions. Let us do as they did; if we do the work of God well, He will be for us and with us. One must count on no one but God alone.”

It is this absolute confidence in God and in His divine Providence that made Father Chevrier reject all human means for maintaining his works. He did not want lotteries, charity sales, sermons with great noise, house-to-house collections, etc. Bishop de Charbonnel had himself offered to preach a sermon in favour of his work in the church of La Charité; the Father had not dared to refuse, but he said that he preferred to receive alms and to ask for them himself at the door rather than thus draw attention to his work.

Father Chevrier never placed his confidence in anything or in anyone, but in God alone, on whom he counted. He did not wish to use any of the means that human prudence counsels and did not want anyone to ask anything from anybody. “If we are asked what we need, let us say it simply; if we are asked nothing, let us say nothing.” He did not blame those who thought they should use these means, but for himself he liked better to give his catechism well and do his work of sanctification among souls. His answer was always: “Let us do our work well and the good God, who is a good Master, will give His servants what they need to live; let us have confidence!” He respected the way of acting of others, but he said: “It is not our way.”

When resources were lacking, he said quite simply at evening prayer: “My brothers, our children have no bread; help us, please, to ask the good God for some.” The good God blessed this act of humility of our Father and resources came. For him, the great means of drawing temporal blessings on the house was for each to do his duty well. When resources were lacking he told us to examine our conscience well and see whether in our conduct there was not something that displeased the good God. I heard him repeat it several times at the Clerical School. In this way we took an interest in the prosperity of the work, to which we felt that our conduct was linked.

The Father was so persuaded that it was for us to earn the bread of the house by our fidelity to all our duties that if at times alms slackened he came to find us in community: “My Sisters, there is something that limps among us [Fr. *il y a quelque chose qui cloche chez nous*: “something is off/amiss”], for the alms do not come.” He said this to us in such a tone that we were quite impressed, and the next day at meditation nobody was missing.

To live from day to day, and to merit from the good God the bread of his children, such was his way of doing. He practised this for twenty years and for twenty years he had bread. The work continues still in the same way, and it is this abandonment to divine Providence that perhaps strikes most in Father Chevrier. When he saw works advertising in the newspapers, or employing other human means, he said: “Poor people! They will no longer be able to count on Providence!”

Hence he did not like to have advances [i.e. money in advance, credit]. One of his first priests assured me that Father Chevrier had said to them one day: “If ever I have any power after my death with God, I shall try

to prevent your ever having advances." He did not like either large stocks of coal, etc.: "That may be good for people of the world but not for the good God's poor; there may be economy in it, but poverty and confidence in God are not in economy. What must be avoided is prodigality." The good God being the steward of the Prado, Father Chevrier would have thought it an injury to Him to reckon with Him. That is why he did not wish to know the sums received as alms for the work, nor those of the expenses, any more than those of the help given to the poor.

Hope Solely in Providence

In his difficulties Father Chevrier trusted solely in God, and he wished his disciples to do the same. "One must not count on the world," he said sometimes in conversation; "today it is for us, tomorrow it will be against us. The world is variable and changing: today it promises us, tomorrow it will withdraw its promise; today you suit it, tomorrow you will displease it. It hangs on a trifle: you do not do as it wishes, it turns away from you. Woe to him who builds on promises, he will find himself in misfortune and ruin. One must not put one's confidence in such or such a person, either because he is rich or because he is devoted. One must lean neither on knowledge nor on riches. It is a great error to say: such a person is rich, he will give to me; such a person is generous, he will give to me; such a person esteems me, is fond of me, he will give to me. The world still loves its money better than us and our works. One must never lean on tottering bases. One must count on no one in the world, not even on those who are with us, unless they have given proofs of fidelity and perseverance, and these proofs are in sufferings." Then he added: "One must count on God alone. Provided that we truly do the work of God, God will be for us; it is His promise. *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all the rest shall be given you besides.*"

He made no acceptance of persons and esteemed his duty more than flattery and money. Several persons who rendered certain services to Father Chevrier thought they might perhaps allow themselves certain things without being disturbed; it was not so. The good Father, with his love of duty, could not bear it; he knew how to say, like St John, "It is not lawful for you" [cf. Mark vi, 18]. They were benefactresses; they sulked and withdrew from the Father and from the Prado, one, it is true, for a short time, but the others for several years, until their self-love was appeased.

I saw Father Chevrier receive alms for his works; he received them with dignity, politely, addressing a word of the good God to the donor to thank him, and that was all. Never did he melt into endless thanks. A benefactress made this remark to one of her friends: "Father Chevrier receives alms for his works as if they were owed to him!" To which the Father answered when the remark was reported to him: "But it is not to me that this good lady gave, it is to God! The rich must give alms as a duty, and God has no need to humble Himself through His priest when the rich man discharges his duty toward God."

The Father was not preoccupied only with material resources for the future of his work; he understood that it had need of apostolic workmen, that it needed men, devoted auxiliaries, continuators. In this, as in all the rest, the Father left it to Providence, he counted on God and trusted solely in Him: "God has sent us until this day material bread, but that is nothing. I ask Him for devoted souls, generous souls, living stones, saints."

> *"I seek no one," he wrote; "I engage no one to come here, I wait for the good God to send them. Devotedness must not be forced. Our Lord wants generous souls with Him. We need devoted, obedient men who accept without restriction our way of seeing and do not impose theirs on us, who for a 'yes' or a 'no' do not put the bargain in our hands, threatening to withdraw, but on whom one can count. Let those who wish to enter resolutely upon this way of renunciation, of the evangelical counsels, come to us, we shall bless the Lord for them. Let the others stay at home if they do not feel this attraction which comes from the Holy Spirit. Everything by love, nothing by force!"*

On a certain occasion I wished to make a move with an ecclesiastic to try to overcome his indecision; the Father absolutely did not allow it: "Let be, the Spirit breatheth where he will." [John iii, 8.]

Never did he accept a lucrative work for our children, in spite of all the blame he had to undergo on this subject. But his confidence was wholly in God. “How can we be reproached,” he said, “that our poor children remain five months without working to learn to know God and His holy religion, to learn their duties as Christians and as citizens? Oh! no, that is not reasonable.” He said to the children: “You are here like little boarders; you have only five months but they are entirely for you, profit by them well for the salvation of your souls.”

I confess that, in the Father’s lifetime, one of my great and frequent preoccupations was to know what would become of the work after him. I was at times obsessed by this thought and, at certain hours, it caused me a real torment. It seemed to me that, as long as the Father was with us, we should have nothing to fear; I was assured that his presence was a safeguard and a protection to us, I had full confidence in him, but I dared not face the eventuality of his death; the future filled me with anguish: what would become of us from the double point of view, spiritual and temporal? I was even surprised that the Father remained so calm, so confident, and that the thought of the future did not hold him too in apprehension and anxiety.

So, profiting one day of the opportunity offered me by the intimacy of a conversation with him, I dared to tell him of my anguish.

“I understand well, Father, that you earn the bread for us all and that Providence feeds us because of you: you are known, you are loved, many persons come to you and have their confidence in you. Now the alms come regularly; it will be so as long as you are with us, resources will not fail us. But after you? We shall be set aside very quickly.”

I did not dare to allude directly to his holiness; I should have been sharply reprimanded; he did not spare us on such an occasion and knew how to silence us.

“Ah!” he answered me, smiling, “you are tormented, ‘O thou of little faith.’ [Matt. xiv, 31.] Well! you must learn to work, to earn your bread; you will do as I do, and if the good God is pleased with His workmen, He will pay them their wages, for the workman is worthy of his hire. I think sometimes of the goodness, the generosity of the good God; I am only a poor man, only a wretched workman who often spoils the work; in spite of that He has pity on me and on His Prado, He sends us all we need; I am perhaps the richest priest in Lyons, for I have more than fifty thousand francs of income; it is true that I have not the capital, but that is an advantage, for it is one care the less. You know the recipe, it is for you to know how to use it.”

“The way of using it is not convenient, Father, and you ought to speak a little in our favour to some charitable and rich persons.”

“I have already thought of it, I have even said a word about it to some of our friends and benefactors, I have tried to interest them in your inexperience, it has been promised me. I shall recommend to them to take care of you, to encourage your efforts and your good will, and I hope they will continue after me their charity and their devotedness to our work; I shall think of it before the good God.”

Then, after a few moments of silence: “See, my children, do not trust too much in promises; believe me, found your hopes on more solid bases. How many people had promised me their help, had assured me of their devotedness and of their good dispositions for the future! Most of these promises have stayed on the way and will never be fulfilled. There are so many causes for that: an unforeseen death, before one has had time to make one’s will; reverses of fortune; the ill will of heirs; attachment to riches; forgetfulness; inconstancy; other more urgent necessities. Many changes take place with time in minds, in hearts, in positions, and cool the first zeal; circumstances modify intentions; people detach themselves from you, they lose sight of you; you pleased well, you cease to please; an indiscreet, imprudent word has perhaps done you a bad turn, they withdraw, they forget you; the necessities of life displace relationships or transform them, and it is over. I have seen this renewed very often in what concerns us; it is inevitable. Count on God, my

children, count absolutely on Him alone; lean on the Gospel, the word of Our Lord is infallible and never varies. You will thus avoid disappointments, for the heart of our good Master does not change and His power is infinite. Do the work of God well and you will see the fulfilment of His word!"

"Must we present ourselves at people's houses, solicit help, in the case where we should lack the necessary? Give us the names of persons to whom we could go on your behalf, if need were, and to whom we should recall their promises."

"No, do not do that, unless the persons themselves have engaged you to go to them in such a circumstance."

"But then, Father, what must be our conduct? You do not wish us to go begging; on the other hand, we must not make debts; what are we to do?"

"Wait for Providence."

"But if nothing comes?"

"You have the great resource of prayer. Humbly solicit your daily bread and that of our children; pray better, with more fervour, with more insistence, pray with arms in the form of a cross, have prayer made, tell the children there is nothing left, that they must pray with more attention and piety to draw down the necessary help."

"And if the misery persists?"

"Well! to prayer add penance. Begin first by doing your catechism well, your employment; work more assiduously and with more care. Examine next what there might be in your conduct or in the house which would be an obstacle to the mercies of the good God; reform abuses, correct disorders. Impose on yourself some mortifications, some little sacrifices, if need be fasting or the discipline; counsel the same practices to the Sisters and to the Latin students: they are the elder ones of the house, and besides, from him who receives more it is permitted to ask more. Be assured that God will let Himself be touched and that His Providence will come to your help. Then, if you wish, set forth quite simply your indigence to the faithful, say a word in the chapel of the destitution in which you find yourselves."

"There are at times so few people at the chapel, and the persons who ordinarily frequent it are not well off."

"No matter. This act of humility and poverty is agreeable to God, and the good people will at least give you the alms of their prayers, and that charity will be blessed by God. Finally, in cases of necessity, when you have nothing left, make the collection on your knees at the door of the church of La Charité, instead of making it standing, like a poor man who is in need and suffers."

"Thank you, Father; all that is not very cheerful [Fr. *tout cela n'est pas drôle*]; we shall nevertheless try to retain your counsels and follow your recommendations. And in spite of all these means, if, in time, the bread still does not come, if, after having waited, been patient, prayed, suffered, resources still fail and the bills pile up?"

"You will not come to that extremity, or else, my children, one would have to conclude that you have not the approbation of God or that He does not judge you worthy to accomplish His designs; one would then have to respect His divine decrees and submit to them. It is for you therefore to make yourselves worthy of your vocation, to acquire its virtues and to merit by suffering the helps you need; for up to the present everything proves to me that we are doing the work of the good God and that He loves our Prado."

Everything for God and Souls

It was easy to see that in everything it was not himself that the Father sought, but God and God alone; hence the motto he often repeated to us was: "Everything for God and souls, nothing for ourselves!" One could not

find a more supernatural soul; he did all his actions with a view to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, for his work had no other aim than to procure heaven, not only for himself but for all the children whom his work protected, and his most ardent desire was to found a lasting work that would ceaselessly create new generations of saints. His gaze ever fixed on heaven, the object of all his desires and all his hopes, he was preoccupied only with the one thing necessary. He thought of Jesus Christ, he thought of souls. He worked at the sanctification of souls to bring them to Jesus Christ and he cared nothing for the approbation of men; he did what he believed good to do. He did not occupy himself with his health or the comforts of his body, he gave himself entirely until he was at the end of his strength; as long as he had anything, he gave and asked nothing.

"There is only one thing desirable on earth: to know Our Lord Jesus Christ, to love Him and follow Him; the rest is nothing; happy he who understands this and puts it into practice."

In his *True Disciple* he says with the apostle St Paul: "For me, to live is Christ! It is no longer I who live, it is Christ who liveth in me." [Phil. i, 21; Gal. ii, 20.] Then he continues:

> *"Jesus Christ must be our habitual and constant thought; let all our desires and affections be carried toward Him by day and by night. The mother lives for her child, the wife for her husband, the husband for his wife, the friend for his friend, the miser for his money, the egoist for himself, the merchant for his commerce. That is the life of each of these beings: he puts his life in what he seeks and in what he loves; when he is separated from that object he weeps, he languishes and groans until he is reunited to the object of his love. For us, our life is Jesus Christ! Mihi vivere Christus est. Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo. ["To me, to live is Christ… I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ." Phil. i, 21, 23.] I desire to die and to be with Jesus Christ.*
>
> *"Jesus Christ is our end; He must be the end of our thoughts, the end of our desires, the end of our actions, the end of our life, the end toward which we must tend with all the strength of our soul. He who does not go to Jesus Christ goes to death. Jesus Christ must therefore be the end of our labours, the end of our whole life."*

Joy in Suffering and in Fulfilling His Ministry

To have heaven Father Chevrier bore infirmities, adversities, the burdens of his ministry. To make known what the good Father thought of the necessity of suffering in order to hope for heaven, it suffices me to quote some passages of the *True Disciple*. Here is what he says after St Paul: "I rejoice in the evils I suffer for God, and I fill up in my flesh what is wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in suffering myself for his body, which is the Church." [Col. i, 24.] Then the Father adds:

> *"The sufferings one endures to save a soul, that is the great sign of true love. Nothing attracts more than suffering; it has an attraction that converts hardened souls. It is the seal of true love and of great souls; wherever there is suffering there is generosity, devotedness, sacrifice, love, and consequently grace, merit and reward on the part of the Master for whom one suffers."*

He had only a feeble health, he was almost always sickly, but his confidence in God gave him the strength to do all and to do well the work that Our Lord had entrusted to him. He had at the same time the hope that a day would come when he might have helpers to join him in order to do good with him. For long years he had to do, alone or almost alone, all the work of the Prado: the catechism, the instructions, directing his work, receiving a great number of persons in the parlour and at the confessional. Almost always sick or languishing, he did not complain; he did his work simply and generously, he did more than a man in perfect health. I never heard him say: "It is too much work," and in spite of the difficulties he was never discouraged. When one loves, one never thinks one does too much for the person loved; such were his thought and his conduct.

From morning to evening he was always busy; he ceased his ordinary work only when he could do no more and his strength abandoned him. If sickness did not necessarily keep him in bed, he still gathered what little strength might remain to him to work at the study of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of Holy Scripture. I always

saw him put his ministry before everything, however overwhelming or importunate the persons or the circumstances might be. Never did he let it appear that he was burdened; and I affirm that he did not belong to himself and was literally overwhelmed and devoured. I sometimes went to try to tear him from the confessional, the parlour or the sacristy; he answered with gentleness and calm: “One is a priest for others,” and that is all I obtained.

He always appeared happy to do the work of the good God in spite of all he had to suffer. That Jesus Christ should be loved and known by a great number of souls sufficed for his happiness. One evening when he was coming out of the confessional while the children were singing a canticle in the chapel, entering the sacristy he went up the stairs singing half-voice with the children. Each morning, after strengthening himself by prayer, he resumed his painful task and his heavy cross, with the same joy and the same courage as the day before. If he complained of anything, it was not of the fatigues of his so busy ministry but of not doing enough for God and souls. He understood too well, as he often said, that heaven must be bought by suffering, and he encouraged himself and encouraged others to it by this word that he liked to repeat: “Let us profit well by our sufferings, they are the treasure of the good Master.”

These great thoughts animated him and sustained him in the so perfect but so painful-to-nature life that was his: a life indeed wholly of continual prayer, incessant work, suffering and mortification, devotedness and sacrifice. All the time that was not occupied by prayer and by the duties of his charge was literally absorbed by the long and painful sittings in the confessional, in the sacristy and in the parlour; the rare free moments he could sometimes find in the day, he consecrated to his dear works on the Gospel. Yet, in the midst of all his labours, all his cares and all his fatigues, I always admired in him the same calm and the same serenity, the same goodness and the same affability, the same full possession of himself.

Not only did he bear with courage and with joy the burdens, the overwhelming fatigues of a ministry in which he spent himself without counting, but it was with these same dispositions that he accepted and bore without complaint sufferings of all sorts, humiliations, malevolent appraisals and persecutions. He was happy to have something to suffer for Our Lord, and he made profit of everything for heaven.

“One needs to suffer to be kept in humility and dependence on God,” he said. He never let appear what he suffered. Yet I knew in him at times several subjects of suffering that would have overwhelmed and discouraged a soul that had not a great spirit of faith and a great love for Our Lord. One was inclined to say: “The saints do not suffer, or they are very happy to suffer.”

It is his great confidence in God that made him undertake and continue the priestly work and the Clerical School, in spite of the struggles he had to face either before the enterprise or during it. The numerous defections among those on whom he could and should have counted did not turn him from his aim; he pursued it in spite of men and events. It happened to him several times to confide to us his pains and difficulties in the establishment of his Work, the better to encourage us to bear the trials we were then going through. He liked to tell us that works were of God and that creatures, who appeared to be only obstacles, became in the hand of God instruments of His glory, and that it was at the moment when all seemed lost that the greatest marvels of works were accomplished.

With the sufferings of the body, Father Chevrier had to bear the sufferings of mind and heart, and these were not the fewest; he bore the one and the other with great generosity. The uncertainty of the morrow was indeed the least of the sufferings of the mind. Among the Father’s sufferings I allow myself to cite the great trials he had to undergo when, on certain occasions, he was attacked in his honour and reputation. He also suffered much from certain persons of his house. He who had so good, so generous, so gentle, so paternal a heart! This suffering of the heart was very keenly felt by him; it was not the least, nor the one that lasted the shortest time, nor one whose wound, very lively and very deep, could close most easily. How many times, seeing himself alone, he cried out in his grief and sadness: “O my Jesus! I am always alone; when will You

give me someone to help me win souls for You?" The good Father was sad but he was not discouraged; he always hoped, he trusted in his Jesus in spite of disappointments and failings.

His difficulties were at times so great that one day, feeling more overwhelmed by them, he said to me with a profound sadness: "I am running away, I am running away!" I answered him: "Do like the Curé of Ars: run away, and we shall run after you." "Ah!" he replied, "the Curé of Ars had not so many troubles as I."

Our Lord seemed on this occasion to make him feel what He Himself had felt in the Garden of Olives. Father Chevrier had one ambition, to walk in the footsteps of his divine Master in order to become like Him. I can say that Jesus, for His part, took pleasure in making him like Himself. St John writes that many of the disciples of Jesus withdrew from Him: they no longer walked with Him. Jesus then said to His apostles: "Will you also go away?" [John vi, 68.] There is no doubt that Jesus, on this occasion of His life, must have suffered much and been very sad. Well! Father Chevrier knew this suffering and his heart met it.

It is here that I allow myself to recall one of his most beautiful letters; it shows the whole heart of Father Chevrier, his love for Our Lord Jesus Christ, his confidence, his abandonment to divine Providence. It was addressed to me at the Trappe of Aiguebelle, where I had gone to settle; I stayed there only ten or twelve days. Two of his young priests, vividly impressed by this step, thought in their turn, to assure their sanctification, of leaving, the one for the Grande Chartreuse, the other for the distant Missions. The poor Father wrote on 9 April 1878:

> *"Dear brother and friend,*
>
> *"Your example produces admirable effects! If the thing comes about thus, I shall pray the gentlemen Latin students to go to the Seminary, and I shall not be able to take back children for first Communion. I feel neither the health nor the courage to do now as formerly. The good God had given me helpers, good coadjutors; He takes them back from me, may His holy name be blessed! He proves to me in an evident manner that He has need of nobody to do His work. You all say that the good God has need of nobody, that He will do well without us, it is evident; I think that after us He will send others who will do better than we, it is my only consolation and my only hope, for I should feel all the same a certain pain to see the Prado deserted and without children, when for eighteen years it has been the place of so many sweats, labours and conversions.*
>
> *"Go off, all of you, to pray and do penance in the cloister. I regret not being able to go myself, for I have far more need of it than you, being older and consequently having many more sins; but, if I do not go, I shall perhaps go to Saint-Fons, and I shall have the consolation of having made Trappists, Carthusians and missionaries if I have not succeeded in making catechists, although, it seems to me, that ought to be today the need of the Church.*
>
> *"Farewell, my dear friend, pray for us and for me above all, who thought I had done something, a work, and I see that I have done nothing. May this humiliation instruct me and expiate all the sins of pride and others of my life.*
>
> *"Your brother in Jesus Christ forsaken on his cross."*

M. Jaricot had occasion to show this letter to the Rev. Father Desurmont, provincial of the Redemptorists, a man of great doctrine and great virtue, who, after having read it, said these words to him: "I do not know Father Chevrier, but he who wrote this letter is a saint."

One of his first priests relates this episode of his life thus:

"I had not yet been a priest a year when I felt myself violently inclined to leave the secular ministry to enter the Grande Chartreuse. I lost sleep and appetite over it, I had no more taste for my employment, I was no longer at my business. I told Father Chevrier of this thought and this desire; harassed by this idea, I several times pressed him to help me with his lights and give me permission to leave. He did not answer me much: 'I shall pray for you, my child, pray yourself too, it is doubtless a temptation.' At last, one evening, at the end of my strength, I went to find him in his room; he was saying his breviary and appeared very weary. I renewed my request with tears in my eyes. He looked at me for a moment in silence, then, closing his breviary, his face took on an expression that seized me and that I shall never forget, and, as if he had been

inspired, he addressed these words to me: ‘My child, listen well to what I am going to tell you: if you leave the work of the Prado, I do not answer for your salvation; if you remain faithful to it, I answer for it!’ ‘Father, that is well, bless me and thank you.’ This categorical answer was sacred to me and fixed me in my vocation. I withdrew to my room content, mind and heart relieved of a heavy burden, and I slept like one of the blessed.”

The Father said: “Every way, every vocation has its pains, its disquiets, its cares. One must ask the good God for one thing only, to love Him well, to love Him simply, and that His holy will be accomplished in everything.”

The Father embraced voluntarily, out of love for Our Lord and also for the salvation of souls, a poor and mortified life. He was happy to lead a life like that of Our Lord on earth. To be poor and even to deprive himself of the little that remained to him, to make himself still more conformed to Our Lord, was a true happiness for him. Only what was poor pleased him. Not only did the Father bear the privations that poverty occasioned him, but in everything he sought, desired and loved for himself only what was poor. He rejected all that did not bear the mark of poverty. He would have wished to suffer all that Our Lord suffered. In the midst of privations and all sorts of discomforts that poverty brings, he was always smiling, and one could have believed that he had everything that satisfies nature. Never did the Father let it appear that he suffered or that poverty was hard on him; on the contrary, he hid by all sorts of little means the privations he endured. More than that, he said that he had quite enough and even too much. It is a thought that I attest having read in several of his letters, notably when, being at Chatanay, he received his food from various quarters, while, according to the context of these letters, it is certain that he lacked many necessary things.

Beneath this exterior of suffering which characterized him one saw a calm, deep and true joy which appeared as through a veil; his so pure gaze reflected the peace his soul enjoyed. In the different illnesses he had, and above all in the last, which was the longest and most painful—eleven months of acute and continual suffering—I always saw him as calm and as smiling; when death presented itself to him, he welcomed it as a liberator who came to put an end to his exile to introduce him into that beautiful heaven that he so ardently desired and had so well merited.

Consolation at the Thought of Death

We often find on the lips or under the pen of our good Father this word: *rest*. It is not astonishing; his life was but a long and painful labour, he belonged to himself in no way, he was indeed a man devoured. [Fr. *un homme mangé*.] Thus he was bound to taste in advance the joys and sweetnesses of rest in God and with God. When he was suffering or felt the attacks of illness or infirmity, he said pleasantly: “Oh! how the resurrection is going to make us young again, we shall be all renewed. When then shall we be with the good God? Up there is the kingdom of peace, here below it is struggle and suffering.” Thus, how he raised his heart to God in all adversities, how he directed his thoughts and aspirations toward heaven and knew admirably how to supernaturalize all things: “We are not of the earth, let us not live for the earth. What are the joys of here below? Illusion and vanity! Let us not imitate the world, let us place our hopes in the true and eternal riches. Ah! one must encourage well those who suffer and inspire them with confidence. How happy we shall be all together with the good God!”

“Lord, how bitter is life far from You, and how long our exile is!”

Thus the thought of death, far from frightening him, consoled his soul and gave it a sweet joy. “I had asked the good God for a few years to establish His Work a little and to labour for you. He has granted them to me; well, now may His holy will be done! I know that many persons have asked for my healing. May God reward their charity and their good will, but it is better to obey God than to live on privileges and miracles.”

"We should still have great need of you, Father, you must not leave us." "It is true, my poor children, but it is preferable to submit fully to God. Let us let Him do. And then, who knows? it may be advantageous to you that I go away."

In his last illness he compared his life to a long Way of the Cross, and he was pleased to note that he had reached the eleventh station: "The twelfth is not far off! Oh! God be blessed!" And, seeing our tears, he consoled us; and, by the calm and peace of his smiling face, he brought back courage and confidence into our souls. "The only souvenir he himself gave me," says one person, "was a little devotional picture, on the back of which he had written: *Courage, in heaven happiness!*"

Hope Rewarded by Extraordinary Graces and Helps

The good God visibly blessed and rewarded Father Chevrier's confidence; this is what made him write in his spiritual Testament: "There has been on this Work since its beginning a quite particular attention of divine Providence; this is what convinced me that God willed it, loved it and would always protect it."

For anyone who has some experience of the world and some experience of affairs, the establishment of the Prado and its success are incomprehensible, so completely was every reasonable means of success lacking: to be born, grow and prosper in these conditions is altogether a prodigy. Humanly speaking, the Prado was not to last; it has grown, it will grow still, it seems, if it please God.

The Misses Mercier and Bonnard assured me that when they went to sign the contract of sale of the Prado at M. Bernard's, the Father said to the persons who accompanied him: "You are leading me well, like Our Lord, to the slaughter-house." [Fr. *à la boucherie*, "to the butcher's".] When the Father founded the Prado he had at his disposal only 300 francs, which belonged to Brother Pierre. His confidence in God and in Providence showed itself in a heroic manner in the keeping of his house, where he had to feed more than a hundred persons each day without knowing how he could assure their subsistence. And the fact that this subsistence never failed them always seemed to me like a reward of the heroism of his confidence in God. It is a quite certain truth that for the temporal God never failed him, scarcely did He make him wait at times.

I found myself once face to face with two persons who had not the same sentiments toward Father Chevrier. One said to me: "You are of the Prado; do you see the Father Chevrier working miracles?" Without waiting for my answer, which would have been the same, the other replied: "Yes, she sees one every day: it is that of maintaining a hundred persons who lack nothing without any one of them earning a centime; is that not a perpetual miracle?"

The greatest prodigy that the good God worked through Father Chevrier is the foundation of the Prado, in that, stripped of all human help, alone, misunderstood, with all the difficulties, he obtained such a result with such poor means. "It is for me a veritable problem," M. Lebas, superior of the Grand Seminary of Lyons, said to me some months before the death of our Father, "the solution of which escapes me, that at the Prado you can make order out of disorder; it is abnormal and contrary to all ordinary laws. You do good, incontestably, we are satisfied with your subjects, but I cannot explain to myself the conditions in which you exercise your zeal: no fixed or assured resources, no organization, impossible elements. Is it the prestige of one man's holiness? What surprise does the future hold for you? I confess that all this surpasses me."

Our Father understood it well when he said: "Let all glory return to You alone, O my God, because I can truly say that I have done nothing myself, but that it is You alone who have done all: *A Domino factum est istud.*" ["This is the Lord's doing." Ps. cxvii, 23 (Vulgate numbering); cf. Matt. xxi, 42.]

On what and on whom does the Work of the Prado rest? When Father Chevrier bought the Prado, what had he? He had no money. Abbé Rolland gave the first necessary sum. The good God recalled to Himself this benefactor, who had engaged to pay the rent for ten years. With a sum of ten thousand francs the Father buys

a property of seventy thousand francs which is to be paid by divine Providence with the alms of the little ones and the poor. But to live it is not enough to have a house, there must also be food, clothing, and so on. The good Father asks all of it of divine Providence, and for twenty years the good God sends him abundantly to feed his children and the poor who come to him. Every day these unfortunates are sure to receive not only the bread of the day but also money to buy remedies for a sick or infirm person, to pay a rent, to discharge a pressing debt, to draw a person, a family out of distress and assure them a suitable future. God alone knows all the money He caused to be placed in the hands of His faithful servant to be distributed exactly, with largesse, confidence and love, to the poor and needy! God gave to him abundantly because the good Father confided entirely in Him. I can affirm that it sufficed for the Father to desire and to ask in order to have, and abundantly.

The poverty of the Prado, the resources the Father had at his disposal—this is certainly a marvel of divine Providence made to proclaim aloud Father Chevrier's confidence in Our Lord. If the alms are so abundant at the Prado, it is without any doubt because they are well employed; the good God would not send them if He did not draw His glory from them. How many souls, indeed, have found the way of salvation at the Prado, and salvation itself, through him who was its soul and life! Would all these sinful souls have come of themselves to Father Chevrier if God had not sent them to him? It is because the workman, the faithful servant, pleased the Master that the good Master thus showed him His contentment and His confidence.

It is certain that our venerated Father was rewarded with many spiritual graces for the conversion of sinners, for he said to us: "Oh! if the walls of our poor chapel could speak, what marvels of grace they would tell, to the glory of Our Lord Jesus Christ." It is the truth that during Father Chevrier's life the Prado was a place of conversion. Abbé Dutel said: "There are many souls who dare not go to their parish to confess after a life of straying and who come with full confidence to the Prado." He could have added: drawn by Father Chevrier.

The habitual intervention of Providence at the opportune moment was the visible reward of his confidence and hope. How many details and circumstances of his life can have no other explanation! "It is no use my drawing on my poor treasure," said the Father, "there is always enough to meet the demands of the moment. When I receive nothing one day, I receive double the next day or the following days; the resources are ordinarily proportioned to the number and the needs of our children. It seemed to me at times that they were going to come from such and such a side; they arrived from another quite unforeseen, and so I have grown accustomed to expect them absolutely only from divine Providence. It has happened to me several times to be in the presence of urgent necessities, to have large bills to settle which I did not expect so soon or whose due date I had forgotten; I would go to the chapel, calm and confident, with the key of the alms-boxes, and, although it was only a few days since I had taken out the contents, I found there the sum necessary to meet the payment, a sum sometimes considerable."

The Father had to give M. Bernard, the former owner of the Prado, the sum of ten thousand francs. The due date drew near and he still had nothing. Then he made the promise to build the chapel of the Crib, and on the day of payment he had his ten thousand francs.

One day when I brought him four hundred francs which I had been charged to hand to him, I asked him familiarly whether he was very rich; he answered me: "Oh! I still had bread left for a day."

He once had a bill of five hundred francs to pay. The bursar was much preoccupied, for the money had to be handed over the very next day. Father Chevrier, on the contrary, was no more troubled by it, and behold, a person did present herself at the Prado and handed over a little casket for Father Chevrier. The little casket contained exactly five hundred francs.

Another time the Father was telling us, as he often did, the beginnings of his Work; I took the liberty of asking him whether he had not felt some disquiet when he had signed the purchase of the house without having the first sou of the seventy thousand francs that remained to be paid. "Yes," he answered me, "I felt a

moment of disquiet, but I felt very quickly reassured by an interior voice that said to me: 'If you do two farthings' worth of spiritual almsgiving, fear nothing, I shall be there.'" [Fr. *pour deux liards d'aumône spirituelle*: a *liard* was a small old coin; "two farthings' worth" = the least little bit.] He was convinced that God would never abandon him.

He told me that one day he had to pay six thousand francs; his cash-box was empty. M. Garnier, of Bellecour, came to see him; he was often his cashier and his Providence. The Servant of God received him in his room; he did that only for the privileged, and they were few. He was quite happy to see him arrive and said to himself: "Here is my money, God knew my distress." He had M. Garnier sit in his own place, before his modest deal desk. They talked a few moments, then the gentleman withdrew without giving anything to Father Chevrier. The Servant of God, having received nothing, began to pray, leaning on his desk. When his prayer was ended, as he got up again, he knocked down some papers that were on his desk! He hastened to pick them up. In putting them in order he found six thousand-franc notes which had been discreetly placed there by his visitor. He resumed his prayer, saying to God: "I knew well that You would not abandon me." It was he himself who told me all this.

I was in charge of the kitchen, the provisions were at an end, and I was worried. I told the Father, pointing out that I had nothing for the next day. He answered me: "Let us love the good God well, let us love Him well, and let us not be anxious." That very evening provisions reached us, not only for the next day but for several days.

In the early days of the Work for the Sick, which consisted in visiting the poor sick of the quarter in their wretched lodgings—a work with which I busied myself for ten years—we had no resources. When I arrived at the sick, and everything was lacking, not having a confidence equal to the Father's, I tormented myself. One day, I came to show the Father a long prescription of the doctor to be made up, and I had neither the first sou nor a dispensary card. The Father answered me: "That is your business." I understood afterwards that it was a trial. I was so surprised that I went off before the altar of the Blessed Virgin weeping. Suddenly an idea came to me. I set off for the dispensary, I waited till everyone was served; then, with the boldness that necessity gives, I asked the Sister, who did not know me, if she would kindly give me medicines, saying that I was from Father Chevrier's, that it was for a sick person. At once the Sister gave me everything I needed. When in the evening I saw the Father again, he said to me: "And your sick person?" "I found everything for nothing, Father," I answered him. "Then you see, another time you will not torment yourself. You think to begin a work without having difficulties; one must have confidence while doing good for the love of God."

At times it seemed that this or that thing was going to be lacking or would not arrive in time, but at the right moment very often we had double what was necessary. The six or eight thousand francs I needed to give for the purchase of the house of the Sisters, Little Servants of the Poor, reached me an hour before the moment fixed for payment.

In 1867, on the eve of the Corpus Christi procession, at the parish of Moulin-à-Vent, there was no canopy. Everyone bustled about at the Prado to try to make one; Father Chevrier let them, while giving his idea, but they could not succeed. On the appointed day a canopy was at Moulin-à-Vent, the gift of an unknown person.

In the year of the war, in December 1870 or January 1871, about seven in the evening, I emptied the cash-box to return a sum lent on an irrecoverable basis [Fr. *prêtée à fonds perdu*: lent without expectation of repayment, or as a life annuity; sense uncertain]. The next morning the box was again filled with three to four thousand francs, which Mlle de Marguerye gave to Father Chevrier, who had said nothing to her about the affair of the day before.

In 1872, on Holy Wednesday, about midnight, a person fearing that we might lack some flowers for the decoration of the altar of repose [Fr. *reposoir*], sent me her servant to inquire, in order to procure them for the next morning.

A fortnight before his departure for Rome to attend the ordination of his first priests, I saw Father Chevrier, who had the kindness to confide to me how anxious he was at still having nothing to pay for his journey and the board in Rome of his children; he seemed tormented by it although he did not doubt Providence. Doubtless God wished to try His Servant, for two days before the one fixed for his departure his purse was still empty, and it was only on the eve that an unknown hand poured into his what he had asked of God with such confidence. Providence had also sent him the sum necessary to provide for the needs of the Work during the three months his absence was to last.

I heard Father Chevrier relate that he had to pay on a fixed day a sum of nine thousand francs. The day of the due date drew near and the sum did not arrive; the Servant of God continued to pray with confidence when, on the eve of the due date, a lady presented herself at the sacristy to ask him for a novena of prayers and at the same time handed him nine thousand francs, precisely the sum he needed for the next day.

One day I went to the sacristy to ask Father Chevrier for money. He said to me: “Wait for me, I am going to fetch some for you.” I did find that he was a long time, but that did not surprise me, for he could, so to speak, not appear without being stopped for one thing or another. When he came back he was moved and said to me: “I have made you wait a long time. I do not know what the devil did to my desk, I could not open it; so I made the sign of the cross and at once it opened.” The next day, when he saw me, he said to me: “Be very careful not to repeat what I told you yesterday.” It was too late, I had said it, and it is precisely his prohibition that engraved this fact in my memory.

The Father liked to tell us: “Live very supernaturally and the good God will come to your help.” Here is a fact of which I was a witness: A lady had given us a basket of pears for the afternoon snack of the children of the patronage. There were perhaps a hundred pears and three hundred children. We distributed the fruit to the children, giving one to each child, and, to our great surprise, when we had gone through all the rows, there were still some pears left in the basket. The children themselves noticed this extraordinary thing and did not fail to remark that it was like the Gospel for the multiplication of the loaves. We could not help seeing there a reward of his confidence in God, for he often told us to work for the good of souls, not to be anxious, that all the rest would come in addition. [Cf. Matt. vi, 33.]

When the Father had begun his Clerical School, it became impossible for the Sisters to remain longer on the side of the Prado. The Father therefore bought a small house opposite. We were installed there but could scarcely lodge in it. He told us to pray to St Joseph in order to obtain the means to build. I therefore went to buy a statue of St Joseph, promising him to prepare a little niche for him in the new house if he sent the means to build it. I carried the statue to the Father to have it blessed, then we placed it against a wall near the vacant site. We came each day to pray to St Joseph. Shortly afterwards the Father was able to have built the house of the Sisters in which we live today and of which St Joseph is the guardian.

Chapter III. Charity Toward God

Chapter III. Charity Toward God

Care to avoid sin and to correct his imperfections. — A mind constantly occupied with God: his manner of speaking of Him and praying to Him. — Horror of blasphemy. — Pains taken to inspire the love of God around him.

Care to Avoid Sin and to Correct His Imperfections

Father Chevrier carried the love of God to all the perfection one could desire. This love was in him as absolute as it can be in a man; his entire life was one act of charity. The thought of God guided all his actions and inspired all his words. “Everything for God and souls, nothing for myself.” This is indeed the truth that directed all his thoughts, all his aspirations, all his acts, toward God as his sole end; all the rest was secondary for him. He worked neither for himself nor for the world, but always for God and souls. He said: “When there is in a soul the love of God and of neighbour, there is all that is needed. Love teaches all that one must do for God.”

From his tenderest childhood the Father manifested his love for God, as he says himself when he finds himself regretting the tender and naïve piety of his young years, when, not knowing how to express what he felt of charity for the good God, he cried out: “I love You, O my God, as big as heaven and earth.”

A passage of the Father’s spiritual testament shows us how he knew how to understand the love of God: “I offer to the souls in purgatory,” he says, “all the prayers that will be said for me after my death, so that those who are more capable of glorifying God in heaven may obtain their deliverance.” It is thus God before all, and His glory, that he prefers. On reading this passage several Latin students said: “The Father’s calculation will be foiled: he wishes to make others pass before him, but no soul in purgatory can be more capable than his of glorifying God in heaven.”

“If you love me, keep my commandments,” said Our Lord. [John xiv, 15.] Father Chevrier had perfectly understood this word of the Master. I always saw him profess a great respect and a great esteem for the law of the Lord and show himself its faithful observer. He practised not only its letter but its spirit, observing perfectly the commandments of God and of the Church and avoiding not only what they formally forbid but also what they counsel not to do. Thus, out of respect for the sanctification of Sunday, I never saw him take carriage or railway on Sunday; I also recall that he watched carefully that in his Work no purchase should be made on Sunday and that the suppliers should not bring provisions to the house that day. In his instructions he insisted much on this so important point of the sanctification of Sunday, as also, for that matter, on the necessity of observing all the commandments of God and of the Church. He explained them and wished his priests to explain them often and in great detail to the faithful. For the children of the First Communion work he had established that every day they should be given a catechism of half an hour devoted solely to the explanation of the commandments of God and of the Church.

When the Father learned that some fault had been committed in his house, he was profoundly saddened and never failed to join a personal penance to that which he imposed on the guilty. Several times I heard how sad he had been when, on Christmas night 1862, as he was giving his children their first Communion, he saw, by a permission of God, the sacrilegious state of two little girls. He found no rest until he had reconciled the two guilty ones with the good God.

It was difficult to confess long to Father Chevrier without conceiving a lively horror of sin. He had a manner of his own of saying: “My child, you must no longer grieve the good God.” The long sittings he held in the holy tribunal throughout his priestly life, and the zeal with which he bore its fatigues, are well fitted to make

us understand that he would have wished to destroy sin to put in its place the love of God. The Father said to us one day: “If the good God gives me back my health, I want to wage an implacable war on the devil.”

The Father had a very great horror of sin. He fled even the shadow of evil. One wondered what he could possibly accuse himself of in confession. “Ah! my children,” he said to us, “let us watch well that sin may not reign in us; we must avoid it and work to make others avoid it. What a misfortune when sin dominates in a family, in a community: it is disorder, it is ruin.” He inspired in us a great horror of sin, especially in confession. It sufficed, moreover, to hear him speak of the malice of sin or of the holiness of God, in his public instructions or better still in his Stations of the Cross, to understand how much he had sin in horror and what zeal he had to combat and destroy it, had that been possible for him. It was always on account of God that he made sin hated. He spoke little of hell, even to children, but much of the misfortune of being separated from God by the stain produced in the soul by sin. He said:

> *“The great effect of sin is to put between God and us a separation, a wall. Man has separated himself from God. God is no longer with him, He is no longer with his mind, He is no longer in his soul, in his will, He is no longer in his actions. Great misfortune of men! When God sent the angel to the Blessed Virgin to repair sin, he said to her: The Lord is with thee. [Luke i, 28.] You, you have not lost God. And at Mass, which is the reparation of sin, the priest often repeats: Dominus vobiscum. The Lord be with you, that is to say: may this separation cease for you, Christians.”*

The Father felt himself pressed, each day, at the hour of the great silence, to come to the chapel to recite, with arms in the form of a cross, at the feet of Our Lord, the *Parce, Domine* [“Spare, O Lord”], and to implore the divine mercies for himself and for the house, to ask pardon for the iniquities that might have been committed during the day, and to pray for sinners. What pressing solicitations he knew how to find in his heart and to render in his words, to inspire in his children, in the weekly confession, the horror of sin and even of the lightest faults. To guard us against the danger to which the habit of negligences or light faults exposes, he often quoted to us and commented on the word of Ecclesiasticus: *Qui modica spernit paulatim decidet.* “He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little.” [Ecclus. xix, 1.]

He neglected no means of preserving himself even from all venial sin and of advancing in perfection. To reach this end more surely, he had made for himself a rule of employing the following means:

> *“1. We shall choose among our confrères a true friend whom we shall charge to make known to us our faults and to warn us when we fall into some fault.*
>
> *“2. We shall make each day our particular examen on our dominant fault and the principal virtue we must acquire.*
>
> *“3. When we fall into some external fault, we shall go in the evening to accuse ourselves of it to our superior and ask him for a penance.*
>
> *“4. Each week we shall assemble and accuse ourselves publicly of our external failings relative to our rule, our employment, our character.*
>
> *“5. We shall humbly accept the observations made to us and the penances imposed on us.”*

The Father avoided even imperfections. To correct himself the better of his external faults and to teach religious persons to correct themselves of them, in his *True Disciple* Father Chevrier makes a long list in which all the faults of mind and body are enumerated in detail. To find all these faults he must have studied and examined much, not only his conscience but also all that could ill edify the weak. He said to us:

> *“Jesus Christ must be seen in our bearing, in our carriage, in our words, in our eyes, in all our exterior. The priest, the religious, represent Jesus Christ to the world. Everything in us must reproduce Jesus Christ, we must spread the good odour of Jesus Christ. That people of the world be hasty, slow, abrupt, sulky, touchy, awkward, very little attention is paid to it; but let these same faults be found in a priest, in a person consecrated to God, at once people are ill edified. Let us strive to rid ourselves of our external faults, the better to represent Jesus Christ and edify our neighbour.”*

The Father recommended to two of his seminarians who were away to write to him often to give an account of their conduct and added these words, which I reproduce as I found them in this letter of the Father:

> *"Reprove one another for your different faults; it is a good way of correcting them, and in reproving each other thus one exercises a great act of charity toward one's brethren, and he who receives the observation makes an act of humility agreeable to God and useful to his soul."*

He was pleased to see this admonition or accusation made with humility and charity. I remember that once he expressed his satisfaction during the *coulpe* [the community's public avowal of faults, from Lat. *culpa*], because he who was accusing himself had humbly acknowledged something reprehensible in his character. The child had said: "Father, I am not cheerful enough." "You say well, my child, and it is a fault for a servant of the good God."

He said: "It is important to know one's faults well, but there are few persons who know them and who wish to be reproved for them. For us, we must choose someone in the house whom we shall ask to reprove us for our faults. And we shall not fear to accuse ourselves of our external failings. We must reprove one another mutually and charitably; we must also reprove all that does not glorify Our Lord and pass over nothing for souls of good will. It is taking the interests of God to destroy evil in oneself and in others."

The Father drew from devotion to the Holy Spirit great graces for the work of his sanctification and the perfection of his ordinary actions: he gave himself up, in a way, to the action of the Holy Spirit. Thus he counselled this devotion as a very efficacious means of arriving at the reform of oneself. He likewise recommended the regular frequenting of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, to arrive more surely at the stripping off of one's evil habits and natural imperfections, and at putting on Jesus Christ. He did not like what is narrow, vulgar, petty; he had a broad mind, great and lofty views; he had a great heart and could not bear around him the self-interested calculations of egoism.

A Mind Constantly Occupied with God. His Manner of Speaking of Him and Praying to Him

The Servant of God said: "Where your treasure is, there is your heart also. If Jesus Christ is our treasure, our heart and our thought will always be with Him." [Matt. vi, 21.] The thought of God occupied his mind exclusively and habitually: without neglecting anything of the duties of his charge and the functions of his ministry, he was literally lost in God, in the meditation of His infinite perfections, in the consideration of the grandeurs and beauties of Jesus Christ. It was his life; he walked constantly under the eye of God, penetrated with the sense of His divine presence, and at whatever hour one approached him one was sure to surprise him in his mysterious converse; all the rest was indifferent to him. He found true joy only in occupying himself with God and the things of God. He never appeared to be entirely at external things. He had a continual recollection which was like a state of most perfect union with Our Lord. Hence it came that he spoke very little and only out of charity or propriety. It was visible that he never ceased to study Our Lord and to converse with Him.

He said: "When one loves Jesus Christ, one must trouble little about the rest. Let Jesus alone fill your heart. Let Jesus Christ alone suffice you." He said again: "All perfection is contained in these three words: I am Jesus Christ's. Jesus Christ is my life. It is no longer I who live, it is Jesus Christ who lives in me." [Gal. ii, 20.] He added: "One must occupy oneself much with Our Lord and little with oneself. Our Lord is so beautiful and we are so ugly, so full of faults!"

With the good God the Father was in his element; thus one approached him, so to speak, only with respect and recollection, as one would a sanctuary, so much did one fear to disturb his intimate union with God. "Let us go and preach, brother," St Francis of Assisi said one day to one of his religious. One may say that the Father excelled in this kind of preaching, so pious, modest and recollected was he in his comings and goings;

his bearing spoke of God and led to God.

After many embarrassments, many difficulties, many explanations, we obtained at last one day that he should be photographed. “I do not wish to be represented all alone,” he said to us; “I want my Master with me,” and he took his crucifix.

Father Chevrier liked to speak frequently of the good God; it was his principal occupation in the parlour, in the sacristy and in the confessional. One day he wrote to his seminarians: “To know how to speak of the good God, how beautiful that is, my little friends!”

He was so preoccupied by the thought of God that his letters are full of it; he ordinarily speaks of Him several times in each of them. One may say that his habitual conversation bore on God or the things of God. He supernaturalized all things; his talks breathed a sweet perfume of piety and love of God. His words had a penetrating unction; one never tired of listening to him. His language, at once simple and elevated, went straight to the heart; when one left him, it was always with the resolution to become better. Men of the world, sometimes unbelievers, who had come to speak with him or hear him, withdrew under the charm of his counsels and visibly impressed by his words. When one had been a little while with him and the conversation happened to stray onto more or less vulgar ground, he was very ingenious in bringing it gently back to his favourite subject and transporting it into the domain of heavenly things, and that without effort and with an amiability by which one was delighted. A flower, a plant, a tree gave him the occasion to develop the attributes of God under familiar comparisons. Everything in nature speaks of God and he excelled at interpreting this language.

Sometimes, in the evening, on a fine night when the stars shine in the firmament, he would say to his Latin students, pointing to the sky:

> *“See these stars, how faithfully they follow the way God has traced for them, without colliding, without being confused! How they shine! What hearths of light! Well, my little friends, that is your future mission: to publish the glory and holiness of God, to shine in the world by the brightness of your virtues, to follow your way faithfully without disorder or confusion. Jesus Christ, the divine Sun of justice, will enlighten your souls and you must in your turn reflect His light on other souls.” [Cf. Mal. iv, 2.]*

His great heart, so full of sentiments of faith and love of God, thus overflowed on every occasion, and his words let one glimpse his beautiful soul. Father Chevrier worthily represented Our Lord conversing in the midst of men, and it is very rare to meet another soul uniting to this degree the whole of the supernatural qualities that one remarked in his person, his manners and his conversations.

To please God he literally sacrificed his life for his Work and for his neighbour. One day, seeing him succumb to fatigue after a long talk on Our Lord, his Latin students pointed out to him that his health did not allow him to speak so long; he said to them with an unforgettable accent: “My children, one does not tire oneself speaking of what one loves.”

He said to us: “The candle represents us before God. We are like candles blessed by Baptism and by the Eucharist. We must burn, consume ourselves with love for the good God, as the candle consumes itself, and carry in ourselves the fire of faith and love.”

Father Chevrier lived constantly united to God by the spirit of prayer. When his ministry seemed to absorb too much of his time, he withdrew into solitude to pray. “I have retired to Limonest during these days,” he wrote, “to pray and work a little and ask for the many graces that are necessary to me,” and elsewhere: “I am at present with the Carmelite Fathers to pray the good God a little and study the poverty of Our Lord.” And in some other of his letters:

> *“I think often of you, dear children, and pray often to Our Lord for you, that He may sanctify you, help you, console you, strengthen you in your combats and pains and the very great struggles that the devil will send you to tempt and discourage you. Yes, dear children, work, work much, and pray above all, for it is by prayer and work*

that you will arrive at the goal that God proposes in making you prepare for the priesthood."

When I saw the Father pray, he made me think of the Curé of Ars. He was so penetrated with the love of God that he inspired it wherever he passed. Thus, when I had to be absent from my parish of Saint-Fons, he was good enough to come himself to replace me. When I returned, my parish was always calmer and more silent. One truly felt that the Servant of God had passed that way, leaving in his traces the good odour of Jesus Christ. His attitude in prayer was striking and inspired love of the good God and recollection.

One day a superior of a community had come to see me. As it was the time of the evening exercise, I led her to the chapel and had her placed beside me in the Sisters' pew. After the exercise I expressed my regret at having forgotten to point out to her which was Father Chevrier among the priests who attended this exercise, and they were many. But this superior answered me: "That was not necessary, I recognized him at once, he shone like a star in the midst of the others." Those are her own words.

Each year, apart from his usual retreat, the Father withdrew, either to a religious house or to his house at Saint-Fons, to pray more and spend a few days in mortification and meditation. The good Father loved his little solitude at Saint-Fons very much. He went there to rest from his fatigues, to make retreats, to work at his *True Disciple*, and, when he had some pain, to console himself with his divine Master. He said: "How happy are those who have time to pray!"

He wrote in our rule that we should make one day of retreat each month to be renewed, to see where we stand with God and to prepare for death. Sometimes, when he saw someone of his house who needed to recollect himself, he made him make a little retreat, saying: "Profit by the rest God gives you to strengthen your body and your soul. Our Lord says to us as to His apostles: *Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little.* [Mark vi, 31.] When one has rested with the good God one can then work with ardour for His glory."

Father Chevrier had his mind constantly occupied with God, but I must point out that this interior occupation with God only facilitated his exterior actions. He was always simple and natural in his movements and his conduct; he attended carefully to the thing he had to do and was never absorbed. While constantly occupied with God, the good Father was very practical in all the things he had to do by duty of state, by charity or by propriety, whether in holy things or in the common things of ordinary life. At table, while taking his meal simply and modestly, he was attentive to his neighbours; a service to be rendered did not pass unnoticed. In the street he did not forget or neglect to greet; on the contrary, he anticipated the greeting; he was polite, delicate with all the persons who approached him, rich or poor. Children were not neglected in his attentions. While speaking of God and of Jesus Christ he was not at all affected; he spoke simply but with conviction and love. The naturalness he put into doing each thing clothed his words with a certain charm, so that one was never weary of them… It is his spirit of prayer, united to his spirit of faith, that made him do each thing well and each thing in its time.

Father Chevrier prayed well and knew how to make others pray well. When the movement of prayer was too hurried, too mechanical, he would, gently and calmly, make a slight signal and bring attention and piety back into the tone of the prayer. He recommended urgently to his priests to watch faithfully over this great duty of prayer, first as concerns themselves by great exactness in all the exercises of piety, then by inspiring in the children and in all the faithful the love and spirit of prayer by frequent exhortations, showing the necessity and the precious advantages of prayer. He liked to recall the example of Our Lord, who spent His nights in prayer and who so energetically recommended prayer to His apostles. "My children," he said, "prayer is our great resource, it is all our wealth. Learn well to pray and often repeat to Our Lord the word of the apostles: 'Lord, teach us to pray!'" [Luke xi, 1.]

Our Father recommended nothing so much as prayer for triumphing over temptations and every obstacle to salvation. He often quoted the word of Our Lord: "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation." [Matt. xxvi, 41.] He knew too well that of ourselves we can do nothing. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the

flesh is weak." [Ibid.]

Speaking of the necessity of prayer for the apostolic man, the Father says:

> *"We must not be astonished if Our Lord prays so often and so long; if He gives us the example of so assiduous a prayer, it is because the supernatural life is so high and the practice of the evangelical virtues so difficult for nature that we need great graces to practise them. We shall sometimes pray with arms in the form of a cross and forehead prostrate on the ground, in imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, to humble ourselves before God and to solicit the so abundant graces we need for ourselves and for others."*

The Father, not being able to pray by day as much as he would have wished, prayed during the night and withdrew into solitude whenever he could.

Horror of Blasphemy

Father Chevrier, in explaining to the children the first petition of the Our Father, *Hallowed be thy name*, inspired in them horror of blasphemy. He said: "When you hear the holy name of the good God blasphemed, you will at once send up a praise like this: My God! may Your holy name be blessed a thousand times! Never blaspheme, my children, it is a great sin!"

Once, at Limonest, a simple-minded boy [Fr. *un idiot*] having blasphemed in the yard, the Father heard him. He came down at once from his room, and taking him by the hand he put him out of the door and said to him: "Go away." This poor child wept a great deal, but the Father wished to give him a lesson. He ordered me to leave him half a day outside and to bring him to him in the evening so that he might ask pardon and promise not to swear any more.

One may say that blasphemy struck him to the heart. It happened to him at times to reprove publicly, with gentleness but with firmness, even outside the house, unknown persons who forgot themselves in his presence. This recalls to me an anecdote of which I was a witness.

One night the alarm bugle sounded in the streets of the third arrondissement and called for help against a fire. It was in the neighbourhood, scarcely five minutes from the Prado. The Father, as was his custom, crossed the dormitory, inviting us to dress in haste to go with him to the scene of the disaster. At that period steam pumps did not yet exist, help was less universally and less minutely organized, and a brigade of a hundred young people or children could still render some services. We set out under the direction of the Father. He grouped us around a pump that was not working for lack of arms; the strongest took the pump handles, the others were placed in two lines to form a chain, and to work, with spirit! We had arrived among the first, and firemen and policemen [Fr. *gardiens de la paix*] gave our captain congratulations and thanks. After half an hour a reinforcement of troops arrived; the soldiers were distributed in our ranks to reinforce them and relieve us a little. A sergeant who presided over this service let slip by inadvertence the name of the good God. The Father heard him, laid his hand lightly on his shoulder, and with kindness, calm, but in a serious tone that revealed the pain of his heart, said to him: "Ah! my friend, you must not blaspheme, otherwise I shall be obliged to make you kiss the ground!…" "Excuse me, Monsieur le Curé, it is not out of malice." All the bystanders had listened to this little dialogue in a religious silence and without permitting themselves the least unseemly remark, so much did the Father command respect.

When our poor children come to us from the streets, they have, for the most part, the sad habit of blaspheming. Thus the Father recommended to us urgently to watch this point well during their recreations, to reprove them with kindness and severity and arrive at correcting them of this unhappy fault; and when he caught them himself, crossing the yard, he gave them a paternal remonstrance in which one felt all his heart of priest and father, and ordinarily imposed on them as a penance to kiss the ground once or several times.

It is in reparation for all the blasphemies and all the outrages done to the sovereign majesty that he adopted the usage of reciting, and having recited publicly, three *Gloria Patri* after the prayers of the *Angelus*,

morning, noon and evening.

Pains Taken to Inspire the Love of God Around Him

Father Chevrier was continually preoccupied with urging souls to the love of God. One may say that he held no conversation, gave no counsel, made no instruction without bringing souls to holy love. His letters are all imbued with it:

> *"Love God," he wrote; "love Him for so many souls who do not love Him; love Him for me, that I too may love Him for you and for all the creatures of the earth."*
>
> *"Pray that I may learn to love God as I ought, so that I may teach others, and you, to love Him more."*
>
> *"Occupy yourself, then, with these good young people and make the mysteries of the life of Our Lord flower in their hearts; inspire them with devotion to the Holy Spirit, the rosary, the Way of the Cross, and tell them that in putting the love of Our Lord into souls one converts them and wins them to God."*

It was to make the good God loved that Father Chevrier wished to be a priest, that he founded the Prado, the First Communion work and the priestly work. He never ceased to preach the love of God by his conduct as well as by his words. To love God, to make Him loved: such is the sole aim of Father Chevrier and of all the works he created.

The Father had a manner of his own of saying: "We must love the good God well! We do not love the good God enough! Ah! if we loved the good God!" This accent of conviction penetrated souls. One thought one heard Blessed Jean-Marie Vianney, Curé of Ars, preaching the love of God to his parishioners. "If you love the good God well," he said, "such and such a difficulty will be smoothed, all will go better, you will see more clearly. You seek yourselves too much, you are far too preoccupied with creatures. That is what hinders the divine action in you, that is what draws on you so many miseries."

The Father said: "Yes, we must love the good God well, we who have the happiness of knowing Him; we must love Him for so many souls who do not know Him! If we loved the good God well we should not have so much trouble in making these little sacrifices of every moment, all would go much better. But we seek ourselves too much, we are full of ourselves, the love of God can find no place."

The Father writes to a scrupulous person:

> *"God never abandons a soul that wishes to love Him and has confidence in His mercy. Your imaginations pull at you, your scruples prevent you from being God's. If you knew how much you make God suffer to see you so anxious, so tormented! Begin by acting with more freedom, more love of God. Fear makes slaves, love looses them and makes them fly toward the heavens. Courage then! Go to God by love and do not fear Him so much. Love God and do not trouble about the rest.*
>
> *"Serve the good God with joy and love.*
>
> *"Your faults, your miseries, cast them into the ocean of His mercy; when one loves Jesus, one must trouble little about the rest.*
>
> *"In every way, in every vocation, there are pains, cares. One must ask the good God for one thing only, to love Him well, to love Him simply, and that His holy will be accomplished in everything.*
>
> *"God prefers to see you come to Him with a little more love and more imperfect, than with more fear and more perfection."*

The Father was always recollected and united to Our Lord. He said: "To love God, to make known Him and His Son Jesus, is that not beautiful enough? Why occupy ourselves with anything else?"

He carried the love of God to heroism. To please God he sacrificed his life for his work. We often saw him make great efforts of voice to speak of God and answer all those who came to him. He brought souls to God by every possible means. He was for the glory of God and the interest of souls what a rich miser is for his

gold and silver: he lets nothing be lost. When the Father spoke to us of loving God, of loving Our Lord, his face lit up with a sweet smile, his speech flowed as from a spring, and even when ill he was inexhaustible; it was a veritable enthusiasm.

While I was in charge of the sacristy, a magnificent monstrance was brought to him one day. As I was admiring it, the Father came in and said to me: “So you find it very beautiful? If you want to make an act of perfect charity, I give it to you.” [*Perhaps: if you wish to make an act of perfect charity, I give it to you*—i.e., he invites the speaker to love disinterestedly; the sense of the sentence is somewhat elliptical.]

The Father did not like things to be done from self-interest. A person said to him one day: “Father, in making one’s Way of the Cross at the Sepulchre one does not gain the indulgences.” “One always gains the love of the good God,” he answered; “one must not work so much from interest, the good God is rich enough to pay us. One must not be so afraid. The love of the good God is everything.”

In all the methods he recommended in his house for the direction or supervision of the children, he wished the love of God to hold first place.

> *“It is not by rigour, force, a military discipline that you will obtain a serious and lasting result. Put first the love of God into souls, the rest will come quite gently. Whether there be a little more or a little less noise in the house is not the essential. What matters is that the good God be not offended, that He be loved. In this way you may have scatterbrains, but you will not make hypocrites. As long as we have not put the faith and love of God into souls we shall have done nothing: it is there we must begin, there the constant efforts of our life must tend; it must wear itself out, consume itself in this work. We ought to be able to run in the streets and along the roads to preach God!”*

The principal motive for which he wished the little children to be gathered on Thursdays and on all days of vacation was to put into these young souls the knowledge and love of God. He took great interest in this work of the poor and the little; it was specially dear to him.

> *“Ah!” he said to us, “this work of the little children gives you an excellent occasion to exercise your zeal in silence and humility, to make the apprenticeship of your mission as apostles, of your future ministry. By the work one knows the workman; it is there I shall know your zeal, your devotedness, your aptitudes.*
>
> *“How I love to contemplate you in the midst of this little world! What a ravishing spectacle in the eyes of Our Lord, and how it must please His divine Heart! Poor little ones! they are never spoken to of the good God in their schools, nor probably in their families; they grow up like little animals or little savages. What sad elements for the society to come! What a service to render them!*
>
> *“It is a work that demands much self-denial, devotedness, courage, for if it is consoling, it is painful to carry out, it is tiring; it must truly be done for the love of God and for souls.*
>
> *“It is not enough to begin it, to busy oneself with it for a day, a week, a month; one must, with the help of God, continue it with great exactness and regularity and not forget the word of the Master: ‘As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me.’ [Matt. xxv, 40.] What a touching word! What blessings and promises it contains! One sometimes applies oneself, takes every care to preach before a distinguished and numerous audience, one seeks to please it and even to convince it, to win it to Jesus Christ, and one neglects to occupy oneself with these little souls, so capable nevertheless of receiving grace and truth in a heart still innocent.”*

By these words and others like them the Father frequently exhorted us to carry out so beautiful a work. He wished it to serve as the beginning of our apostolate. He sent us (we were Latin students) through the streets to seek the little children and gather them: we made them play, sing, and led them to the chapel of the Sepulchre; one of us supervised them, another evangelized them, showing them the pictures, the statues, explaining to them the symbolism or the meaning of each thing, having them make little acts of love of God, and we recited a little prayer all together before dispersing. The Father’s happiness was to come and surprise us in the exercise of this ministry, sometimes to attend our little talks, and joy beamed on his brow when we appeared to acquit ourselves only moderately. If the children were too numerous we divided them into

several groups, and each section came in its turn to the Sepulchre; the lecturer and the supervisor then exchanged roles. We were sometimes very tired, but always very glad.

The Father affirmed that when we worked thus to make the good God known and loved, Providence intervened more visibly and paid its little workmen. Resources came and there was in the atmosphere of the Prado a renewal of fervour and piety.

In our little meetings the Father aimed at rooting the love of God deeply in our hearts, at increasing zeal in them, at developing the sense and spirit of apostolate—in a word, at making of us true evangelical workmen, following the example and word of the Master: "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." [Matt. iv, 19.] He admirably commented to us on the word of the great apostle: "When one truly loves God, one gives all and gives oneself!" Even more than his words and exhortations, his conduct, all his actions, brought souls to love God. Merely to see him one felt the desire to be good. Marvellous power of holiness! O my God, for love of You, to love You more, give us saints! Make saints of us!

The Father wrote to his seminarians:

> *"My very dear children, a little moment with my children of Alix—it is already a long time since I have said anything to you. I am at present at Saint-Léonard, at the house of Abbé Villion, who is ill, and I have retired for a few days to work a little. First I thank you for your good letters, whether at the beginning of the year or for my feast. I bless all the good sentiments that God has put in your soul and I pray Him to make them grow in perfect charity and in the love of Our Lord, for it is to Him and toward Him that all must return.*
>
> *"The wishes and hopes I form for you, dear children, are that you grow more and more in the knowledge and love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the author of all good in us and who alone can produce in us perfect works.*
>
> *"'Whatsoever you do,' says St Paul, 'do it for the glory of Our Lord.' [Cf. 1 Cor. x, 31; Col. iii, 17.] Look upon Him as the foundation of all things, let Him be as the sole aim of all your work and of your beautiful vocation. To know Jesus Christ, to work for Jesus Christ, to die for Jesus Christ, that is our whole motto and our whole life. Let the world work to acquire a name, glory, honours, fortune, esteem—folly! All that passes; there is but one thing that remains: that which rests on the eternal Master who came on earth to instruct and lead us. Fix your mind well on that. When one is young, the glitter of the world sometimes strikes, and there comes unhappily to mingle with our good thoughts quite earthly ideas, ideas of family, of well-being, of position, of an honourable life, what do I know—everything that passes through the mind. Oh! very dear children, raise your heart very high and let all your thought, all your desire be to honour and imitate your Master, who alone is worthy of your attention and your love: it is thus that you will merit my affection, my esteem and my true love. Oh! it is all the desire of my heart to see you worthy of your divine Master, to see you walk in His footsteps and copy Him faithfully; then I shall believe that my time has not been lost, that God's alms have been well placed and that you answer the expectation of my heart. I am happy when I read your letters and see in them a little love of God breaking through, a little of that supernatural sentiment which tends toward God and which must make you worthy apostles of Jesus Christ.*
>
> *"Yes, your letters have consoled me much and I am happy to think of you, and every day I do not forget you, dear children. No day passes, I would even say no hour, in which my thoughts do not naturally turn toward God to ask that you become priests according to His heart, for you are my hope, my consolation and my support. And in whatever place divine Providence calls you, I shall always be able to say: My God, I have given You true disciples; if I have done nothing on earth, at least others will labour for me and do what I could not do. Be blessed then, dear children; I pray for you and I call down on your souls, which are dear to me, all heavenly blessings. Do not be discouraged in the temptations that may come; walk with courage, ceasing not to pray, like St Paul, to obtain the love of Our Lord, so that you may spread it abundantly later on earth.*
>
> *"Forgive me for writing to you thus without style, without phrases; I write as I think, and it is with my heart that I write to you, and I love you as my children. Be wholly God's, wholly Jesus Christ's and wholly the Church's, and thus we shall all be united by the sweetest, strongest and most lasting bonds, because those alone hold for time and eternity. Pray for me and for my children, your brothers of the Prado.*
>
> *"Your Father, who loves you and blesses you."*

And in a letter to a person living in the world:

> *“May the good God be blessed in all: it is the prayer I habitually make. My God, if I am still useful to Your work, keep me; if not, take me. Let us profit well by our life to love Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Master.”*

Chapter IV. Charity Toward the Neighbour

Chapter IV. Charity Toward the Neighbour

Spiritual aid. — Love of neighbour. — Conversion of sinners. — Labours undertaken for the salvation of souls. — Compassion for the afflicted. — Fervour and efficacy of the holy ministry. — His kindness. — Souls in Purgatory. — Conduct toward persecutors. — Care to avoid discord. — His mercy. — Having at heart the good name of the neighbour. Temporal aid. — Loving and helping the poor. — Care of the sick. — Charity for prisoners. — Thoughts on charity.

SPIRITUAL AID

Love of Neighbour. Conversion of Sinners

The Servant of God showed throughout his life a heroic charity toward his neighbour. In this he wished to imitate Our Lord in the holy Tabernacle, and when he had meditated well the examples the divine Model gives us there, he concluded that to resemble Him one must give one's body, one's mind, one's time, one's goods, one's health, one's life, and give life around one by one's faith, doctrine, words, prayers, powers, examples. "We must become good bread," he added; "the priest is a man devoured." [Fr. *un homme mangé*; see Chapter II.] He said to his first priests: "I have killed myself at the work, you must kill yourselves at it in your turn. It is better to live ten years less working for God and souls than to live ten years more doing nothing." "Christian for oneself, priest for others," he repeated to us often. He attributed this saying to Brother Jacques, who was for many years porter at the Prado; but I believe it is rather Brother Jacques who borrowed it from Father Chevrier, whom he must very often have heard say the same thing in other terms.

The Father made God loved in His creatures. One felt that the love he had for his neighbour came from his love for God. He said: "Jesus loved us to the point of coming down from heaven to earth, to the point of sacrificing Himself and dying for us; He gives Himself to us and to each of us in the holy Eucharist. On seeing any Christian whatever, the most disgusting child, I can say: Jesus sacrificed Himself for him and is ready to give Himself to him as food. I must do the same. I shall base all my exercises of charity toward my neighbour on this truth."

The Father often said to us: "We must apply ourselves to suffer everything from everybody and to make nobody suffer." And he did so continually.

The Father says in the rule of the Sisters: "Charity consists in being good to everybody, in having hatred and antipathy against nobody, but on the contrary in feeling kindness and benevolence toward everybody, toward one's enemies and toward poor sinners. Charity consists in bearing with everybody and complaining of nobody." He often repeated, and had inscribed in his chapel in large letters above the choir, the word of Our Lord: "Love one another." [John xiii, 34.]

His kindness toward his neighbour was inexhaustible. His welcome was such that those who had been rebuffed everywhere, the wretched, the criminals, felt that they belonged to him and were received by him in such a way as to give him their whole confidence.

The Father loved sinners very much. It was a true joy to him when a sinner came to confess. Thus he left everything for that soul. We saw him hear confessions at all hours of the day and sometimes late into the night. If he often reconciled souls with God, he often also reconciled men with one another. How many times he put peace and union into families. I once saw him make two big young men kneel before their mother to ask her pardon, for they were behaving badly toward her. He was often called to the sick: a good number wished for no one but him. After reconciling them with the good God, he had them ask pardon of those who surrounded them or of a certain member of the family with whom the sick person was not on good terms. He

also inspired this act in religious souls before dying.

The Father loved sinners in order to convert them, and he said: “We must flee sin and not sinners. On the contrary, we must speak to sinners. See, Our Lord was accused of being always with publicans and sinners. And Our Lord said: *I came not to call the just, but sinners.* [Matt. ix, 13.] I am come to bring back the strayed sheep. If we wish to be the disciples of Our Lord, we must do the same.”

How the Father loved sinners! for their souls are on the road to perdition. How he would have wished to go and seek out one by one these poor strayed souls and bring them back to the way of salvation! He consecrated to them his time, his life; he treated them with kindness, I was about to say with consideration, yet not sparing them useful reprimands or grave warnings, reproving them with authority for their faults; but his paternal heart knew how to soften the rigour of his remonstrances. Thus, on leaving him, souls were rather under the influence of grace and confidence than under the sway of discouragement. He would not suffer them to be rebuffed, and one day when, in his entourage, one of these poor souls had been somewhat roughly handled, I heard him gently and sadly repeat this word of St Francis de Sales: “O my God! so there are only You and I who love sinners!”

Never did he haggle with them over his time or his pains; at whatever hour of the day or night he was called to one of them, however tired he was, he went. How many souls owe him their return to God, the last consolations and the grace of a good death! It was not rare to hear one of these laggards, yielding at last to the call of grace, cry out: “I am willing, but go and fetch me Father Chevrier, or the Curé Chevrier, I want no other.” By dint of loving them, he ended by becoming sympathetic to the most recalcitrant.

To this love for sinners he joined prayer, a perpetual and fervent prayer. He knew well that God’s grace alone prevails over souls. How he asked for it, how he solicited this grace of conversion for sinners in general and sometimes for this or that soul more specially entrusted to his solicitude! And often he added penances and various mortifications to his prayers to make them more efficacious, following the recommendations of Our Lord and the practice of the saints. He said: “Souls are instructed by word, but they are bought by suffering and penance.” He had much prayer made in the house for sinners, and he had an *Ave Maria* recited in the chapel specially for this intention, every morning after the community Mass and every evening at prayer, a tradition which has been preserved in the Work. It is for this also that he had so great a devotion to the Passion of Our Lord and to the exercise of the Way of the Cross. He knew how salutary this exercise is, how it impresses the faithful and produces fruits of conversion in souls. He made, moreover, the sweet and consoling experience of it, and from my first years at the Prado I remember hearing him, in recommending this devotion to us, affirm that he had never made the Way of the Cross without noting shortly afterwards the return of some soul to the good God.

The Father prayed and had prayer made in his work for sinners. In his rule he wishes a part of the breviary to be specially consecrated to asking the conversion of sinners. When he had an exorcism to perform, he surrounded himself with persons to pray.

When the Father gave the cross to be kissed during the ceremonies of Holy Week, to the crowd that filled the chapel, he always had a pious word to address in particular. Sometimes it was simply: “May the good God bless you! May the good God give you His wisdom!” To others: “You will come and find me one of these days.” How many poor sinners were touched thus and afterwards came to find the Father to confess. I can cite this fact of which I was myself the witness. On a Holy Saturday evening, at a late hour, three big young men had come to confess. Father Chevrier then asked me to accompany them with a candle to the little parlour. I was a witness of the satisfaction they felt after their confession and of the pleasure that Father Chevrier’s heartfelt welcome had given them. They had arrived hesitating and went away full of joy.

Father Chevrier was a living image of Jesus treating sinners with gentleness, like the Samaritan woman, the woman taken in adultery. He was the good Shepherd taking the strayed sheep on his shoulders, the Father of

the prodigal son, the good Samaritan. Sinners found in him a Father, a faithful and devoted friend; they were always welcome at the Prado; they knew it. The good Father, speaking of the gentleness necessary to priests and to all who wish to do good to souls, says to us:

> *"Gentleness is the particular character of the Saviour of men, who is called to heal. Gentleness is the magnet that attracts and wins hearts. Thus Our Lord says that by meekness one possesses the earth [Matt. v, 4]: men, animals, everything lets itself be won by gentleness; thus it is the first quality one remarks in Jesus. Woe to those who are abrupt, severe, haughty and harsh!"*

The Father was, by his gentleness, a true copy of Our Lord; this is why we saw him attract so many souls of sinners, of the poor and the afflicted. He did good to all.

The Father always made excuses for sinners. One day a person spoke to him with a little bitterness of her sister, who was behaving badly; the Father said to her: "If the good God had not kept you, you would perhaps have done worse."

My uncle, who had not been to confession for a very long time, came one day to see me at the Prado. I took him to the Father. The Father simply took his hands and said a little word to him; my uncle began at once to weep, and a week later he came back from Vienne expressly to confess.

"My God! give me this house and I shall give You souls!" To bring souls back to God was like the aim of his house, and what reassured him about his work was that souls had been converted in it. The Servant of God admitted this himself in the following words: "Since the origin of the Prado many things have happened. Some souls have been converted there; that is all my desire!"

He wished everyone in the house to work for the salvation of souls. Sometimes he stimulated us with words such as: "We are lazy, we let souls be lost by our fault, because we do not know how to attract and instruct them. Our Lord, with twelve apostles, converted the world, and I, with a far greater number, do nothing at all. We must work for the salvation of souls, we are here for that. But to busy oneself with others, one must have one's bread baked, that is to say, have much to give." [Fr. *avoir son pain cuit*: to be provided for, to have one's livelihood assured.]

The Father's great desire was to communicate to others this zeal for the conversion of sinners. After each of his instructions to the pupils of the Clerical School we felt animated by a more ardent desire to work for the salvation of souls. I remember that once, in sending us off on vacation, he told us that each of us must convert at least one sinner. Impelled by this word, on arriving at home I set about visiting a sick old man. After a few days he admitted to me that, seeing his illness without remedy, he had thought for a moment of cutting his throat.

Father Chevrier prayed and had prayer made that the good God might find everywhere good workmen, faithful servants, devoted priests, working actively for the salvation of souls. "Do not confine yourself," he writes in a letter, "to offering your pains to God for yourself alone; put everything into the hands of the Blessed Virgin Mary, who is the great distributor of God's graces, and if you have anything that can be useful, offer it for the Church, for priests, and ask God for the holiness of priests, so that we may put no obstacle to the salvation of souls and to the outpouring of graces on the faithful." And in another letter: "The world is full of iniquity and ignorance; let us pray that the Father of the family send good workmen and that he may cultivate the plants that wither for lack of cultivation."

The Father wrote: "Today more than ever saints are needed to work more usefully for the conversion of sinners, for the glory of God and the triumph of our holy Mother the Church."

He would have wished to have more zeal and light, more action on souls to convert them, and he asked God and the saints for this divine science, as one sees from this passage of a sermon of Saint-André, which I quote textually:

"Missionaries write often that their nets break and that they cannot draw them in without powerful help. Oh! how happy you are, priests of Asia and Africa! Your nets break, and we, we may spread them in vain, we labour without fruit. Ah! worthy ministers of God, give us your nets, that we may cast them with as much success as you; tell us what your secret is for converting so many souls; but you have on your side the eloquence of the heart, you have on your side the weight of your virtues, and when the infidel asks you: Who are you? you can answer: I made six thousand leagues to convert you, I crossed the seas, I suffered everything to bring you to the religion of heaven. And these words, more eloquent than the most brilliant discourses, convert souls. Ah! Lord, give me this eloquence of the heart which persuades and converts souls; give me this irresistible force of virtue and sacrifice which persuades even more than words. Ah! I do not ask the brilliant externals of the mind nor elegant researches, and it is not to this study that I shall apply myself. St Paul knew only Jesus crucified [1 Cor. ii, 2], and with this one science he brought sinners back. Teach me this divine secret, that here, as among barbarous nations, we may rejoice to see the number of our faithful increase every day!"

Labours Undertaken for the Salvation of Souls

God alone could reveal to us all that his apostle's zeal and his saint's heart inspired Father Chevrier to do for the salvation of souls. The good angels, who were the happy witnesses of it, could tell us the marvels of his charity, marvels accomplished successively at Saint-André, at the Cité, at the Prado or elsewhere, and whose secrets we shall know in eternity. But what we know of it, what we have seen and heard, what remains of it, is already a splendid testimony rendered to the heroism of his charity.

It is for souls that, answering the call of God, he prepared for the priesthood. It is for souls that he conceived the design of leaving for the Missions to carry the word of God to distant lands; he renounced it only when obedience had taught him that such was not God's will for him.

It was with the thought of souls that he wrote on leaving the seminary:

"Here I am on the point of being charged with others; the salvation of souls will be entrusted to me, these souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Why, Lord, do You deign to call me to such high functions? You know well all my misery and nothingness. A priest is a man who knows how to forget himself, who knows how to sacrifice everything for the Gospel. How can one do good? It is by sacrifice and devotedness."

It was for souls that as a young curate he devoted himself with such ardour, working without respite, lavishing himself on the poor, the sick and sinners. He founded the society of St Aloysius Gonzaga and busied himself actively with catechisms and preaching. "He was so good," says one of his parishioners, "that he had the key to all hearts."

Shortly afterwards, pressed to walk in a more perfect way by a life of renunciation and sacrifice, he entered the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus, then founded the Prado. "It was more than a year," he writes, "that I had looked at this house with longing; more than once even, in my prayers, I had sent up to God this cry: My God! give me this house, and I shall give You souls!" It was for souls that he established the work of the First Communion of boys and girls, the work of Perseverance, the evening schools, the Thursday and vacation work for the little children, the Sunday classes and catechisms.

It was to form a nursery of apostles, of men entirely disposed to follow him in the fulfilment of the evangelical counsels in order to work more efficaciously for the salvation of souls, that he established the Clerical School, that he wrote his *True Disciple*—a gigantic work long prepared and matured beside the Tabernacle, the Crib and the Cross—and that he drew from it for his priests and for himself that admirable rule of priestly life. It was to supervise and prepare its execution in his first children that he did not hesitate, in spite of the poor state of his health and the cares he left behind him, to make the journey to Rome and to stay there several months. It was for the service of all his works that he surrounded himself with religious and devoted souls, striving to inculcate in them the same spirit, uniting them in a little community of Sisters who should live very humble, very modest, very poor, very unknown to the world, very obedient and faithful to their little rule: a true family all of whose members would be, under various titles, his auxiliaries, and on

whose devotedness and charity he and his successors could count.

He also took an interest in the category of children of little intelligence who, by assiduous, devoted and persevering care, by a particular method, are capable of acquiring with time and patience, and by the grace of God, a certain sufficient notion of the principal mysteries of religion and of the great features of the life of Our Lord, and thus become capable of being presented for the sacraments of Confirmation, Penance and the Eucharist. He even exercised this charity toward some of them for a certain time, catechizing them himself or entrusting them to the solicitude of Father Jaricot and of some Sisters at Limonest. This work was not without result, and he had observed that the good God took pleasure in blessing and rewarding the care and devotedness lavished on these poor afflicted ones and the efforts made to reach their souls. Not having been able to gather all the elements necessary for the organization of this work, he could not continue it, but he left precious indications on the subject and expressed his desire that in the future this question should be studied from the practical point of view and that this project should not be abandoned.

It was for souls, that they might have life and have it more abundantly [John x, 10], that he organized the catechisms of the Prado and instituted in the chapel that variety of exercises so capable of maintaining every day, and developing more and more, faith and a well-enlightened piety: “To make Jesus Christ known, to give life to souls, that is the great mission of the priest.” Evening preaching, Sunday preaching, familiar talks, explanations of the Rosary and of the Way of the Cross, conferences on the divinity of Jesus Christ, on the life and teachings of the divine Master, and so on. “We ought to be able to go into the streets and public squares,” he said again, “into the factories and workshops, to preach Jesus Christ and to tell all these poor people that they have a soul to save.”

In a word, this great heart of an apostle and saint, this great priestly soul contained an ardent zeal that asked to show itself and spread: each new misery, each new infirmity of which he was a witness suggested to him a new form of devotedness. Death surprised him in the midst of vast aspirations and numerous projects, and there is no doubt that, had he lived, he would have drawn in his train generous and intrepid devotedness. “I have workmen quite new,” he said, speaking of his first priests; “they must not be left in idleness: they ask only to be employed.”

It is fitting to remark likewise that it was out of zeal and great devotedness to souls that the Father accepted the cares and responsibilities of the pastoral charge in the parish that the bishopric of Grenoble entrusted to him at Moulin-à-Vent, near Lyons. He did not refuse to add this new surcharge of labours to a life already so occupied, in spite of the evident fatigues he foresaw would result for him. But this entered so well into the frame of his ideas and views. It was a poor parish, where there was no resource. How he could devote himself there! and how it would serve him to exercise the zeal of his coadjutors!

If the Father was indefatigable in the service of souls, he intended that his entourage should be so too, and he wished us to understand, from the very first days of our priesthood, the necessity and importance of this work and consequently the duty of setting ourselves to it immediately. At Rome itself, in a small meeting, he distributed the employments, giving us first general recommendations, then seeing us in private, speaking to us of the employment that fell to each, giving us brotherly counsels and helping us with his lights and experience. “My children, I count on you: up to now you have received, and received much; henceforth you must give, and give much.” In intimacy he had us renew the promise to devote ourselves to the Work, at least for a determined time, reminded us in convinced terms and with a certain emotion that it was the work of God and that Our Lord asked us to enter resolutely on this way, and showed us what good would result from it for the House, for example, and for our personal sanctification. Each of us made known to him our little written resolutions.

There was talk of prolonging our stay in the Eternal City to give us time to finish our preparation for the licentiate in canon law for which two of us had enrolled, but one fine morning, impelled by zeal for souls and

doubtless by divine inspiration, he said to us: “My children, that is enough, on the road! The Prado has need of us; make your farewells, we shall leave Tuesday or Wednesday. Souls are waiting for us: it is not diplomas, it is workmen that they need. On the road!”

I was the only one who had not, like my confrères, the consolation of having my family at my first Mass on arrival, for their parents lived in Lyons and mine were far away and had not the facility to travel; they counted, moreover, on my visit to the home country. I made known to the Father this quite legitimate desire. “My child,” he answered me, “to the work first; remember the word of Our Lord: *Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?* [Luke ii, 49.] Therefore, before all, souls! Tomorrow, Monday, you will take possession of your employment and you will begin the catechism.” I did with joy what he asked of me, and I admit quite simply that, by a particular grace of the good God doubtless, obedience cost me nothing. I set to work with spirit. On the Friday of the same week the Father had me called: “You will leave tomorrow for Charlieu and you will return Monday.” I at once notified my parents by telegram and the next day I was with them.

In acting thus the Father doubtless wished to make us perform acts of renunciation, to make us accept small sacrifices, but he wished above all to make us understand the necessity and importance of work and the place it ought to hold in a priestly life, for one is a priest for others, one is established the distributor of the gifts of God and the dispenser of His mysteries [1 Cor. iv, 1]; one must always be ready to give and to give oneself, and one must scrupulously avoid loss of time, useless outings, and busy oneself before all with God and souls. Thus, to initiate us early into this conduct, in the first years of the Clerical School he granted us only a fortnight of vacation outside the Prado, from 16 August to 1 September, and even then it was permitted to shorten it. Afterwards we made some pilgrimage together or spent a week at Limonest, and the rest of the time, until the beginning of October, we busied ourselves with the little children and rendered to the Prado the ordinary small services it needs. Thus one accustomed oneself, and accustomed one’s own, to mutual renunciations; one prepared for oneself an easier future, more independent on that side; one attached oneself more to the Work; knowing the Prado better one loved it more, one obtained more graces, one could acquire more merits, one made the apprenticeship of the apostolic life, one had at last the consolation and enjoyment of rendering some little services to this well-beloved Prado in return for all that one received or was to receive from it or through it.

To arrive at procuring the salvation of souls, Father Chevrier began by sanctifying himself. “The priest,” he says, “must shine in the world by his good examples and by his virtues. He must practise the virtues opposed to the vices of the world, and the more the world is corrupt and spoiled, the more the priest must shine in its eyes by his virtues and astonish it, carry it along by his words and above all by his examples.” Convinced that it must be so in order to do good to souls, the good Father adopts a motto which he strives to put into practice: he wishes to be another Jesus Christ. To become another Jesus Christ, the Father applies himself to follow Him in fasting and prayer, in His gentleness and humility, in His poverty and His love for men, in His preaching and persecutions, in His sufferings and in His death. He practises this at the same time as he preaches it.

Father Chevrier urged all the members of his Work to labour for the sanctification of souls and to do good to all. To put the divine fire into our hearts, he had a motto of charity taken from the teachings of Our Lord: *Take ye and eat.* [Matt. xxvi, 26.] “We must regard ourselves as a spiritual bread which must nourish everybody by word, example and devotedness.” He was this spiritual bread.

We find these lines written in his hand:

> *“You are in my eyes like a tree that lacks light and dew: it is without vigour, without strength, the sap cannot rise, and it has neither leaves, nor flowers, nor fruit. There is lacking in you life, that Christian life, that sap of faith which must animate our souls, which must dispel that mortal languor that one remarks in your hearts. God is not served well enough—let me say it to you without detours and in simplicity of language: you do not serve*

your Lord and your God well enough."

The Father was constantly preoccupied with the salvation of souls. He urged us to devote ourselves in imitation of Our Lord and to procure the salvation of the neighbour. A useless life appeared a crime in the face of Jesus Christ, whom the Father always showed full of love for souls, and who, he told us, calls us unceasingly to follow Him in His devotedness. He said: "The house of God is on fire and people amuse themselves with trifles." And again: "There is cause to weep, as the prophet said; the children have asked for bread and there is no one to break it to them." [Lam. iv, 4.]

At a meeting the Father spoke to us of souls and was so ardent that he said we ought to go into the streets to seek the children and bring them to the Prado to give them the catechism: "When I had only two or three Sisters and one Brother, we had at least three hundred children who came, and now that I have more people there are fewer children. They must be brought there, we must go and fetch them. Ah! the Protestants, they do go and seek souls, and we who have the truth do not put ourselves out enough!"

Although the Father was very busy, I observed that his love for souls led him never to take any moment of rest. Thus it often happened that on Wednesdays, the little boys being out for a walk, the little girls were alone in the chapel for the recitation of the rosary, at half past one. The Father came himself to explain a mystery of the Rosary to them, and I found him admirable in simplicity, kindness and devotedness. He placed himself before them, leaning a little against the back of a pew, and, without fear of tiring himself, spoke to them with love of Our Lord, to instruct them and to prepare them. Thus one saw him give himself without measure to all souls without distinction.

While the Father was still at the Cité, one evening he had gone to his parents' house. There was a family gathering that day; several of his relatives had come to Lyons. They wished to keep the Father, and one of his cousins tried by little stories to make him forget the hour. The Father smiled, but when the moment came to go to the evening prayer, he left at once.

Compassion for Afflicted Souls

After the example of the divine Master, the Father felt in his heart a great compassion for the unfortunate; like Jesus, he welcomed with kindness, gentleness and humility all who suffered. He made no distinction of persons, and if at times he could have a preference, it was for the most unfortunate. One day, preaching on the multiplication of the loaves, he delighted in the words of the divine Saviour: *Misereor super turbam*, "I have compassion on the multitude." [Mark viii, 2.] One would have said that he would never cease pronouncing them. Afflicted souls, like sinful souls, came therefore to him in great numbers, in full confidence; he wept with them as Jesus wept with Martha and Mary over His friend Lazarus.

The good Father said that those who remain cold and insensible to the ills of their brethren cannot have charity. His heart called to him all the unfortunate; he seemed to say like Jesus: "I am the good Shepherd. Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you." [John x, 11; Matt. xi, 28.]

I attest that during the fourteen or fifteen years that Father Chevrier was the confidant of the trials of my life, I never received from him a harsh or indifferent word, and that he always took a real part in them, without any affectation or purely natural sensibility. He spoke little on such occasions, but his words expressed a sympathy that one felt to be real and very deep. It went straight to the heart because one felt one's grief shared. He was, moreover, the same and good to all and of a very great delicacy of heart. Of a tender and expansive kindness, he drew hearts, but so high that one of his priests, echoing my thought, said to me: "One loves Father Chevrier as one loves the good God."

A man who found himself suddenly plunged into misery was on the point of putting an end to his life. Father Chevrier spoke to him with such kindness and inspired in him such resignation that he accepted his heavy cross and became thenceforth a perfect Christian, a great admirer of Father Chevrier, of whom he afterwards

spoke only with tears in his eyes.

A lady lost two of her children on the same day. The two bodies were at her house; she came to find the Father quite distraught. And she said later that the Father was of an admirable kindness and said to her a few words so full of unction that she left him comforted and submissive to the will of the good God.

Mme Laforest was a benefactress of the Work. She fell ill; the doctor had condemned her, she knew it and suffered horribly at the thought of death; she could not make her sacrifice. The Father, who was at that moment at his little solitude of Saint-Fons, was sent for. He came to visit the sick woman, who begged him with loud cries to heal her. The Father stayed by her a part of the day, exhorting and praying. When he left, after having made her make the sacrifice of her life, this person was calm and awaited death with joy and happiness. The Father said to us: “What a beautiful soul!”

He said: “We must give alms above all by pouring words of consolation into suffering souls.”

Fervour and Efficacy of the Holy Ministry

The Father exercised the holy ministry with great fervour. He said after St Paul: “Christ shall be magnified in my body.” [Phil. i, 20.] Then he added: “The body is the expression of the soul; it is by the body that we edify, it is also by the body that we scandalize. The faithful do not see the soul, they see only the exterior. It is therefore by the body that we must edify our neighbour and reproduce Jesus Christ who is in us.”

Father Chevrier was penetrated in his heart with what he wrote; he strove to edify his neighbour by all his external acts, even the most indifferent. When he fulfilled the functions of the holy ministry, the faithful were edified in seeing his noble, grave, but humble, simple bearing, without affectation. By his exterior he preached the presence of God in him and around him. His body was indeed a living victim, holy and pleasing to God. [Cf. Rom. xii, 1.] I never saw in him any slackness or negligence, and this fidelity took on a quite special character of mortification, while it showed in him a great spirit of faith and an energetic will to do good.

It was with great edification that one saw him go to the confessional with eyes modestly lowered; he knelt first for a few moments, his eyes fixed on the tabernacle or his head in his hands, and put himself in communication, by a fervent prayer, with Him who is the Resurrection and the Life [John xi, 25], the light of souls; he filled his heart with the treasures of infinite Mercy and went to distribute them to souls. What piety! what spirit of faith in the administration of the sacraments! how one felt his heart inflamed with the love of God! How beautiful he was to see when he distributed holy Communion! One read in his whole person his happiness in giving Jesus Christ to souls. His feet seemed scarcely to touch the earth while his hands held the adorable host, with which he traced religiously a great sign of the cross before laying it on the tongue of the faithful. Neither slowness nor haste, always dignified and penetrated with the deepest respect.

I saw, on several occasions, certain bystanders known for their indifference, if not their unbelief or even their impiety, deeply moved and impressed on seeing him administer the sacrament of Extreme Unction to a sick person; or deeply stirred by some good word of faith that he knew how to find in his heart. I heard them afterwards express their admiration for the dignified, elevated, pious manner in which he acquitted himself of the holy functions. I have known several conversions wrought by this simple spectacle of edification.

Thus how God blessed his ministry and made it efficacious! He alone can know the good that was done in souls through the intermediary of His worthy servant and the number of conversions of which the latter was the instrument. How people flocked to his confessional! How they sought him, how they surrounded him, to receive from him some counsel, some good word! How the help of his prayers was solicited! How he was asked to take an interest in this sick person, that sinner, this affair! People confided to him their pains, their sorrows; they wished to see him, to approach him, to receive his blessing; his mere sight did good to the soul and to the heart. I have observed, and the thing is moreover notorious, that the Servant of God did very great

good in souls, that he converted a great number of sinners, consoled and raised up many afflicted or discouraged souls, drew and directed many generous souls into the perfect ways of the evangelical counsels, and raised up around him numerous devotednesses.

The Father watched over his house and, without seeming to, saw everything at a glance. He said: “We must always reprove faults and correct them.” I saw him impose rather severe penances for a few slightly slanderous words.

The Servant of God directed souls with much zeal and devotedness. His words produced a profound impression; one came out of the confessional wholly penetrated, wholly absorbed. Under his guidance one was always in the true, in the great. He neither flattered nor deceived souls. In his kindness one felt strength. He never troubled, yet he always left the soul under the impression of the grandeur and holiness of God; he made one feel the smallness and weakness of nature. He wrote to one of his penitents: “I want you to be a strong and manly Christian and not to content yourself with a piety of imagination and sentiment which leads to nothing.”

The efficacy of the good Father’s ministry is visible in the great number of persons who came to him for confession; all were happy to have him for confessor and would never have wished to leave him. One found oneself well under his direction and counsels; he told the truth with kindness, charity and firmness. His words were received with respect and love; one kept them in one’s heart. When one could not confess to him, one wished at least to have a counsel. People came not only from the Guillotière but from the Croix-Rousse or other distant points of the city and from elsewhere; they did not find the Prado too far when they thought to meet the Father there. Not only from France but from foreign countries souls came to him whom they regarded as the successor of the Curé of Ars. It was not simple faithful only who had confidence in the good Father, but priests too came to confide their souls to him and ask his counsels. The Father had the gift of touching hearts. It was a rush to see him, speak to him, carry away from him some souvenir. Country people came with their carts, sometimes bringing sick persons, and asking to speak to the saint of the Prado. But when we went to warn the Father, we took care to hide from him that he had been asked for under that title. Once a good woman asked for “the boss” [Fr. *le patron*]; the Sister who went to warn him told him so; the Father smiled.

His Kindness

Father Chevrier drew souls irresistibly to him by kindness. At Saint-André they already said of him: “He is so good that he has the key to all hearts.” His mouth had a smile in which his whole soul showed. At times, especially when he spoke to the little ones, his head bent with an amiable condescension. His gentleness captivated. One could not tire of looking at him, nor forget him after having seen him. A benefactress who had handed him a considerable alms said: “I wondered whether it was not I who ought to thank him for having been willing to accept my offering.” His heart, naturally good but still perfected by grace, gave all who approached him the idea of God’s infinite love for souls. After speaking to him a few moments, a poor working woman, delighted, said naïvely: “My God! if You are as good as Father Chevrier, I shall not be afraid of You when You judge me!”

His kindness captivated everybody: it is no wonder if, many times, the importunate abused his charity, his time and his devotedness! Little children, like grown persons, knowing his good heart, came to him with confidence, certain of not being rebuffed. The good Father did not complain of the loss of time which, often, in the eyes of men, he would have used better in employing it for greater things. For him, he had done by kindness an act of patience and humility; he had pleased a child, imitating his divine Master who loved them so much.

The Father, who had so delicate, so generous a heart, knew how to appreciate the devotedness of his Sisters. He understood that life at the Prado, especially in the beginnings, when they were not numerous, must have

been hard for them. Thus how attentive he was to sustain their courage by a truly paternal direction. He knew how to console them in their troubles: a word from the Father sufficed to a discouraged Sister for her to return joyfully to her employment. He took an interest in their health, and when one of them was ill he brought her, by his visits, the consolations of the good God, and had her given all the care her condition required. Thus how our good elder Sisters have kept for him an affection full of veneration! how proud they are to have known him, happy to recall the good meetings he held for them almost every week and from which they came away comforted by his word! The superabundance of work cost them nothing, and very often the Father recommended to us to respect them on account of their generosity and devotedness. One day he heard one of his children of the Clerical School who, in a moment of discontent, said a disrespectful word against a Sister; he called him before all his comrades and gave him a lesson in politeness which the pupil cannot have forgotten and which served all. This wholly paternal kindness of the Father for his religious made him seek before all their spiritual advancement. He knew very well how to calm anxious souls by showing them the infinite mercy of the good God. His direction led not to fear but to the love of God.

The good Father, wishing to bring his disciples to love this beautiful virtue of charity, makes use of the teachings of Our Lord and of St Paul:

> *"The commandment of charity contains all the others. The divine Saviour, before giving Peter the government of His Church, asks of him only love. [John xxi, 15–17.] We must remember that charity is the most excellent of all virtues, that it is more excellent than faith, knowledge, poverty, penance." [Cf. 1 Cor. xiii, 2, 13.]*

The Father was gentle even toward animals. He was good to them and could not bear that harm be done to them.

Souls in Purgatory

The Father took a lively interest in the souls in Purgatory; he spoke of them with great charity in his little talks when the occasion offered, he recommended this devotion much and had prayers said for these dear souls. He often recalled their memory to us and exhorted us not to forget them in our Communions and our prayers. He spoke of them to the children of First Communion in his little words at the rosary and the Way of the Cross and in the explanation of Christian doctrine on Purgatory and indulgences. He did not forget either to say a word of them when he spoke of the holy sacrifice of the Mass, that means par excellence of coming to their aid. He introduced at the Prado the practice, in use in several churches, of singing the Vespers of the Dead throughout the octave of All Saints.

We have seen, in speaking of the love of God, how Father Chevrier made the heroic act in favour of the souls in Purgatory. I take the liberty of adding here that this good Father liked to visit, with his spiritual family, the cemeteries where rest the bodies of persons who had been dear to him during their life, specially the tomb of his good father, of the benefactors of the Work, of the children of the Prado. Every evening, at the little prayer of the persons of the Work, a *De profundis* is recited for their intention.

Conduct Toward Persecutors

Our Lord Jesus Christ had His enemies and detractors: all the saints, all who wished to practise virtue and live piously have been more or less persecuted. The Father did not escape this general rule, which, moreover, enters into the views of divine Providence. The history of his life relates that he was reproached for his odd ways of acting and his intemperate zeal. He was treated as ambitious, pretentious, senseless, proud, an intriguer, to which he answered: "Alas! how well people know me! It is true that if I intrigue it is to win souls; but I must be clumsy indeed to succeed so little! And even that little, there are moments when I am tempted to make glory of it. Yes, they are right: senseless, proud, intriguer, that is indeed I! I ask the good God every day to make me less unworthy to serve Him."

The Father bore persons and things with great patience and charity, applying himself, as he says himself, to suffer everything from everybody and to make nobody suffer. He had for maxim and rule of conduct to overcome evil by good [Rom. xii, 21], not to resist evil [Matt. v, 39], and he did not wish that around him recourse should be had to violence to defend and protect his interests or his rights. He never spoke ill of persons whom he knew to be hostile to him. The Father endured many persecutions and contradictions, even in his own house, which was still more painful to him, because they struck his Work to the heart.

In all these circumstances he was admirable. Not only did he not justify himself and not complain, but he spoke in a favourable manner of those who decried and continually persecuted him. He pointed out their qualities, their devotedness, their virtues, and said also everything that could diminish their wrongs when people wished to point them out to him and to pity him for what he had to suffer. Toward all who persecuted him thus he was good, delicate, considerate, and accused himself still of not doing enough.

When he was curate at Saint-André he had succeeded in bringing back to God several young persons given to all the vices. Now their companions in debauchery resolved to take vengeance. They waited for Abbé Chevrier one Saturday evening as he came out of the confessional, and were preparing to deal roughly with him. Then the humble priest, imitating Our Lord, said to his assailants this beautiful word: “It is I whom you seek? Here I am, do what you will,” [cf. John xviii, 4–8] and, stretching out his arms in the form of a cross, he waited. The effect was marvellous: these men, disarmed by so great a virtue, made their excuses, and it is said that they were converted.

Not only did Father Chevrier forgive the injuries received, he did better, he forgot them, as can be seen in his spiritual Testament: “I forgive with all my heart all those who may have caused me pain or offended me in any manner whatsoever. I do not remember that anyone has offended me gravely.” Mother Chevrier [Fr. *la mère Chevrier*; presumably a woman of his family, perhaps his mother—the text does not say], when she heard this word, said: “That poor Father! he had a good heart, but a very bad memory!”

At the Prado he had contradictors and opponents, but never did he permit himself to criticize them. He sought, on the contrary, to bring out the qualities they had. Like Jesus Christ, this good Father did not fear to call an enemy, with the greatest sincerity, “my friend” [cf. Matt. xxvi, 50], and to press him to his heart. By his words as by his conduct he led others to forget injuries and to imitate the divine Saviour on the cross praying for His executioners and pardoning the good thief. When the Father was contradicted to his face, he said his thought twice, then kept silence. In difficult circumstances, trials and vexations, the Father showed great patience. He held everything within himself and seemed to wish that Our Lord alone should know his suffering. Silence was his ordinary conduct.

Care to Avoid Discord

“Blessed are the peacemakers,” said Our Lord, “for they shall be called the children of God.” [Matt. v, 9.] The Father had understood this word and always applied himself to put it into practice. He did not like discussions, controversies; he preferred to them peace, charity, union. He did not like people to raise their voice to impose their opinion or make their view prevail. He gave a penance to those he caught quarrelling, sometimes a public penance, “in order,” he said, “to repair the bad impression. One must know how to sacrifice one’s ideas, one’s own judgment, to the ideas, to the judgment of others; it is at times the only means of buying peace and preserving charity, that good par excellence. Cordiality is much more meritorious and consequently more agreeable to God than the triumph of an opinion.”

He always tended to reunite divided minds by bringing hearts closer. In his talks he often recommended fraternal union, good harmony, understanding.

> *“Happy the house,” he writes, “where the members have renounced themselves! Then reign peace, joy, charity, union, strength and impulse toward good and love. According to the Master’s recommendation, our justice must be more perfect than that of the people of the world: they are always disposed to defend their rights with arms in*

hand, to fight for a trifle, to go to law for nothing. Ah! lawsuits! what a source of hatreds, divisions, enmities and vengeance! May God preserve you from them for ever! No, let there never be lawsuits among you, nor with anyone. It is far preferable to lose everything, to be stripped of everything, above all for religious, than to claim one's rights by lawsuits and quibbling. How much more worthy, more noble, greater it is to put into practice the word of Our Lord: 'But I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on thy right cheek… and if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him; and whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him other two.' [Matt. v, 39–41.] Let us strip ourselves of everything, let them take everything from us, but let us keep charity! then we shall be truly the children of God, we shall act according to His spirit and not according to the spirit of the world, and our conduct will be a teaching to the faithful."

And when he had learned or surprised some little quarrel among us, he did not fail to make sure whether we had had the generosity to follow the recommendation of Our Lord: "Let not the sun go down upon your anger" [Eph. iv, 26]; "leave there thy offering… and go first to be reconciled to thy brother." [Matt. v, 24.] He knew how to chastise evil tongues, those he called sowers of discord, and showed them the dangers to which they exposed themselves and others. He was severe on this chapter; one understood that his heart was filled with charity and that the spirit of God was in him.

Nothing was more painful to the Father's heart than divisions. He said that he did not understand how people could not agree. He recommended to us charity and union, and he often cited the texts of the Gospel and of St Paul to bring us all to be of one heart and one soul. [Acts iv, 32.] Here is what he says on this subject in his letters:

"You are quite right to say that I am pained to see that there is so little charity. I believe the devil does all he can to set division and hatred. I am truly desolate and pained at it; at such moments, what is to be dreaded is that all the smallest things grow and become monsters. One remembers everything that may have pained one and finds nourishment for one's antipathies. All that is not the spirit of God. I do not suppose that there is any bad intention in my children; I believe that you all have good will, and that if there were more humility and charity, all would go well. May charity put into your mind good thoughts about the others, and then you will always have peace, joy and happiness."

Father Chevrier left in his *True Disciple* and his various rules admirable counsels on charity. The summary is that in the House we must all form one great spiritual family, as the names of fathers, brothers and sisters which we give one another suppose.

The Father strove to remove discords and discussions by his words and examples: "We must," he said, "renounce our own head to have peace. We must know how to submit to the thoughts of others and renounce our ideas, our judgments. What is the use of quarrelling over a nail? Whether a nail be a centimetre to the right or the left, whether this be white or blue, a matter of more or less taste, what is that? Let us seek first the kingdom of God. [Matt. vi, 33.] Let us do our catechism well. Let us make the good God loved, that is the main thing, the rest is nothing." It was by such words that the Father sought to bring peace into discussions.

He was the first to give the example. When he entrusted an affair to someone, for instance an altar of repose to be built on Holy Thursday, he said what he desired and gave his opinion, then left full latitude to the one to whom he had entrusted the execution. During the work, if he was asked his thought and taste, he said what he thought good, that is all, but did not amuse himself paying attention to trifles of taste and colour which waste time and very often charity and peace. One must not think that the Father did not know how to discern and judge well the good or bad execution of things; on the contrary, he had a very sure and very delicate judgment and taste. He made a true sacrifice each time he renounced his way of seeing and judging, but for him the main thing was the glory of God and charity.

"People quarrel over nothing," he said again, "over a rag, over a silliness, they fall out, they bear a grudge until death. To have peace, let us remember the words of the divine Master: If anyone wishes to take your cloak, give your coat also. [Matt. v, 40.] Great and spiritual souls have their mind above the earth and their heart is in heaven."

"One must know how to sacrifice one's ideas to those of others, when it is not contrary to faith and morals; it is often the only means of preserving peace.

"I should like to be able to melt you all together, so that there should be but one heart and one soul. It is the desire of Our Lord and mine. Oh! how I suffer when I see that people do not agree! One must know how to yield in order to have charity!"

"If you would believe me, I would make you all happy, and this secret of happiness is Christian charity, it is to love one another!

"Christian charity, how beautiful this virtue is! How happy he who possesses it! To love one's neighbour! why, after the happiness of loving God, it is the greatest happiness of life! Oh! the beautiful law, this law of charity that makes of us all but one! Oh! the beautiful law, this law of charity that makes us all debtors one to another [Rom. xiii, 8] and unites us all in the mystical body of Jesus Christ!

"It seems to me that he who had fulfilled the precept of charity all his life, who all his life had loved his neighbour as himself, even if he had forgotten the other precepts of the law, it seems to me that he will always find mercy before the Lord, because he will have fulfilled the greatest of the precepts and will have been truly the disciple of Jesus Christ on earth, since the Lord said: By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another. [John xiii, 35.]

"Charity is the distinctive sign of the true disciple of Jesus Christ."

His Mercy

Like the tender mother who hides the faults and defects of her children, so Father Chevrier hid the faults and defects of the neighbour and, according to the recommendation of the divine Saviour, reproved and corrected them in the intimacy of a gentle talk, adding to this gentleness and patience. Returning one day from Saint-Fons, where he had gone to make a retreat of a few days, he was asked by me what he thought of doing regarding certain persons of his house, in the presence of certain disorders: "My resolution," he said, "is mercy." Mercy toward the unfortunate was indeed his virtue of predilection.

How many times he found over-zealous disciples to whom he answered like Jesus to James and John: "You know not of what spirit you are." [Luke ix, 55.] One of us, when we were new priests, had shown himself a little too young and too violent toward an employee against whom he had to deal severely. The Father recommended him to use more consideration another time. "Experience and time will teach you," he said, "that it is not thus that men are to be governed. There is a door by which to reach people's hearts: they all have a good side by which they can be taken; the point is to discern it and to make one's authority accepted by persuasion."

One never saw him in bad humour, and one never noted any abruptness in his words or manners; he always welcomed you with kindness and a smile on his lips. Patient toward all, affable toward all, he was, even toward children, of a benevolence that went as far as respect.

The Father said to us: "The charity of Our Lord must animate you in everything. As to the Perseverants or young girls who come to the house, never rebuff them, whatever their faults or failings; remember the word of Our Lord: *The smoking flax he shall not extinguish.* [Matt. xii, 20.] If we wish to repress a disorder, let us never lose sight of charity."

One day the Father, entering the Sisters' house, saw in the parlour a child who wanted to go away: he approached, tried to calm the father of this little girl and to decide the child to stay to make her first Communion. I still see his majestic and gentle look. Nevertheless they would not yield to this benevolent invitation. Then the Father looked at the child with a smile full of kindness and said to her: "Come, little one, you will come back." In fact she came back the following year and made a good first Communion which will certainly save her, for faith has entered her soul.

Having at Heart the Good Name of the Neighbour

Father Chevrier took care to praise all the acts of virtue he met on his way. Often, to stir us up to good, he quoted to us this or that trait of generosity, of piety, of the persons he saw. One felt that he had a disposition to see good everywhere and to interpret everything for the best. He accepted, on the contrary, without complaint, the bad interpretations given to his conduct. Here is what he answered to a person who had reported to him some criticisms addressed to him. I cite the letter textually:

> *"I feel well that some things offend the others, but what is to be done? Must one not be good toward those whom God brings, to please a few hearts, jealous perhaps, who have always something to say against the others? Oh! how difficult it is to be prudent enough and charitable enough! How difficult it is to prevent others from judging and thinking; and believe that I understand it well and that there is not an action in which Our Lord does not make it known to me, but that, being always inclined to the side of gentleness and kindness, I try to bring them back by that means. As you see for yourself: often one is condemned in things which make us suffer much and which one is obliged to bear for Our Lord and for the good of souls."*

During an absence of Father Chevrier, he was asked by letter whether a person of difficult character about whom there was complaint should not be sent away; he answered:

> *"We must go gently. You know that we must regard our house as the refuge of the unfortunate, of the desperate, the house of those who have none and of those who are rebuffed by everybody. Considering that we ourselves are nothings, beings who are the rebuff of the world and who do not deserve to have a shelter, we must be full of compassion and charity for the others."*

All that concerned the neighbour or his reputation was, so to speak, sacred in his eyes, and his tongue knew no slander. Habitually he spoke little, but never did he let slip a word unfavourable to the neighbour; he knew, on the contrary, how to defend him, and always interpreted for the best the words and actions of others.

He thus practised marvellously the maxim of St Francis de Sales: "If I had ninety-nine reasons for accusing my brother and only one for excusing him, I would take that one." He could not bear slanderous tongues around him; he used his authority to prevent and punish slander. If it happened to us to let slip a few words of this kind, he had us at once kiss the ground and imposed on us a little prayer to say for the person we had slandered. These sorts of conversations displeased him, even when they took place in the form of a joke. "When one cannot excuse the actions," he said, "one must excuse the intentions. Our poor nature always leads us to blame in others what we so easily tolerate in ourselves." And again:

> *"We must respect well the reputation of others, my children; each one needs his own; we must publish the qualities and keep silent about the faults. We must respect the charges and dignities of each, however small they be, and prevail ourselves of nothing."*

He often recalled to us the maxim of St Paul: *Honore invicem praevenientes* ["in honour preventing one another", Rom. xii, 10]:

> *"Be full of consideration for one another, of deference toward one another, full of delicacy, of tact, avoiding wounding, humiliating, never noising abroad what ought to remain hidden. Be discreet, prudent, reserved, above all as concerns the conduct of your brethren."*

Oh! what beautiful examples he gave us in this respect! and how his conduct was in harmony with his words!

Father Chevrier had at heart the good reputation of the neighbour. His mouth did not open to slander. I never heard him speak ill of his superiors, nor of his equals, nor of his inferiors. He did not judge or condemn the conduct of others. When he had to condemn evil, he knew how to safeguard persons and excuse them. He knew how to say, like the divine Master: "Judge not, and you shall not be judged." [Matt. vii, 1.] He himself imitated our divine Saviour on the cross when He says: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." [Luke xxiii, 34.] These are the teachings the good Father gave to all: "One must never say any word of injury and contempt to anyone whatever; one must beware of despising others, even the little ones."

Several times I was myself attacked in my reputation. Each time he took up my defence; he did it with great delicacy and great charity.

A person had become greatly guilty toward him, had caused him a very lively pain, and ought to have been entirely cast off. But this tender Father, knowing how to imitate the divine Saviour who prefers mercy to sacrifice [Matt. ix, 13], showed mercy to this person. In order not to make her lose her reputation or her honour, the good Father continued to show her outwardly the same marks of esteem and confidence as before her fault. When the occasion presented itself to speak of her favourably, he did not fail to do so; he brought out her good qualities. If I know the fact, the ingratitude and the fault of this person, it is only by chance. Never did the Father say a word of it to me.

I never heard Father Chevrier slander. He did not permit slander. He said to us: “Let each do his employment well, without troubling about what others do, and all will go much better.”

TEMPORAL AID

Loving and Helping the Poor

I believe that his charity toward the neighbour, as much for his soul as for his body, could go no further. I know that he went begging at the door of the church of La Charité. He himself told me the humiliations, the mortifying words and the ill treatment he received. He related them gaily, saying: “If I received only for the others and there were nothing for me, I should be wasting my time.”

In 1870, on 4 September, the day when the religious were exposed to all sorts of dangers, Father Chevrier was the first to come and offer a shelter in his house to the Capuchin Fathers of the convent of Les Brotteaux, where I resided as Provincial. And in fact a certain number found asylum there. I had taken refuge with the Brothers of St John of God. Father Chevrier, having learned it, ran at once to inquire whether I had resources to leave Lyons. I told him that even the clothes I was wearing were borrowed. He opened his purse, saying to me: “I have received six hundred francs, let us share, I give you three hundred.” This sum served me to procure ecclesiastical clothes and to make the journey to Marseilles, where I was called as Provincial. [*This paragraph is the deposition of a Capuchin Father who was provincial of his order in 1870; unnamed in the book.*]

The good Father loved the poor. After the example of the divine Master he bore all men in his heart, but like Jesus he had a marked predilection for the poor. He spoke of them with humility, respect and a true love of preference; one saw by his words that he considered Jesus in them and that they recalled Him to him by their presence. But as always, the Father teaches by example at the same time as by word. Let us consider him in his love for the poor. He takes pleasure in their midst, he is lodged like them, clothed like them, he wished to be humiliated like them, to beg like them and to be fed like them. He loved to be treated and rebuffed like them. At his death he is in sorrow because he is deprived of the consolation of dying in his poor little bed, which seems to him more in accordance with the poverty of Jesus and which made him himself more like the poor, whom he so loved during his life and whom he wishes to imitate even in his death.

At Saint-André, from the beginning of his priestly life, the good Father devoted himself quite specially to the service of the poor. Desiring a greater perfection, he gave himself wholly to the poor of the Cité de l’Enfant-Jésus. Finally, he founded the Prado for the poor, to which he consecrated his health, his rest, his life and the money which divine Providence sent him. The good Providence is so pleased with its faithful servant that it gives to him abundantly for his poor. God did not count with the good Father, and the Father did not count with the poor, to whom he never refused anything. One may say that the Father consecrated himself completely to relieving the poor, and it is the ministry he always preferred. He said: “We are their humble servants; they can dispose of us and of all that is for our use: our time, our health, our life belong to them.”

His history is full of the most admirable examples of charity for the poor. Of the Prado he made truly the house of the poor. He provided first for the needs of the persons living in the Work, and the surplus he gave to the poor from outside. Thus the rich were happy to pass their alms through his hands, and Father Chevrier was able to say one day that he gave almost as much money to the poor outside as he needed for his house. It was to ask for the bread of his children that he went to beg each Friday at the door of the church of La Charité. He wished that the share destined for the poor, whether in clothing or in food, should be decent; he would not have tolerated that spoiled food or articles in too bad a state be given them.

When we came back from Alix in July 1879, he received us in his room at Limonest and said to us: "At the seminary you were recommended, and rightly, ecclesiastical dignity. The priest must be dignified; but there are two sorts of dignity. It would be contrary to your dignity to amuse yourselves in the square like children, but it is not contrary to dignity to render service to poor people in the street. We must not be afraid," he said again, "to render small material services to poor people: to carry their burdens, to push their cart if need be." He himself knew how to give them a helping hand on occasion: he lavished his devotedness on them under all forms, and every time it was useful he sent us into the quarter to render service, to move out or move in, write letters, run a few errands, help along the roads to carry the bundle of some tired traveller; in a word, we were always to hold ourselves at the disposal of the poor, and he often repeated to us the word of Our Lord: *The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister.* [Matt. xx, 28.] It was with the same aim that he took from time to time one of us to go and bury a dead person of the neighbourhood. At other times he designated one of us to go and watch a sick person, or even a dead one, during the night. These acts of charity will certainly have won us several graces for our vocation and accustomed us early to making ourselves useful to the neighbour, to loving and helping the unfortunate.

When he was asked for alms, on the road or elsewhere, he never refused, he always gave with affability, excusing himself for not being able to give more and greeting the poor man with kindness and respect. If he had nothing, he addressed some compassionate, affectionate word, capable of showing the poor man the interest he took in his situation and of raising his courage a little, and he always promised a prayer; thus he practised the recommendations that we find on this point in his *True Disciple*. Thus he was esteemed, loved and venerated by the poor and the workmen who knew him. They were happy and proud to approach him in the street, to shake his hand and even to offer him a little glass, which he never accepted, of course, but this proposal, entirely of the heart, shows what sentiments he knew how to inspire in these good folk.

Father Chevrier said to his children: "As far as possible we must not refuse to give to any poor man who asks us for alms. Let us give him what we can in money, in clothing, in food, and also lodging if it is necessary." Here are the reflections he made on the sixth Station of the Cross:

> *"A great lesson for us, priests, brothers, sisters, religious: we are here to console the unfortunate. It is our duty to go on the way of suffering and to carry with us the veil that wipes wounds, the bread that strengthens, the wine that consoles, the oil that soothes. All who have faith and have withdrawn from the world to love God more must succour the unfortunate."*

He recommended to his priests to be the priests of the poor: "We shall receive, when the occasion offers, the parents of our children at our table, as well as the poor, making it a happiness to serve them, to show them all our affection."

Father Chevrier led others to love and help the poor. In his teachings to his priests he says to them: "One thing alone is necessary for each of us: to love God and to instruct the poor." The good Father's priestly ideal is to make poor priests to evangelize, catechize and labour for the sanctification of the poor. Such is indeed his dominant thought for glorifying God on earth. He wishes all his priests to follow his footsteps in this love and devotedness for the poor. The good Father came back unceasingly to this teaching in his talks, his writings and his letters.

This venerated Father says again: “Give to him that asks, according to your power and means, but refuse no one. If we have no money, let us give some little thing such as a picture, a medal, a rosary; if we can give nothing, we must say like St Peter: Silver and gold I have none; but what I have, I give thee. [Acts iii, 6.] We must give spiritual alms by praying to God for them.” He wished his priests to be able to give alms to the poor they met in the street. For that reason they were always to carry money on them. When I asked him for money to give an alms, this good Father always gave, but he never inquired about the nature of the alms, wishing thus to keep discretion.

Father Chevrier made of the Prado a true house for assisting the poor, spiritually as well as temporally. The poor man can truly say: This is my house. If the poor man is hungry, he finds food at the Prado; if he has no clothing, he is given something to dress himself; if money fails him to pay his rent or another debt, the necessary money will likewise be given him; if he needs certain services to get out of a difficulty, they will hasten to render them. If he has no friend, let him come to the Prado; there he will find more than a friend, he will find a Father, a mother, brothers, sisters, a family wholly at his service. Anyone can knock at the door of the Prado, and by day and by night he is welcome there and received with joy as a child of the house, as a brother, a sister, a friend. Is the poor man in a delicate situation? They will hasten, as far as they can, to come to his help, to find him a place or to meet the expenses his marriage may require. The Sister in charge of the clothing-room quickly finds the bride’s wedding basket as also the bridegroom’s breeches [Fr. *la culotte de l’époux*]. If the wedding meal is to take place at the Prado, the Sister cook prepares the dinner; the good Father, the friend of the poor, gladdens for a moment with his presence his children and his friends.

Father Chevrier saw Jesus Christ in the poor and treated them with great consideration. He received them with kindness and affability, taking off his biretta and greeting them respectfully. After listening to them with charity and rendering them, as far as possible, the services they had come to solicit, he accompanied them out with politeness and affability, as he did for the benefactors of his Work. The good Father did not use tobacco, but when a workman offered him some, I saw him many times simply accept it. He never refused the little presents of the poor; he was happy to please them. One Friday he received at the door of the church of La Charité a glass and a lamp-chimney [Fr. *chapeau de lampe*: probably a lamp-shade].

Sometimes the poor came to consult him on things quite simple; nevertheless he listened to them with kindness, he did not complain of their importunity, nor was he astonished at their simplicity. For him, the little affairs of the poor and of workmen were as serious as the great affairs of the rich. Like the divine Saviour he loved and respected the simplicity of the little ones.

One day we were going up to Fourvière, the Father and I; it was in 1878, probably the last time the good Father made this pilgrimage. Having reached the bottom of the steep ascent that goes from the rue de Trion to the Loyasse gate, near Fourvière, we met there a worthy man who was pushing with great difficulty a cart in which was a stout invalid woman. The good Father was very tired; I did not wish to leave him to go, according to the custom of the Prado, and help the worthy man push his cart. When we had reached the top of the climb, I was very surprised to see arrive there, at the same time as ourselves, the little cart and the burden it contained.

This fact has never left my memory; I often think of it, and I remain convinced that the good Father had obtained by a good prayer what I had not done with my arms.

A person related to me that she was once at Fourvière at the same time as Father Chevrier. The woman who lets out chairs was making her round. A poor woman not having a sou to pay for her chair, she made her get up. The Father at once took the chair back and gave it to this poor woman, then he said to the chair-woman: “That is not how poor people are treated!”

Once a poor infirm woman, quite covered with vermin, was found in the street; she was taken to the Prado and kept some time until she was well restored. Afterwards the Father did not want her to go back to the

street; he would have liked to place her in a hospice; she would not, she said she would rather sell thread, needles, bootlaces [Fr. *chevillères*; uncertain, perhaps laces or tying cords] and that she knew a person who would lodge her at night. The Father had me take this poor woman to the person she knew; he gave me a letter and some money which I was to hand over to her so that she might buy the wares this poor woman desired to resell in order to earn her living.

In the first times that I was at the Prado, we were coming back from the Perrache station and passed before a little drinking-shop. The person who kept it called us and said: “Come and drink: I should like to give drink to the whole Prado. It is Father Chevrier who obtained for me from the Prefecture the permission to sell.” Later I learned that she was a poor widow with children and that the Father had spoken in her favour so that she could continue to keep her little shop.

Care of the Sick

Father Chevrier’s compassion, so great for the poor, was greater still when these poor were visited by sickness. He felt inclined to console those who suffer, and according to circumstances and the means at his disposal, he surrounded them with care and attentions. “Charity commands us to take care of those who suffer,” he said. It was to put his conduct in harmony with his sentiments and words that he rendered, on occasion, a host of little services to those who suffered, and that he likewise employed us for this purpose with the sick, to watch with them, run some errand for them, sweep their room if need be, make their bed. This likewise inspired him with the project that we find written in his hand in his notes, relative to the institution of Sisters “Servants of the Sick Poor”. In any case, he never refused, as far as the necessities of his work and circumstances allowed, to send one or several Sisters of the Prado to serve the sick poor of the quarter.

After the example of Our Lord, the Servant of God could not see the sufferings of the sick without being profoundly moved. Thus he sometimes used his influence with God to obtain, even extraordinarily, their healing. He went to visit the sick in hospital, and in his catechisms he shared with us the emotion he felt on seeing so many sick and so much suffering: “All that is the consequence of sin,” he said.

He preferred the most repulsive sick, like that young man of Saint-André who had black smallpox. The Father visited him often and embraced him, despite the delicacy of his nature. There was also, at the Cité de l’Enfant-Jésus, a poor woman struck with smallpox, abandoned by everyone, whom nobody wished to nurse: the Father went several times to give her drink.

Father Chevrier once went to make a retreat at La Salette. On this journey he was with a young man of eighteen to twenty, very pious but very ill, who took epileptic fits at every moment. He had brought him in the hope of obtaining his cure, which was not granted to their common prayers. But the journey manifested the Father’s charity, who was obliged to carry his companion during almost the whole ascent of the holy mountain. The young man fell several times into convulsions horrible to see. Then the good Father took him on his shoulders, as the good Shepherd does with his wounded sheep.

Father Chevrier took great care of the sick; he did not wish them to lack what was necessary, and more. As long as he was the only priest at the Prado, sick children were never put into the hospital of La Charité: they were nursed, watched with, and that with tender affection and gentle consolations. Once, during an absence of the Father, a child fell dangerously ill. The doctor declared the illness contagious; it was typhoid fever. Abbé Boulachon, who was at that moment at the Prado, had me called to the parlour to ask me whether the child should be taken to La Charité. I answered him that we could not take it upon ourselves to put a child in hospital in the Father’s absence. The next day, when the doctor came, the child was cured, and the doctor said: “Decidedly, at the Prado prodigies happen!”

One Sunday evening, after prayer, one of our children broke her leg. It was necessary to put her in La Charité. The Father sent for a carriage to take her. He walked beside the carriage, which went at a walking pace, with a big boy who was to accompany him on the way back, for it was ten at night.

The Father was glad that there were sick at the Prado. “It makes us practise charity, self-denial,” he said. “If there were no sick, we should have to go and look for them. Sickness is an employment like any other, and an employment so important that the good God reserved to Himself the designating of those He judges worthy to fill it.”

Father Chevrier showed a particular affection for Father Jacquier on account of his infirmities. Thus he was quite happy to give him the consolation of making a pilgrimage to Our Lady of Lourdes, granting him three of his seminarians who devoted themselves and led him there on foot, pushing his little carriage.

> *“The sick, the infirm, are the blessing of religious houses,” he said. “Thus it is very advantageous that this employment should not remain vacant, and ordinarily Providence provides for it and thus furnishes us the occasion of numerous acts of humility, patience and charity. We must use great delicacy toward the sick and those who suffer; surround them with care and attentions, bear their infirmities in silence, avoid making noise, avoid appearing discontented in their presence, for fear of giving them to suppose that they are a burden to us.”*

These are the counsels he gave us frequently about the sick, and he himself never behaved otherwise toward them. He ordinarily made, each day, an appearance beside the sick of the house. Sometimes it was only in passing, for his occupations left him little leisure; but they had seen the Father, they were glad, they were comforted by his blessing and his kind smile accompanied by a word of the good God. It was a true enjoyment to him to serve the sick, to dress their wounds, above all the most repulsive, when he had the occasion. He excelled in this function and put into it much delicacy and a great spirit of faith.

His solicitude, which extended also to the outside, was exercised first on the sick of his house. When his dear children were surrounded with little attentions, it went to his heart and he expressed his satisfaction: “If it happens to me to be ill,” he said, “I have a hundred persons for one ready to offer me their services, whereas one is naturally inclined to neglect these poor little ones a little; there is less personal satisfaction in nursing them. Thus the regard shown them is far more agreeable to me than if it were addressed to my person, and I am more grateful for it than for the attentions that would be paid to myself.”

He ordinarily made a little visit in the evening in the dormitories, when we were Latin students, sometimes long after bedtime. He made sure himself that we had all we needed; he glided like a shadow, noiselessly, along all the beds, and if he had seen one of us a little tired, or simply if he had heard us cough during the day, he brought an infusion or hot milk to the one whose indisposition he had surprised; he inquired whether we were sufficiently covered, whether we were cold. He did not wish us to be demanding, but he anticipated all necessities.

It is above all in the illnesses and trials of his children that he showed them his affection and attachment. In August 1876 three of us were struck with smallpox. Although ill himself at that time, he took the liveliest interest in us. I seem to see him still, kneeling near my bed, while I was being given [the last sacraments], because after a terrible night of delirium I was thought to be at the last moment. Weakened by illness, he was profoundly recollected and prayed with great calm.

In 1876 I accompanied the Father to the Perrache station; he was leaving for Vichy, quite against his heart and out of obedience. This departure recalls to me a detail which shows how delicate the Father was and how much he cared for the health of his children. There were still twenty minutes before the departure of the train when he noticed that he had forgotten a quite necessary object. I understood that he would have been glad to take it, and I told him I had time to go and fetch it and bring it to him before the train left. He refused at first, alleging the little time there was for this errand and the fatigue it would cause me. Wishing to please the Father, whom I sincerely loved, I insisted again and, on an approving sign, I ran rather than walked, and

finally had time to hand him the article before his departure. The good Father, quite confused at the little service I had just rendered with joy and eagerness, did not know how to thank me. Perceiving the sweat which streamed over my face, he gave me a thousand recommendations so that I should not catch cold; he led me to the refreshment room, told them to take good care of me, paid, and left in all haste. We loved him so much that his absences were painful to us.

The Father, so humble, rejoiced during his last illness at the attentions of which he was the object, at the care lavished on him, but it is in relation to the glory of God and the exercise of the virtue of charity that he viewed the matter. “I am happy,” he said, “at the many acts of charity that I see accomplished around me and of which I furnish the occasion in my poor person by my infirmities. How the good God must be glorified by them! What merits will be their fruit and reward!”

Prisoners

All miseries found a consolation in the heart of the good Father Chevrier. One may say of this disciple of Jesus Christ that he wished to take upon himself all miseries and console all afflicted souls. Prisoners, too, aroused his compassion: the prisons of Lyons, like the asylum of Saint-Léonard, witnessed the visits of the Father of the unfortunate. When Abbé Boulachon, chaplain of the prisons, was ill or absent, the Father went to replace him with the prisoners, or sometimes sent one of his priests. I myself have filled this office.

I remember that a poor father came to the Prado to solicit a favour for his son, who was in the central prison of Albertville; to solicit a favour of the Father was ordinarily to obtain it. Another, who had returned to God, was near death; he regretted dying without seeing once more one of his children whom he had scandalized during his life and who was then shut up, for bad conduct, in the penitentiary of Oullins. By a quite special privilege, such as is often permitted to be seen at the Prado, the child was authorized to come and see his dying father, who had the consolation not only of pressing his son to his heart but also of giving him very good counsels and showing him by himself how sweet it is to serve God and to make a good death.

The Father exorcised a prisoner who always kept for him a profound gratitude.

Thoughts on Charity

> *“O happy and divine transformation! To give to the poor is to give to Jesus Christ; to clothe the poor is to clothe Jesus Christ; to feed the poor is to feed Jesus Christ! O Lord! how You have ennobled the poor! how You have made him respectable in our eyes! How You have made him worthy of our affection, of our love. Ah! who is he who, seeing Jesus suffer, would not come to His help!*
>
> *“Work then, Christians, in the vineyard of the Lord. The work He asks is the poor to be relieved; the sick to be visited; the ignorant to be instructed; the sinners to be drawn from evil by our prayers; the children to be corrected and reproved. Ah! Christians, with a little charity one can convert not only a parish but a whole city, a whole kingdom!*
>
> *“To love one’s neighbour, to bear with him, to render him service, is worth more than fasts and disciplines!”*

Prayer for the Second Joyful Mystery

> *O sweet Jesus, how great Your charity is! How You are devoured by the thirst for the salvation of souls! How admirable Your zeal! What, Lord, You are scarcely conceived in the chaste womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and behold You urge Your Mother to rise, to cross in all haste a hill country, to go and visit and sanctify Your precursor! [Luke i, 39.] But, Lord, who presses You thus? Ah! it is Your charity, it is Your love for men! You perceive Your precursor still in the bonds of sin and You go to deliver the captive from his chains and to fill with joy the heart of his mother and all her house! O my Saviour! O my charitable Master! make my heart, like Yours, be devoured with zeal for the house of God! [Ps. lxviii, 10; John ii, 17.] Make me save the souls of my brethren and do not permit one single one to be lost by my fault. But may I, by dint of patience, gentleness, kindness, love and sacrifice, and even at the price of my own blood, bring back to the fold the lost sheep and reunite, in union and peace, divided families! And You, O sweet Mother of my Saviour, obtain for me this holy correspondence*

with the voice of grace and make me fear no difficulty in walking in the way of virtue. Make it that, after your example, I carry with me the blessing into all the houses where I go and in all my visits to my neighbour; may my conversations be always holy and pure, and may I everywhere act with humility and charity. Amen.

Chapter V. Prudence

Chapter V. Prudence

All his actions were done to obtain his salvation. — Practice of the evangelical counsels. — Flight from occasions of sin. — Work. — Relations with the neighbour. — Prayer, study of the Gospel, love of recollection and retreat. — Struggle against his faults and imperfections. — Love of simplicity, frankness and uprightness. — He asked counsel, he acted with calm, with a wise slowness, with much practical sense. — He fled human prudence. — In the exercise of the holy ministry, great good sense, broad direction, gentleness and firmness. — Direction of scrupulous souls. — Moderation, reasonable care of health. — Before all, to put the spirit of God into souls.

All His Actions Were Done to Obtain His Salvation

"Wisdom resteth in the heart of the prudent man," says Holy Scripture. [Prov. xiv, 33.] This word may well be applied to the good Father, who practised prudence all his life. While still very young he sought, knew and loved God, and consequently attached himself to the thought of heaven, for which he never ceased to live and to work. All his works, indeed, bear the seal of the desire of heaven; it is for God and for Him alone that they were done. "Everything for God!" such is his motto. The virtue of prudence constantly made him choose and take the best means to assure his salvation.

From the first years of his life he attached himself to God and His commandments, he chose the good and strove to flee evil by the practice of the virtues common to all. To be surer of his sanctification and salvation and to procure greater glory to God, he becomes a priest; but he soon perceives that his good resolutions of the grand seminary might well vanish if he were not free to follow more closely Jesus Christ, who had shown him His love and devotedness for men in the holy Eucharist, His love of poverty and contempt of the things of the world in the crib of Bethlehem. With the permission of his superiors, he leaves the parish of Saint-André, where he was curate, and withdraws to the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus, where he hopes to be able to correspond more easily with grace. There, indeed, grace presses him more strongly; he feels an interior attraction that urges him more and more to attach himself to his divine Master and to be, like Him, poor, crucified and devoured. [Fr. *mangé*.] It is then that he founds the Prado to arrive at establishing a priestly work in which the priest, without being a religious, can practise the evangelical counsels and procure greater glory to God by saving a greater number of souls. Like the divine Master whom he has chosen, he always strove to give the example of the virtues he asked of others, knowing perfectly that words without works are nothing.

His principles of conduct were the maxims and counsels of the Gospel, and among others these words: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." [Matt. vi, 33.] He adds: "We must rather occupy ourselves with the things of heaven; for earthly things we must be content with the strict necessary." He said again with the divine Master: "Sell what you have and give alms. Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not: where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth." [Luke xii, 33.] "No man can serve two masters." [Matt. vi, 24.]

He did all he could to become a saint: he attached himself to the one thing necessary, to his salvation. He laboured to heap up for himself a treasure in heaven, he loved one Master only, as his life of stripping, sacrifice and charity proves. Very often, by his words and by his writings, he invites his disciples to do as he, he never ceases to repeat to them that they must become saints:

> *"Let us work to become saints, that is the essential. Let us become saints, that will be worth more than all the rest. A holy priest does more good and converts more souls than a hundred others. Let us not put the accessory before the principal, stones before virtue, ornaments before holiness. We propose to occupy ourselves in*

everything only with the works of God and to put them before all."

He often repeated the call of Our Lord to the perfect life. In the retreat instructions he explained it at length. He said to us:

> *"Our Lord addresses those who wish to follow Him and says to them: If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. [Matt. xvi, 24.] A disciple is someone who chooses another for his master, listens to him, believes him and follows his examples, conforming his life to his teachings. Therefore, if we have chosen Our Lord for our Master, let us listen to Him very attentively and meditate His words. He begins by laying down a condition for him who wishes to be His disciple: he must deny himself. To deny oneself is to leave oneself, to forget oneself, not to live for oneself but for one's master; it is to have no thought, no sentiment, no will, to do no action that is in the least in opposition to Our Lord. In a word, it is to imitate Our Lord when He says: What things soever he [the Father] doth, these the Son also doth in like manner." [John v, 19.]*

One can say with truth of our Father: Everything he saw in Jesus Christ he did.

Practice of the Evangelical Counsels

Divine prudence inspired Father Chevrier to take Jesus Christ for Master and Model, to follow Him more closely in the way of the evangelical counsels, and also to engage and help to walk in this more perfect way the souls whom God called to it. He appreciated highly this grace, for which he thanks the divine goodness specially in his spiritual Testament: "I thank God for so many spiritual graces that He has granted me during my life, and above all since my priesthood, in calling me to a more perfect and more evangelical life, to draw nearer to Jesus Christ, my divine Model."

In his instructions the Father always gave us a word of Our Lord to support what he said:

> *"Let us listen to Our Lord, who calls us into solitude: Come to Me, He says to us, I have to speak to your heart, I have many things to say to you. [Cf. Osee ii, 14; John xvi, 12.] And, prostrate at the feet of our Master, here is the word we hear: What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? [Matt. xvi, 26.] In meditating on this word we see that the salvation of our soul is what is most important and most necessary for us. Our soul was created for heaven; now, all that we seek, all that we desire, all the affection we give to creatures or receive from them, serves us for nothing."*

The good Father, as a wise and prudent man, takes Jesus Christ for the foundation of his whole life. Like the great apostle Paul, he wishes to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. [1 Cor. ii, 2.]

> *"Jesus Christ is our Master, He is our Head, He is our Model, He is the principle and foundation of all things, He is the root from which we must draw the sap that gives life, He is the centre toward which everything must converge, He is the end to which everything must come, He is the resurrection and the life. Take Jesus Christ away from the earth, what foundation remains? None. Those who wish to edify and build anything whatever without Jesus Christ deceive themselves, they build only on ruins. He is the stone which has become the head of the corner of the whole edifice of God in heaven and on earth."*

Such is the teaching I heard the Father give to his disciples and which he strove to put into practice. Can one be wiser? Can one be more prudent? In his conversations, as in his instructions and catechisms, he returns unceasingly to Jesus Christ, to His teachings and His examples. He never ceases to recall Him in his letters. He wishes his priests and the members of his Work to nourish themselves abundantly on the holy Gospel, and the children, the little boys as well as the little girls, who are instructed in his Work, to learn the principal mysteries of the life of the divine Saviour and to be strongly penetrated by them. I can affirm, without fear of contradiction, that it is to this deep study of Our Lord Jesus Christ that one owes those so fervent first Communions made at the Prado, and those beautiful deaths one meets among the persons who received religious instruction at the Prado.

Knowing that everything lies in the knowledge of Jesus Christ and in grace from on high, he frequently and urgently inculcates the obligation of studying the Gospel and of having recourse to prayer. To facilitate this

work he composed the Mysteries of the Rosary after the Gospel, and he imposed on the Latin students and even on the children of the First Communion the task of copying them, learning them by heart and setting forth the considerations that this knowledge suggested to them. He took care always to adapt his lessons to the age and condition of those to whom he spoke. He asked of each of them only the perfection in keeping with the degree of grace or the dispositions he recognized in him; but he wished that one should grow each day in wisdom, after the example of the Child Jesus. [Luke ii, 52.]

When he wished to stir souls more deeply, he led his little flock into the retreat of Saint-Fons, and there, for several days, a little rule was followed which bore as motto: *This is eternal life: That they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* [John xvii, 3.] One studied Jesus Christ, one prayed to the Holy Spirit, and one made the apprenticeship of the life of poverty and charity.

"Today," he said, "people reason about everything, they discuss the Gospel, they contest authority, and so nothing solid is done, because everything is based on one's own judgment, everything is regulated according to one's way of seeing; it is the natural, the earthly, the human, and consequently not a solid and lasting foundation. The apostles left all and followed Our Lord, they answered His call simply. Do the same. I am persuaded that only those who have renounced their own judgment, their personal lights and all the calculations or reasonings of human prudence will consent to remain with us and attach themselves to the Work. The wise and prudent of this world will not follow us: so much the worse for them! It is because there are so many reasoners that there are so few saints. How many parish priests, ecclesiastics in the world, are and will always remain good priests and will never become holy priests, because they stop to calculate, to reflect, to foresee, to dread, instead of following the impulse of their faith and the ardour of charity and of putting into practice the counsels and recommendations of Our Lord. True prudence consists in leaning on the Gospel, on God, rather than leaning on reason and on oneself. *I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject*, says the Holy Spirit." [1 Cor. i, 19; Is. xxix, 14.]

He guarded us against the counsels of this false prudence. "It is through having been too prudent that a great number have not answered the call of Our Lord, have lost their vocation or have deprived themselves of great graces, great merits, and have set aside Christian or religious perfection. *Be not solicitous*, said Our Lord [Matt. vi, 25]; and the holy religious founders, in the formation of their novices, applied themselves above all to destroying their own judgment and brought them to set aside all human considerations in order to walk in simplicity and obedience. Thus what supernatural men they became!

"People will hold fine reasonings to you, my children, they will make long speeches to draw you into a different way; they will put forward many considerations, they will make you value such and such advantages, dread such and such inconveniences, for I know that a great number do not think as I do; but I tell you, remain faithful to the call of Our Lord. He walks first and invites you to follow Him: Let them do, let them say, as for you, follow Me! I suffered so much from remaining so long alone and misunderstood! O my God! I often cried, will You then send me nobody to help me, nobody who thinks as I do, nobody who is willing to accept this kind of life and follow You with eyes closed! How content I shall be, dear children, when I see you wholly Our Lord's! Oh! may you all become little living copies of Jesus Christ on earth! It is so beautiful, a priest according to the Gospel!"

The Venerable Father never discusses the word of God; he takes it as it is and trusts himself to it. The Saviour says to him: Follow Me, and he follows; do this, and he does it. His works and his writings have always seemed to me an evident proof of the simplicity with which he received the word of God and put it into practice. Father Chevrier was truly a little child when he studied the word of the divine Master.

Flight from Occasions of Sin. Love of Work. Relations with the Neighbour

Father Chevrier kept himself carefully away from every occasion of sin, fled the world and faithfully practised the recommendation of the divine Master: *Watch ye, and pray.* From his childhood he avoided bad company, not lingering in the streets on leaving school. He always stayed with his parents and did not go out without their permission. At his parents' house he gave himself with love to the work assigned him by his mother, thus avoiding the idleness that leads to sin. All his life he had this love of work. One may say that his rest was in work, one act of charity succeeding another. Thus he was much pained when, going out on a charitable errand, he sometimes heard certain persons say to him: "You are going for a stroll?" His masters at Saint-François and at L'Argentière, his fellow students at the grand seminary, agreed in saying that he was always a model by his application to work. The works he left after him, the writings that remain to us, which are the fruit of the moments of leisure that charity toward souls left him, prove well enough how full his time was. When this good Father went out, it was out of charity, either to see a sick person or to pay a visit of gratitude to this or that person who showed herself generous toward his Work. He had himself accompanied when he could.

In his *True Disciple* the Father never ceases to recommend prudence to the members of his Work, in order to keep sin far from them:

> *"The priest must be a man of work par excellence; he must never be seen idle and unoccupied. One must take only the rest necessary to put one's body in a state to work. When one stays in bed without sleeping and without necessity, one exposes oneself to many temptations and faults." He says again: "One must not let oneself be governed by one's body, one must not cultivate one's body too much, one must renounce the sins of the body."*

Father Chevrier had indeed the simplicity of the dove, but he did not lack the prudence of the serpent. [Matt. x, 16.]

The *True Disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ* is like a treatise on the virtue of prudence regulating all the other virtues. Here is a passage:

> *"We must have with the people of the world only relations of necessity and for the good of souls. By going often into the world one takes up the tastes and ideas of the world. We are so inclined to natural things, we have so much trouble keeping to the height of our vocation, that contact with the world can only be most fatal to us. When a priest goes often into the world, he quickly loses his authority, his ascendancy over others. People invite us and press us to go to their houses; they pay us a thousand politenesses, a thousand flattering advances; let us not believe them. It is better in this case to pass for savages than for visitors. One ought, it seems to me, to see the priest only at the altar, in the pulpit and in the confessional, among the poor and the sick; everywhere else the priest exposes himself to criticism. When Our Lord invites His apostles to take some rest, He does not lead them into the world and its feasts, 'He takes them apart.' [Mark vi, 31.]*
>
> *"We must flee the world, and that not only to avoid falling into its snares, but also to obtain, by recollection and prayer, the grace that strengthens against temptations. Our Lord Jesus Christ prayed often and long. He gives us the example of an assiduous prayer, because the supernatural life is so high and the practice of the evangelical virtues so difficult for nature that we have need of great graces to practise them."*

He never paid a visit to anyone, even when this visit was solicited and alms were promised for the Prado, without having had information taken about the family, without having inquired whether these persons were good Christians and whether it was prudent to go and see them. I was often charged with obtaining such information. It served him well to have acted thus.

At one of the doors of the Prado, opposite Father Chevrier's window, lived a person who pursued him with her importunities; out of prudence the Father condemned this door and had his window raised so high, having part of it walled up, that he saw only the sky. He wished that in the parlours there should be glass partitions. In his conduct he carried prudence to the point of requiring that everything be avoided that could give the shadow of a bad thought. He never received women in his room; he gave them audience always standing, in the sacristy or the parlour, spoke very little himself, listened much, and to end the interview gave them his crucifix to kiss; when asked, he gave his blessing. Among the persons who had recourse to him, some were

of a somewhat exalted temperament; the Father was very good and rejected no one, but he behaved toward everybody with such dignity that nothing could ever be said against him. He even had returned the objects that had been given to the Prado by persons of this kind.

He was vigilant not only for himself but for his children, to make them avoid sin and the occasions of sin. He permitted a young girl to catechize the children, but out of prudence he would not have her go into the houses to visit poor families, because she was not sufficiently instructed on the dangers she might meet there for her soul.

Prayer, Study of the Gospel, Love of Recollection and Retreat

To the means that prudence counsels for keeping away from sin, the Servant of God added the most efficacious of all, prayer, in conformity with the recommendation of Our Lord which he often cited in his instructions and above all in the Tribunal of Penance: “Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation.” [Matt. xxvi, 41.] Knowing that men can do nothing without grace and that, left to themselves, they are capable of the greatest faults, he imposed on himself for each day, each week, each month and each year, numerous and detailed religious exercises, which he took care to enliven by the spirit of piety; this is what he called “the little week of the Prado”.

He was in particular faithful all his life to devotion to the Holy Spirit; it is on His help alone that he counted to obtain the interior transformations, whether in his own soul or in the souls of those with whom he was charged. “Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” [John iii, 5.] He gave of this word the wisest commentaries and continually brought others to invoke the Holy Spirit. How should he not have possessed the virtue of prudence, having solicited the gifts of wisdom and counsel? One day, one of his Latin students having lacked tact rather gravely on some occasion, he reproached him for it, saying that certainly he had not made his devotion to the Holy Spirit well that morning.

The good Father made all his spiritual family pray with him, all the poor, all the souls he wished to convert; for this reason he made of the Prado a true house of prayer, a work where one prays much and where one prays well.

> *“My children,” he said, “the priest is the appointed counsellor of souls in supernatural things. Since God created everything to be subordinated to the supernatural order, since the priest has the mission of directing souls toward heaven and of furnishing or indicating to them the best and surest means of attaining their supreme end, he must have a great devotion to the Holy Spirit and a deep knowledge of the holy Gospel: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven. [Matt. xvi, 17.] It is not knowledge, my children, nor natural wit, nor skill, that gives us this clear view of the surest and most perfect, this just medium that comes from the Holy Spirit; it is a gift of God. That is why you must pray much and study the Gospel, which is the manifestation of the thoughts and sentiments of God Himself. Oh! what riches! what a treasure! There is in the Gospel an answer to everything, a remedy for all ills, a solution to all difficulties, a light for all doubts. He that followeth me walketh not in darkness. [John viii, 12.] It is the book of books which unhappily people no longer wish or no longer know how to read. Holy Scripture, for the priest above all, is the one thing necessary.”*

His predilection for his dear solitude of Saint-Fons is known. He withdrew there from time to time to escape the crowd and the overworked life that was his. “I need to run away and go and pray the good God a little.” In the course of the year he sometimes took with him one or two of us, or even a larger number, and, entrusting us with his little bag: “Let us be off, my children; let us go and pray, let us go and renew ourselves and replenish our provisions.” He thus followed, by necessity and by attraction, the example and recommendation of the Master: *Come apart into a desert place, and rest a little.* [Mark vi, 31.]

As far as his health and strength permitted, he led us to this hermitage, which we had nicknamed “the Mould” [Fr. *le Moule*—the mould in which one is formed], to form us early to the life of prayer, to make us taste and appreciate the benefits of solitude and retreat. During these days of recollection he busied himself with our soul and our vocation: he spoke to us of Our Lord, he laboured at our formation and initiated us in the practice of the virtues and obligations of our future apostolate. Before going down again to the Prado, he had us take and write down our retreat resolutions; we submitted them to him and he deigned to approve and annotate them.

When he could not go as far as Saint-Fons, he made up for it by making his monthly retreat, that is, regularly one day a month; his love of solitude led him to show himself less, to remain hidden in order to occupy himself more with God and his soul and to unite himself more intimately to Our Lord. When his occupations left him leisure, he spent a great part of his day outside the house, withdrawing into some church, some unknown sanctuary, to give himself at ease to exercises of piety, visiting if need be several chapels to escape the demonstrations that were not lacking when he was recognized. Keeping thus apart from the crowd and the noise, and forgetting for the time his grave and manifold solicitudes, he gave himself to prayer and was absorbed whole hours in the presence of God and in the immolation of himself. One must have contemplated him in one of his meditations, have seen him thus at prayer, to form an idea of his piety, of his spirit of prayer: one would have believed him literally lost in God.

From the first months that followed our priestly ordination, he recommended to us warmly this practice of the monthly retreat as very capable of maintaining us in fervour, of reviving our zeal in the service of the good God, of perfecting our soul by making us work assiduously at the reform of ourselves and at the acquisition of the virtues proper to our state:

> *“You can take this day of recollection and prayer,” he said to us, “without neglecting anything of your employment or your daily duties, and when your work will not suffer from it, I authorize you to do as I myself do from time to time: go to some chapel, some solitary church, some desert place, apart, to pray to Our Lord there, to rest in mind and heart. Ask if need be, like the poor, a piece of bread on your way in order to last until evening. Try, you will see how good it does!”*

He often admitted to us that he never could have held out in this overflowing life that was his, nor sufficed for the task, without the comfort and help that his soul found in these hours of solitude: “I feel that the hand of the good God is with me and sustains me, otherwise one would have to run away and flee far off!” The exuberance of his outer life was always balanced, nourished in a way, by a calm, strong and powerful interior life.

From time to time it even happened to him to put a greater barrier between the world and himself, a greater material distance between his Prado and himself, because his poor health required it; he felt his strength exhausted and, as he says himself, his mind weighed down and his soul languishing; he then went to ask hospitality of the Curé of Saint-Jean-de-Soudain, or else at La Louvesc, at Valfleury, at Chalamont, at the Trappe of Maubec or the Charterhouse of Portes.

Struggle Against His Faults and Imperfections. Love of Simplicity, Frankness and Uprightness

The Servant of God was not content with praying to preserve himself from sin and to obtain the transformation of his interior; he struggled ardently against all the faults he remarked in himself and which are the source of our failings. For this he made an attentive study of his soul. The enumeration he makes of the faults to which our spirit is subject shows how far he had carried this study. But it was not to have a sterile knowledge of them that he thus descended into his interior; it was to root out all he found there of imperfect. He had a card on which he marked each day the little failings in the exercises of the day and in the religious virtues. He asked his children to do the same thing and had composed a little table for this use. The

coulpe [public avowal of faults] which he introduced into his community is destined in his thought for the same result.

His intentions were always pure, his actions upright, and his virtues free of disguise. He had a horror of lying. If Abbé Grisaud was able to say at his grave that during all the time he was at the clerical school of Saint-François he never committed a venial sin in his dealings with his masters, it is a sign that he carried to an extraordinary degree the love of truth, seeing that at that age children are very much inclined to lie. "He had," says M. Brunel, his professor of philosophy, "with his masters as well as with his fellow pupils, a heart transparent as crystal; one could read on his face the impressions of his soul, so much frankness was there in this young man."

He had a particular attraction for simplicity and held it in high esteem; it is a special character of his holiness. He was simple in everything, so that his holiness became approachable to everybody and one could not help saying on seeing him act: I can do that, I can do as he does. Simplicity is truly what pleased in the good Father, what charmed, what drew to him, what made one never tire of him and find virtue easy to practise. This simplicity was accompanied by a great frankness. On all occasions he recommended uprightness and frankness to us and very often recalled to us the practice of simplicity:

> *"Be simple, my children, be simple in your tastes, in your manners, in your words, in all your conduct. Simplicity pleases Our Lord and suits your vocation and the ministry you are one day to fulfil among the simple and the little. You know how much Our Lord recommends to His disciples the simplicity of children. He thanks His Father for revealing His mysteries to the simple [Matt. xi, 25], He condemns reasoners and ambitious men. One must be simple and poor everywhere, even in one's speeches and sermons, so that luxury, curiosity and a certain complacency may not take the place of faith and piety."*

His habitual language was very simple, but always very dignified and fitting; he carefully avoided every improper or even merely vulgar word, and still more never made use of coarse or trivial expressions. No plays of wit, no words with double meaning, no foolish jokes, such as escape so easily in familiar conversations. His manners were simple, so was his bearing; he could not bear anything that smacks of self-importance or pretension and recommended to us in everything the greatest simplicity: "Be very humble, very natural, do not give yourselves the airs of little bourgeois."

I remember an occasion when we were very embarrassed, a fellow student and I. We had been designated to make the compliment for his feast; we were, I think, in Humanities. What turn should we give to our composition? In what terms should we express ourselves so that our prose might be agreeable to the Father? He so loves what is simple, and at that age it is sometimes so difficult to remain simple! If we give our expressions a literary air, if we make phrases, we shall not succeed in pleasing him. After deliberations, researches and several attempts, we finally settled on a very modest plan which consisted in choosing a word of the holy Gospel and commenting on it by applying it to the occasion; we carefully avoided all ornament of style, and we hoped we had more or less obtained the proposed result, but this composition cost us real work.

We were, moreover, well rewarded by the testimony of satisfaction the Father was pleased to give us.

A great uprightness flowed naturally from this love of simplicity: the Father knew neither detours nor artifices; he went straight to the goal. He was ignorant of the self-interested calculations of politics and never made use of those thousand little industries which worldlings and the prudent of the age know so well how to use to reach their ends. All his wisdom was in Jesus Christ; he had no other diplomacy than that which comes from the Holy Spirit, from the Spirit of truth, which condemns lying, trickery, duplicity, hypocrisy. Good, respectful, affable toward all, small or great, rich or poor, he bowed and scraped before no one. He did not know how to dissemble or to make use of mental reservation; his words were stamped with the most entire frankness. He never flattered and was sparing of praise: he approved, encouraged when it seemed to him necessary or useful, expressed if need be his satisfaction, his contentment, but in few words. He did not employ the usual devices for "bringing water to his mill," as people vulgarly say. [Fr. *faire venir l'eau à son*

moulin: to turn things to one's own advantage.] He spoke rarely of himself and never advantageously. He did not boast of his works, fled publicity, abstained from useless visits. He was profoundly grateful to charitable persons and the various benefactors of the Work, but always with reserve and modesty, without lavishing demonstrations or testimonies of his gratitude.

He Asked Counsel, He Acted with Calm, with a Wise Slowness and a Great Practical Sense. He Fled Human Prudence

The Father consulted much before acting, above all before doing an important thing. One day the Reverend Father Bruno, Capuchin, who was his confessor, said to me: "Father Chevrier consults a great deal." Indeed our Venerable Father distrusted himself and carried out slowly. Thus certain counsellors would at times have liked to see him go faster. One of them said to us: "Father Chevrier is always consulting and does nothing." He did nothing, and why? Because, before having a rule of life approved, the good Father wished to have practised it himself and to have seen it practised by others. He wished, as he says, to be himself this living rule.

"There are some," I heard him say, "who, beginning with external rules, make many regulations; all that is nothing. The true rule that must be imposed on others is this: Follow me, do as I do. I do not ask of you things more difficult than those I do myself; follow me, that is the great rule."

This is, indeed, the rule that Our Lord gave to His apostles and which Father Chevrier wished to have practised by his first disciples before having it approved by his superiors. It is, moreover, what the last words of Pius IX seem to signify in the blessing he deigned to grant Father Chevrier on 1 November 1864: "For the moment, I can only approve the intentions and bless the persons, which I do with all my heart." For the approbation of his priestly Work, they wished to induce Father Chevrier to go directly to the Pope; someone undertook to make him succeed in this affair. The Father wished to go through the ordinary hierarchy, that is, through his Archbishop, and this he did when he submitted his little rule of life to the approbation of His Eminence Cardinal Caverot. The Father's uprightness is admirably depicted in his petition of 1 October 1864 to Pius IX: "Abbé Antoine-François-Marie Chevrier, humbly prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, sets forth to him the desire which several priests have to unite, as far as the diocesan authority will permit them…"

> *"We must ask counsel," he recommended to us, "and do nothing and say nothing of ourselves; before doing or saying anything whatever, we must examine whether it is conformable to the thoughts and desires of Jesus Christ our Master, to His humility, His gentleness, His poverty, His charity. We must ask counsel of our superiors. We must submit to the decisions and judgments of our superiors, in whom we must recognize the spirit of God. We must submit in mind and heart to all the decisions of the Church and of the Pope."*

When grace pressed him interiorly to lead a more perfect life, the Servant of God went to consult the Curé of Ars. Many times I heard him say: "All that the good Curé of Ars told me comes true; how happy I am to have followed his counsels!"

As to the counsels of relatives, here is what Father Chevrier says of them, addressing his priests:

> *"Parents always think they keep rights over their children when they are priests. They think they can counsel and lead them, but as their counsels are wholly earthly, and as it is almost always to induce them not to tire themselves too much, to take care of themselves, these counsels are always harmful to the good of souls and to their own children, by inspiring them with negligence. It is then that one must have in mind and on the lips these words of Jesus Christ our Master: What is it to me and to thee? [John ii, 4.] And this other: Go behind me, Satan, thou art a scandal unto me: because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but that are of men. [Matt. xvi, 23.]"*

The Father says again: "Woe to him who lets himself be led by these harmful and pernicious counsels! He leads no longer anything but a natural life; he no longer serves God, but serves himself and his parents." The good Father had to hold to this conduct more than once with his mother. He did not fear to practise what he

taught by his words and to say again like Jesus Christ: “How is it that you sought me? did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” [Luke ii, 49.]

He admitted to us that often persons presented themselves to him to make observations to him, address remonstrances to him, give him counsels. He always welcomed them with great humility and gratitude, avoided discussions, but remained unshakable in his convictions and persevered in the way where he felt himself called by God. In all his undertakings he acted without precipitation, with firmness but without stubbornness, and he writes: “If God does not send us resources, it is a proof that He wishes us to suffer; it may also be that the good God does not will this work.” Very judicious, very balanced, very distrustful of himself, he acted only after having asked the lights of the Holy Spirit and received a sure sign of the will of God. He had the same maxim as St Vincent de Paul: *Let us not step ahead of Providence.* [Fr. *N’enjambons pas sur la Providence*.] But once the will of God was manifested, he followed it with fidelity, courage and constancy.

I often heard him say that he was only a poor man, fit at most to stand at the corner of the Guillotière bridge to polish the shoes of passers-by. [Fr. *décrotter les chaussures*.] He added: “We must let God act; let us remain the instruments of His divine Providence. Our works must be stamped with the mark of the spirit of God. Everything I wanted to do by myself I have had to undo.”

This conduct of the Father brings out one of the qualities of his zeal: perseverance. He knew how to wait and be patient; he was not enthusiastic to the point of being for a moment all fire and flame and then letting his zeal cool or go out for lack of fuel. He burned habitually with the love of God and the love of souls; always ready to give himself, to immolate himself, he did not let his ardour slacken through the difficulties and trials of the holy ministry. A vigilant sentinel, he was always on the breach, measuring neither his strength nor his devotedness.

> *“One must reflect much, pray much before undertaking a thing, to know whether it is of God, for God, whether it is for His glory, for the interest of souls; but once the thing is undertaken, one must not stop before trials and sufferings, or before purely human considerations; one must struggle energetically against all obstacles and count on God.”*

He knew how to work, suffer, pray, wait in all painful and difficult circumstances. It is said that when he had some great difficulty he could not sleep, but never did any trouble appear in his person or conduct. The will of God, His divine Providence, Jesus Christ whom he loved so much, sufficed for his soul. He had no need whatever of creatures to help him suffer. He practised, in every painful circumstance, the word he counselled to others: *And Jesus held his peace.* [Matt. xxvi, 63.] He was admirable in patience, and it is to his union with Our Lord and his application to imitate Him that so perfect a conduct may be attributed, for his nature was lively and ardent, but always contained.

I can say with truth that the Father put into practice these words of the apostle St James: “Let every man be swift to hear, but slow to speak, and slow to anger.” [James i, 19.] I saw him many times listen with great patience to what was said to him. He simply, plainly waited for the moment when he had to speak; then he said in a few words what he had to say. Of a wise and balanced mind, he also had a supreme care for propriety and a great moderation in his words. He was not one of those who flaunt their independence by overly cavalier manners and in terms at times misplaced; he held that the priest should never depart from his dignity, no more in the presence of injustice and calumny than in his claims or in the exercise of his rights. In everything and everywhere he must be inspired by the examples of Our Lord and of the saints and impress his adversaries by his bearing, his moderation, his self-respect and respect for propriety. Thus he knew nothing of wounding words, nor of that exuberance of gestures and expressions which escape so naturally from one who has lost calm and self-possession and which can weaken, if not compromise, the defence of the best causes. None of those inconsiderate or unfortunate words, ordinarily attributable to precipitation, but which one always has reason afterwards to regret or deplore.

He readily supposed good faith in others and did not hasten to blame or condemn them with temerity or obstinacy. He listened patiently to their reasons, respected their convictions, left them time to explain themselves without interrupting them, as every delicate and well-bred man should do, and tried to win them to the truth by persuasion and the force of his gentleness, remembering the maxim of St Francis de Sales: *One catches more flies with a spoonful of honey than with a barrel of vinegar*. In any case he never permitted himself to inveigh against his interlocutor; if people were not of his opinion, he kept silent or simply withdrew, without engaging in or continuing those useless and sometimes dangerous polemics in which it is so difficult to keep to the rules of prudence and safeguard charity. I always greatly admired in him this coolness, characteristic of the virtue of prudence. The prestige of such a virtue commanded respect. He it is who put into practice this beautiful maxim of St Bernard: *Let him who has authority see everything, pass over many things, punish few.*

If this good Father had not had the prudence he showed in his conduct, he would never have been able to do the works that make his glory and that of the Church of Lyons. Prudence made him see many things that others did not see; it made him have patience, practise mercy and labour for the sanctification of many souls, because he knew how to keep silent, wait and let people talk. “My retreat resolution is mercy,” he said one day in my presence on returning from Saint-Fons. It is prudence that led the Father through the difficulties and countless contradictions that he met at the Prado; it realized in him the conduct of the divine Master pursued by the hatred of the Jews: *Ipse autem transiens per medium illorum ibat* [Luke iv, 30]: “But he passing through the midst of them went his way.”

The prudence of the Venerable Father was remarked in the conduct he held when he founded the Prado. It was only when pushed by Providence that he decided first to rent the poor shack in the rue des Trois-Pierres, then, later, to rent and buy the Prado. He always avoided creating debts for himself. When he bought a building or had one built to enlarge his Work, it was only after having assured himself of the sum necessary to pay and having convinced himself of the holy will of God. I often heard him say:

> *“God pays only those who work for Him. If you exceed the limits of what God wills; if instead of remaining in the suffering and poverty that God always asks in the works that belong to Him, you go beyond these limits and busy yourself too much with exterior things; if you leave simplicity and poverty, if you venture and do more than you ought and than you can; if you embellish and spend uselessly and, in a blind presumption, say: God will pay well—you deceive yourselves. No, God does not pay for follies and imprudences. When one has not, one must not engage in expenses beyond one’s resources. One must count on Providence but not tempt it. One must act in everything with prudence, moderation and wisdom, know how to be poor and to suffer.”*

When it was a question of the salvation of souls and of the number of children to benefit from religious instruction in the house, he had a very great confidence in Providence. On certain days, when the alms were insufficient, he liked to say: “Let us have confidence, tomorrow we shall have double.” He admitted to us that, despite the contrary advice of his entourage, he felt inclined not to follow the rules of human prudence in his administration, that is, not to base his calculations on the resources at his disposal, on the money he had in the cash-box or could hope for, saying for example: I have such a sum, I can receive so many children, do such a thing, make such a purchase, we can go on until such a time. None of these reasonings. He based everything on confidence in Providence. He filled the house, received all who presented themselves under the required conditions, left no place vacant, and he said to the good God humbly and with confidence: “Now it is for You to do the rest, to bless the work of Your servant and to feed all these poor people.”

He was very attentive as to the choice of means of execution. Thus he chose to beg at the door of the church of La Charité, without condemning the house-to-house collections made by others, because he found this more prudent than going to beg at people’s homes.

He saw in this, besides, a means of practising better the virtues of humility and poverty.

"It is likewise out of prudence," says Father Bruno, "that when he sent his seminarians to Rome, he did not wish to put them in a seminary, but asked me to find them a house in which it would be easier for them to lead a life conformed to their habits of poverty at the Prado, under the direction of an experienced Father. I designated to him Father Francesco da Villafranca, who afterwards became General of the Order and of whom the Pope said after his death: He is a rare man. It was he who sought a house for them and became their guide. He presented them at the Vicariate, examined them and took all the steps necessary for their ordination." [*Father Bruno was a Capuchin and Chevrier's confessor; his name appears here as in the 1926 text. The identification of the Roman Father is as printed, unverified.*]

In the Exercise of the Holy Ministry: Great Good Sense, Broad Direction, Gentleness and Firmness

Ars artium regimen animarum. ["The art of arts is the government of souls"—a saying of St Gregory the Great.] The Father knew the whole importance of the so noble and so delicate ministry of the direction of souls, and he put into discharging it that zeal and prudence which had their source in a right judgment, in the lofty views of faith, and in those supernatural lights with which God favours His true servants, or rather His friends: *Jam non dicam vos servos… vos autem dixi amicos.* ["I will not now call you servants… but I have called you friends." John xv, 15.] He had a great zeal for souls, for their salvation and sanctification, since souls were the passion of his life, but his zeal was an enlightened zeal and consequently prudent.

Good sense is perhaps a rarer thing than is commonly thought: the Father was well favoured in this respect; he possessed the practical sense of things and a great rectitude of judgment. All he said, all he did, is an irrefutable proof of it: thus one never noted in his words or acts any banality, any eccentricity, any precipitation, any temerity, any frivolity; everything was balanced and regulated by a wise prudence; he made no ill-considered move and never committed any of those blunders which ordinarily bring discredit on their authors, however well-intentioned they be, or entail regrettable consequences.

He attached great importance to the qualities of judgment and wished severity to be shown in this respect in the recruiting of the pupils of his clerical school. He often recommended us to make a serious choice and to watch this point closely.

> *"A priest, more than anyone else," he said, "is exposed to committing faults sometimes irreparable, humanly speaking; one must not put oneself in the way of passing for a simpleton, and how can one always avoid it when one lacks good sense and judgment? Good will and piety are not enough. Choose men who give marks of a sure judgment, unless their distrust of themselves leads them to undertake nothing without asking counsel, which is very rare in this category of people."*

I remember hearing him say on several occasions that those who lack judgment are rarely fit to become true and holy religious, that ordinarily they are the scourge of communities and that, left to themselves in the exercise of their ministry, they are capable of every inconsequence. Of a presumption carried to temerity, they go ahead, never doubting anything and above all not themselves. Muddle-headed minds, they have in general very little esteem for what others say or do; they trust only in their own judgment and find good only what they themselves say or do. In these conditions one guesses the result they can attain, and one understands how right the Father was to insist that these rash and imprudent ones be kept away from the priesthood—who sin more often through ignorance than through malice, but nonetheless do a real and serious injury to the holy ministry.

Holiness is a power and it attracts souls. The Father's reputation, with time, spread around him and soon extended far. All the persons who had occasion to see him and speak to him admired the prudence and wisdom of his counsels. When he was a young priest, people went to him as to a counsellor whose wisdom had outrun his years. All were delighted to see him direct souls with so much prudence in the way of perfection. Later he was, as it were, continually besieged by multitudes who came to ask counsel of him, to

set before him their pains; he shared with all the science of the saints that God had given him as his portion, and each went away consoled. As soon as a soul had put itself into communication with the Father, it recognized him as a man of God; it liked to come back and consult him, and very often it brought with it other persons to whom it had boasted of his prudence. Hence that crowd of persons who besieged his confessional, the parlour and the sacristy, eager to have his counsels and follow his direction. To be able to give himself longer to souls, he twice moved his parlour closer to his room; the last was at the foot of the staircase leading to it. People came to him not only from Lyons but from all parts of France and even from abroad. It is not only the little and the poor who come to consult him; rich people, priests, religious, learned men like to have his opinion. Many consulted him by letter.

The things on which he was consulted were not all or always of high importance. One knows the remark of St Francis de Sales on "the great affairs of little people"; he was sometimes submitted very minute, very commonplace questions, above all by certain country people, and after his death, in going through the letters that had been addressed to him, I found very naïve requests! It is a proof of the confidence these good folk had in him and a testimony of the condescension he used toward them, together with his patience in listening to them and bearing with them.

He ordinarily based his counsels on the holy Gospel, on some word, some example of Our Lord. He recollected himself an instant, as if to consult the good God, and expressed his thought in few words. I often admired the wise slowness with which he gave an answer, but when he had given it, one felt that one could follow it in full assurance. In everything he proposed to himself only the glory of God and the good of souls; he counselled only what could tend or lead to this double end. "That is what must be seen before all, what must be sought," he said. "It is by the light of the Holy Spirit that all things must be examined and judged." He prayed so much to the Holy Spirit! One of his customary ejaculations was this: "O my God! give me Your spirit!" He lived in such great union with Our Lord that one could, in all security, trust his word and rely on his advice in the gravest and most important matters.

> *"Let us accustom ourselves to treat our affairs with the good God. See, my children, Jesus Christ has been given us to be our wisdom, our light. [1 Cor. i, 30.] Let us use this divine Light in the conduct of our life and in the conduct of souls. The wisest philosophers have been mistaken, the learned are likewise mistaken; Jesus Christ is not mistaken and never deceives us."*

It is therefore in prayer and in the study of the Gospel that the Father found this light from on high which gave his counsels an incontestable assurance and superiority. "One must not seek what suits us better, what is more convenient, but what is worth more, what is preferable." Such was the key to all the counsels he gave.

He did not like people to reason too much, to argue with him; he gently imposed silence by a word, he left you with a word of Our Lord and that was all, it was to suffice, for all the little human reasonings weaken the Gospel. "Lean on Our Lord and not on your personal ideas; faith perfects and completes reason, it must not be over-subtilized by it. Let us not lose our time," he said with authority and firmness; "go, and do what I tell you!" [Fr. *alambiquée*: distilled, over-refined.]

"One meets souls," he said again, "who are content only when you think as they do. What they want, what they seek, is to bring you to be of their opinion; they are satisfied only when they reach this result; in general it is preferable to let them run."

Very sober, very reserved in his words and communications, the Father was also of an absolute discretion. He received the confidences or waited for the openings that people wished to make to him, without ever provoking them by indiscreet questions; one scarcely obtained from him, when asked, that he should facilitate or encourage this opening of the soul, at times so laborious and yet so important: he scrupulously respected the intimate domain of conscience, he did not wish to surprise its secrets prematurely. He waited with patience and kindness and was content to solicit the action of the Holy Spirit by prayer, while appearing

outwardly to remain indifferent to this intimate evolution. Thus he felt a real joy when a soul showed itself to him without reserve and confided to him all its feelings and most intimate thoughts. In his turn he answered this confidence by giving himself more, by giving a greater communication of the graces and lights with which he was favoured, and he then exercised over this soul a stronger and more salutary action.

The Father recommended discretion to us. He was himself of a perfect discretion. He never spoke of persons who confessed to him, kept even the smallest things confided to him, and let slip no word that could produce a bad impression or make known what he believed he could not reveal. He gave us the counsel to reflect seven times before speaking. He reproached me very often for not being measured enough in my words, for saying my way of thinking too much, and he made me make a sign of the cross on my lips each time I left him. He recommended not to disclose the particular graces one receives from God. He himself kept well hidden the favours and interior lights with which he was loaded. He gave us as examples the Most Blessed Virgin and St Joseph. He also reminded us of the silence of the Incarnate Word at Nazareth and the silence Our Lord kept in His Passion. Thus the Father, who excelled in silence and discretion, did not permit the least act of curiosity or indiscretion; then he was very severe: one had no desire to read papers found by chance, for one would have been well punished.

Father Chevrier, in the confessional, was truly a father by kindness and a physician by the science of spiritual maladies and of the remedies to apply in each circumstance. He was astonished at no avowal, however grave the fault accused, and in this respect one was at ease in speaking to him. He even sought excuses for sinners, saying: “The temptation was then very strong?” or: “That is what human nature is when one has not grace, when one does not pray!” He repeated the words “Poor child!” in a tone that showed the pity of his heart and his profound grief in the face of sin. He then recommended prayer and again prayer. Among the virtues on which he insisted most to lead to the correction of vices and faults, humility must be put in the first rank. He said that pride being the root of all sins, the surest means of advancing in perfection and holiness of life was to destroy it in us and to put in its place the contrary virtue.

[The following paragraphs are the testimony of a woman penitent; the source says “I know all these details of his conduct in the confessional from the confidences of various persons and also from my personal experience.”] One felt in the Father such treasures of indulgence and kindness that, however bad the dispositions, whatever fault one had committed, one would have gone with joy to confess everything to him. One of the recommendations he often made was this: “Little child, if it happened to you to commit some big folly, you ought not to wait for the end of the week; you ought to come at once and tell me.” “But, Father, I do not want it to happen to me!” “I know that well, but the devil is so cunning and so wicked that he might well play you a trick.” And when one had something graver than usual to accuse, he was so good, so tender, that one was encouraged never to hesitate to come to him. I always heard him say to me in such circumstances: “We must thank the good God for the profit He draws from our faults. See, it teaches us to distrust ourselves, it makes us prudent, indulgent for others. Those who have always lived as little saints are sometimes less useful to others than those who have experienced life, who have been wounded in it and have risen again.”

He reserved his scoldings for the days when one did not know very well what to say to him. Oh! then, how he found [fault]! Nobody ever pointed out my faults to me so much, said such strong things, I was going to say such hard ones, if one could use this term with the gentlest, the most paternal of directors.

At the beginning, to initiate me into the way of perfection, he explained to me that it was contained entirely in these three phases of the life of Our Lord: the Crib, Calvary, the Tabernacle. The Crib, preparation by stripping and the spirit of poverty; Calvary, renunciation of everything in this world, immolation; the Tabernacle, the consummation of holiness in perfect love. “Not everyone reaches the second degree,” he said to me, “and very few rise to the third.” He had me study in my meditation the virtues of the Cross and asked me to give him an account of it. Little by little he sought to raise my soul, to supernaturalize its sentiments

without stifling them. Sometimes this doctrine seemed to me difficult and impracticable. The Father never pressed me too much; even when he saw that I was not capable of understanding, he waited patiently without saying anything to me.

In the work of perfection, as in all the non-essential practices of Christian life, the Father always had as a principle to impose nothing. He raised the heart, he disposed the soul to will, and he waited for one to act of oneself. “What is too strongly counselled,” he often said to me, “has no solid and lasting basis; one must let souls will for themselves, then one can count on their constancy. The good God wishes us to do everything out of love and not by force. It is love that made Our Lord act all through His life; love must be the only bond that holds us attached to Our Lord; it is out of love that we must imitate Him and devote ourselves to the neighbour.”

He asked of each soul only what it was capable of doing and did not push inconsiderately to too many practices of piety; even for frequent Communions he waited for the desire to be manifested to him rather than impose them.

When, in fervour, one was drawn to extraordinary penances, he held back, saying: “Do not go too fast, be wise with sobriety.” [Rom. xii, 3.] And if one let oneself go into negligence, he reproved, stimulated, with great gentleness. If one had not made one’s meditation, he sometimes asked: “On what subject did you make your meditation these days, or this morning?” That sufficed for one not to omit it again. He acted with the same prudence toward the children whom he prepared for first Communion. When certain series seemed to him less well prepared, when he saw in their state “black spots,” as he said, he recommended them to pious persons he knew.

[The following paragraphs, in the first person, are the testimony of a woman penitent.] His charity did not exclude firmness. Seeking one day, in the confessional, a consolation, I complained of painful treatment. Here is the consolation I received: “When one has neither charity nor humility, that is how things turn out.” Another time he sent me to buy a sou’s worth of oil. In the early times, when I knew him less, I one day brought him a sum of 4,000 francs. “Thank you,” he said simply. Later I admitted to him that I had been surprised at this summary thanks. “Yes, you would have wished more than that, would you not? But it was to Our Lord that you were giving. Was it not better that He should reward you Himself?”

One of his penitents relates that one day the Father asked her in confession whether she did all her actions for the good God. “Not all, Father,” she answered. “And for whom do you do them, then?” “Much to please you.” “Poor child,” he said then, “yet it is not I who shall reward you!”

It is to this same person that Father Chevrier addressed this letter of direction:

> *“My dear child, you are always very little, and what is very vexing is that you will not grow. Come, little child, grow! I shall pull you so by the head and the feet that I shall make you grow by force.”*

In direction, no more than elsewhere, Father Chevrier did not flatter, as he says himself in a letter: “That is not my way of doing.” He told the truth with a charity that knew how to make reproaches accepted.

> *“Nature is always the same,” he writes to one of his penitents; “it is difficult to change it, it is a long and laborious work, but I do not lose courage; I shall always and in spite of all make you observe what is bad in you, for the glory of God and your particular good. Since you have chosen me for father, I must fulfil the duty of it, not by spoiling you with sweet, suave letters, but by serious and useful corrections. Well! you have failed in your duty, you let yourself go to sourness, you know how to suffer nothing; put yourself then at the feet of Our Lord and pray Him to calm this nature a little. More than ever I understand that one must be a saint to do anything useful, lasting and good. I seek wisdom and holiness; I know well where it is, but I have so much trouble practising it! I am a little like you; I should like to be a saint and I cannot manage it. We are going to pray, both of us, for our conversion, and whichever becomes a saint first will help the other to become one.”*

He knew how to give to each the direction and counsels in keeping with his condition and dispositions and profited by every occasion to bring souls to God. “Patience in everything,” he writes to an afflicted person; “accept all that happens to you as coming from God, making what vexes and pains you turn to your perfection. Since Jesus Christ made evil turn to our good, let us know how to make the evil of creatures, or the evil we believe we see in them, turn to our perfection.”

Direction of Scrupulous Souls. Moderation. Reasonable Care of Health. Before All, to Put the Spirit of God into Souls

Father Chevrier was very good and very patient with souls tormented by scruples. He listened to them first, then, reassuring them about their state, brought them to confidence, forbade them to repeat their past confessions, and if need were imposed on them a strict obedience.

> *“Always mountains out of grains of sand,” he wrote. “When then will you know how to distinguish an ant from an elephant? I forbid you to preoccupy yourself with all these things of conscience; obey exactly; obedience having everything, I take all upon myself; a life of rule and obedience is worth more for you than a hundred confessions. You think yourself obliged to confess four or five times to receive absolution, and still you always have worry, imaginations. What do you want me to do? It is for you to work seriously at being humble and obedient; there is no other means of salvation for you than that. What I ask of you and what the good God also asks is a serious will to work at your perfection, to practise solid virtues and not to waste your time with your conscience. Contrition for the past, good will for the future, and the practice of serious virtues each day; with that you will be sure of your pardon and your salvation. One must not waste time seeking one’s sins, making long confessions of little peccadilloes. It is better to accuse two or three of one’s principal faults, to manifest one’s dominant defect, to rouse oneself to contrition; that is worth more than these long confessions which bear no fruit. Oh! do not become scrupulous, it would be the greatest misfortune that could befall you!”*

He reassured anxious souls. A person reports the following fact: At the time of the insurrection of the Commune in 1871, I said to him: “Father, they assure us there will be three days of darkness and that one must have blessed candles.” “One must not believe everything that is said,” he answered me; “since the war was declared there are prophets on all sides; before, nobody spoke of them, and as for darkness, there has been none since the death of Our Lord. We are well in the darkness, people want neither God nor His religion, there is the darkness!” And he added: “Those who know what must happen do not say it!” Then I was reassured.

Discretion was a particular virtue of Father Chevrier. He loved moderation in all things. I can affirm that he knew how to put into practice the word of the apostle St Paul who recommends to be wise with sobriety. [Rom. xii, 3.] He loved mortification, he wished it for himself and for others, but he did not wish people to mortify themselves to the prejudice of their health, in such a way as to make themselves incapable of fulfilling the duties of their charge and ministry. He said: “He who does not live is worth nothing” [Fr. *Qui ne vit, ne vaut*—a proverb, as printed], and as to food he wished each to take what was necessary with simplicity and liberty of conscience. Apropos of this, he once cited to us the example of Father Bridaine, who needed a great quantity of food and drink, which did not prevent him from being a holy missionary. The important thing in his eyes was that one should be content with the manner of living of the poor.

In his *True Disciple* he recommends in all things the golden mean, moderation in privation or insufficiency of sleep, in the quantity of food, in mortifications. He feared excesses, even in the practice of the virtues dearest to him, such as poverty, penance and confidence in God.

> *“One must take care of the good God’s property, economize but not skimp [Fr. liarder, from liard, a farthing]; be mortified but not forget that charity outweighs fasting and macerations of the flesh. One must not fast if it prevents you from fulfilling your duties of state, from giving your catechism. One must have confidence in God, but one must not tempt God, above all in temporal things. To be without economy, without order, is to dissipate the goods of God, it is to abuse His gifts.”*

As for bearing in the chapel, he did not want stiff attitudes to be adopted. I remember that at the procession of 15 August through the streets of La Guillotière, he came to tell some Latin students who were walking with arms crossed to take a more easy bearing.

The good Father was very prudent in counselling or authorizing corporal penances and mortifications, although he used them largely for himself. He took account of age, health, work, and wished that in all these respects each should have what was necessary and not exceed his strength. For sleep, he fixes the duration at 7 hours to 7½ in the rule of his priests. "Health often suffers," he says, "because one does not take the necessary rest or goes to bed too late." He readily permitted those who could not observe the austerities to replace them by prayers or mortifications less prejudicial to health, such as "to be badly seated on one's chair, to bear without chasing it away a fly that walks over one's face; there is nothing more painful, more irritating than that, he admits; try it and you will see."

He sought above all, in spiritual formation, to establish the spirit of God and the fundamental virtues. He considered as the basis of the spiritual edifice a solid conviction of the divinity of Jesus Christ; this conviction, in his thought, was to lead to the desire of imitating His virtues and to the practice of humility, renunciation, charity—in a word, to the possession of the spirit of God. Father Chevrier, relying on the word of Holy Scripture, *The kingdom of God is within you* [Luke xvii, 21], busied himself far more with the interior than the exterior.

> *"Put the interior into souls," he says, "the exterior will come after. Put the exterior in, you have done nothing. We must begin by putting the spirit of God into ourselves, and when it is there, it does as the sap of the tree: it produces the exterior."*

He liked to explain his thought by the comparison drawn from the natural tree and the artificial tree. The latter is perfect in regularity, but it lacks life. He concluded that much more importance must be attached to the interior than to the exterior.

> *"That is not to say," he added, "that one must neglect the exterior and demand nothing on that side, no, there must be order and regularity, but one must lay down as the principal foundation the interior, the spiritual sap which must give life to the exterior. Otherwise one does nothing solid, true and lasting. Better charity without exterior than exterior without charity.*
>
> *"To instruct, to reprove, to put into action, to make act, there is the great method of formation of Father Chevrier. It is what Our Lord did with His apostles and disciples. He chooses them first, then, during the three years He spent with them to form them to the evangelical and apostolic life, we see Him in no way applying Himself to give them external, regular and disciplinary forms; they lived as they could, according to the time. But we see Our Lord occupying Himself unceasingly with the interior formation of the apostles. The love of God and of neighbour, there is the principle and the life-giving sap which must produce everything in us. When that is in a soul, there is all that is needed." [The paragraph beginning "To instruct…" is printed within the same quotation as Chevrier's words; whether the first sentence is Chevrier speaking of himself or Chambost's summary is not clear. Treated here as continuing Chevrier's words.]*

At times I heard the good Father reproached for not putting enough order in his house. He answered good-naturedly those who permitted themselves this unjust and exaggerated reproach: "Better disorder with love than order without love. That is the spirit I should like to see born at the Prado."

He liked to recall the good Curé of Ars, who had no other principles than his. "The Curé of Ars," I heard him say, "speaking of the little girls of his Providence who had been led for a short time past according to the principles of order and regularity so common in our age, when everything is exterior, and comparing this regime with that of the time when his good Catherine, who understood nothing of disciplinary methods, was Superior, said that he loved his little '*bourdifaille*' of former days very much. [Fr. *bourdifaille*: Lyonnais/Dombes dialect word for a little rabble or gang of scamps.] In Catherine's time the children acted from the heart and not by signal; these little girls came to him, they loved him, they led a family life and not a regimental life. In Catherine's time the good God increased the dough in the hands of her who kneaded. God

was therefore not displeased with the government of the Curé of Ars and of his daughter Catherine."

The good Father had a greater knowledge of the human heart and a greater compassion for souls than those who wished to lecture him. "My very dear Sisters in Our Lord," he wrote in 1869:

> *"I thank you for the prayers you say for my health; I think the good God will hear you; I am better. I desire health only to finish the work that the good God has given me to do, to shape this spiritual work [Fr. tailler à cette œuvre spirituelle; sense of tailler here uncertain—"to cut out, shape"] and then give you the spirit of Our Lord, so that you yourselves may be able to work at the work of God; that is all I desire. It must be admitted, you are still far from having this spirit of God which is necessary to you to be true daughters of Jesus Christ; you are still far from that complete renunciation which Our Lord asks in order to belong to Him entirely and follow Him in His charity, His humility, His gentleness and His devotedness. It is not entirely your fault, for what can you know if you are not taught? For it is for me to instruct you, and as long as we have not spiritual conferences several times a week, we shall always be poor beings, living so to speak like good people of the world; and as long as I do not myself give you the example of all the virtues, we shall not be much before God. We must set to it seriously and work with all our heart to become saints, walking in the footsteps of Our Lord. Pray God that I may work at my sanctification and yours, for I groan in the secret of my soul to see us all in so sad and languishing a state, we who ought to be so humble, so fervent, so charitable, so devoted and so poor according to the spirit of God. Let us pray, because we have need of many graces to convert us all, and above all we all have need of someone who gives us the holy impulse that must lead us to God. That is what we must ask above everything; the rest is nothing. I know that you have good will and that you are quite resolved to love Our Lord. Strengthen yourselves then in these good resolutions and work to acquire, above all, renunciation of self, which is the first grace for becoming wise and walking in the ways of God. Till soon. May Our Lord bless you and give you all His peace."*

Chapter VI. Justice

Chapter VI. Justice

The spirit of justice animated all his actions. — Respect for the Sovereign Pontiff, Bishops, parish priests, priests, civil Authority. — Fidelity to the divine Office. — Duties of a Superior, spiritual and temporal care for the persons entrusted to him. — Duties of justice: workmen and suppliers. — Gratitude toward God, his parents, his collaborators and benefactors.

The Spirit of Justice Animated All His Actions

> *"O Word! O Christ! Put into me a great faith in You, so that all Your words may be for me so many lights which enlighten me and make me go to You and follow You in all the ways of justice and truth."*

The Servant of God fulfilled very faithfully all his duties toward God and toward men, liking to give as the motive of his actions the word of Our Lord to St John the Baptist: "Suffer it to be so now. For so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." [Matt. iii, 15.] I often heard him apply this word to the conduct we have to hold here below. It was visible that this word governed his own conduct. He used this example of the Gospel to act with authority when he was naturally inclined to efface himself, and also to demand, in spite of his humility, the regard that was due to his character of priest and father. It is this sentiment he had at the bottom of his heart if it happened that he felt pain when respect and gratitude were lacking to him.

The Father animated all his actions with this spirit of justice; he carefully noted in Holy Scripture all the passages in which penance is regarded as a just chastisement of sin, and he sought to put this doctrine into practice in his daily conduct, on the occasion of the labours, illnesses or pains that came, or of the voluntary sacrifices he imposed on himself. "Our members," he said, "were instruments of iniquity, they must become weapons of justice." [Rom. vi, 13.] When, in his spiritual testament, he says that he accepts willingly the law of death, and that in his eyes it is better to obey God than to live on privileges and miracles, he does but translate outwardly one of his habitual thoughts and dispositions. It is the opinion of all who knew him intimately.

He condemned himself to a continual labour, in order not to eat anyone's bread for nothing, according to an expression he frequently used in the advice he gave us. [2 Thess. iii, 8.] He also often told us that he who does not work must not eat. [2 Thess. iii, 10.] It is the spirit of justice that made him speak thus.

The Father made of his body a living victim, by the practice of justice and virtue, to edify and bring souls to God. He used faithfully his priestly powers to teach the word of God with justice, authority, charity, firmness and constancy; to offer every day, with dignity, respect and love, the most holy sacrifice of the Mass. He used faithfully his priestly powers to forgive sins, reconcile sinners with God and make saints of them, to pour out grace abundantly on the world, never repelling a soul that came to him, going out to meet the sickest, the weakest, and, like the good Shepherd, bringing back to the fold the strayed sheep.

He wished that there should be order and economy; that one should take good care of one's private affairs, as also of those of the house, which he called the good God's property.

The Father was of a very great delicacy for all that was given to the Work. He assisted his mother, because he owed it, but he did not wish anyone of his family to meddle in the Work. He had a little orphan cousin who made her first Communion at the Prado. Because she was an orphan, the Father's cousin and very good, the Sisters wished to keep her. The Father would not, because she was a relative.

Respect for the Sovereign Pontiff, Bishops, Parish Priests, Priests, Civil Authority

The Servant of God had a great respect for all persons constituted in dignity. He had in particular for the Sovereign Pontiff a great veneration, what has been called devotion to the Pope. He was truly Roman in mind and heart. These sentiments led him to make the journey to Rome four times, despite his great occupations and his poverty, namely in 1858, in 1864, in 1875 and in 1877; to send to Rome his first four deacons, to make there their last year of theological studies and preparation for the priesthood; to adopt from 1858 the Roman liturgy; for not only did he accept with submission all the decisions of the Holy See, but he always sought to be inspired by the sentiments the Sovereign Pontiff favoured.

I always saw him very sensitive to the great trials of Pius IX and the sufferings of the Church. He did not read the newspapers, but he had himself informed each week of the news from Rome and of all that interested the Holy See and the Church. He had a sovereign respect for the authority of the Church and of the lawful pastors. The decrees of the Popes and the ceremonies of the Church were for him a sacred thing.

When Father Chevrier is at Rome in 1864, he writes: “I think to obtain the signature of the Holy Father for the work of poor priests. With that I shall walk with more assurance.” At the head of the *True Disciple* we read this humble declaration: “May there be in all that it contains nothing that is not conformable to the sound doctrine of the Church, to her holy canons and to the rules established for the conduct of priests. If anything opposed should be found in it, I reprove and condemn it.”

Father Chevrier always manifested a profound sentiment of deference for Bishops and particularly the Archbishops of Lyons. He always seemed to me to have the preoccupation of being in agreement point by point with the thoughts and desires either of the Pope or of the Archbishop. This stands out for me, evidently, from the words I heard him say and from his writings that I have read. He always had the care to do nothing in the least in disagreement with the will of his Superiors. When he had composed his rule for the Priests of the Prado, he presented it to Monseigneur the Archbishop of Lyons, with these simple words of submission: “We beg His Eminence to be pleased to examine this little rule of life which we desire to follow, with his high approbation, to render our Work more regular and more stable.” When he submits to Rome his plan for the gratuitous exercise of the holy ministry, he takes good care to say that he will lead this kind of life “only as far as the diocesan authority will permit him.” When the Archbishop of Lyons refused to Father Jaricot to remain at Rome with the deacons, Father Chevrier said: “It is better to accomplish his will simply, without seeking to do ours.”

Father Chevrier gave, on every occasion, the example of deference toward the parish priests of the parishes in which he founded his works: at Saint-Louis de la Guillotière, at Limonest, at Villeurbanne. Never did he permit himself the least criticism of them, nor allow any around him. These gentlemen always expressed their satisfaction at the way he behaved toward them and often were the first to encourage his works. At Limonest, as at the Prado, the new chapel of the Work was blessed, as well as the house, by the parish priest. A priest of Saint-Louis is called to the Prado to administer the last sacraments to a man the victim of an accident in the rue Sébastien-Gryphe.

In the time of Abbé Guy, owner of the building of Saint-André, the chapel was forbidden to the public. When Father Chevrier acquired it, the interdict remained and was respected until the Sunday when, from the pulpit, Abbé Genin graciously gave his parishioners permission to attend Mass, on Sundays and feasts, in the chapel of Saint-André.

Father Chevrier took an interest in the parishes in which he had a house. Thus, having received a sum for a parish mission, he made the parish of Limonest benefit from it. He even sent a class from the Prado to stay at Limonest for three weeks, to put a little life there by singing and edification. We went every day to the parish church, which is twenty-five minutes away.

Toward his confrères Father Chevrier showed himself full of respect and deference. If a priest asked for him in the parlour, however busy he was, he left everything to go and receive him.

The Father was respectful toward the civil authority and spoke of it with regard and deference. He was faithful in fulfilling his duty as an elector and had the members of his Work fulfil it also. He honoured science and the arts. He wished to have in his Work men of talent, of learning, good theologians, capable of rendering great services to his Work and to souls, for the glory of God. Several artists, painters or sculptors, had his esteem on account of their religious talent.

Fidelity to the Divine Office

Father Chevrier attached great importance to this public and daily prayer of the priest. He recited his breviary with great exactness, faith and piety. It has been said that the Servant of God was so busy that he scarcely found time to say his breviary. The truth is that in the midst of his incessant occupations he knew how to take the fitting time for his spiritual exercises, above all for the sedate and pious recitation of the breviary, which he regarded and treated as a principal duty of the priest.

He put into practice what he recommended to his priests: “We shall recite together or separately, as is possible, the divine Office, with dignity, attention and devotion, exactly fulfilling the rubrics, rising and kneeling at the places indicated, making the pause in the verses and taking at each canonical hour a particular intention.” And he enumerates these intentions. “One must not,” he added, “put off one’s breviary or send it off till the evening; that is to neglect the duty of prayer, to expose oneself to saying it badly and to get rid of it. How can one say one’s breviary well when one has worked all day and is tired? One must begin the day with prayer.”

Duties of a Superior. Spiritual and Temporal Care for the Persons Entrusted to Him

Father Chevrier had a just and lofty idea of his duties as superior; he practised them to perfection. In the notes he left on this subject he takes care always to support his doctrine on the Gospel.

> *“It is the duty of the superior,” he says, “to be the first in everything; he must be the first in virtue and humble himself. He must be the model of all; Our Lord said nothing else to His disciples: Follow Me. He must be full of the grace of God to communicate it at every moment to all. He must reprove. It is because people do not reprove enough that the field of the father of the family is invaded by evil. One must also have carried out what has been judged good; it is there that firmness and perseverance are truly needed. The superior must watch over the whole of his community, the fulfilment of the rule, of employments, of exercises; have his eye on all that goes on, take account of each one, his conduct, his character. He must be the man of business, the friend and father of all, always approachable, gentle, patient, seeking to unite everybody in a bond of charity.”*

The Father was not content with saying what should be done, reproving and correcting the guilty, but, being convinced that authority must be exercised far more by example than by word, I always saw him strive to do what he asked of others. To impose and show his authority, never did he permit himself to say: “I am your superior, you must obey me.” He said rather: “I owe you the example since I am your superior.” One day he said to me: “How can we dare to teach others if we do not give good example, if we do not do what ought to be done?” The good Father could truly have said: Follow me, do as I do. But, his humility opposing it, he showed virtue, duty, by acting himself.

According to the word of the divine Master giving authority to Peter after having asked him: “Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these?” [John xxi, 15], the Father understood that to be superior and to command, one must love, and dominate by love before dominating by word.

While exercising toward the present members of his community his zeal and solicitude, the Servant of God did not forget the absent, and acquitted himself by letters, toward them, of the duties of father and superior, requiring that they write to him often and give him account of everything.

The Servant of God manifested a great interest in all the persons entrusted to him and busied himself with care with the spiritual and temporal interests of each of them: his priests, the Sisters, the employees, the children. When he was present, he took account of everything, exercising supervision himself, concerning himself to know whether everyone had what was needed. He said: “It would be a sin for us not to give the necessary to those with whom we are charged. The good God would ask an account of it from us. A religious community is a spiritual family; it must therefore furnish each with all that is necessary to him both for the soul and for the body.”

He put all his care into giving his children a religious instruction as complete as possible and into disposing them to the reception of the sacraments of Penance, Eucharist and Confirmation.

The spiritual advancement of his children was his great solicitude; to favour it he took all sorts of measures: direction, notes, little meetings. Besides the general care that Father Chevrier gave to all through the common exercises of piety, he knew how to reserve moments to give it to those who had particular need. He did not fear to sacrifice part of his sleep to devote more time to direction. Every year he gave the retreat to the members of his Work or had it given. All had their particular retreat: the priests, the seminarians, the Latin students, the Sisters, the children of the First Communion. When a member of the Community had a special need to withdraw into solitude to make a retreat, he granted him permission with pleasure.

He busied himself with care with each of the persons of his house. I saw him exercise supervision himself from time to time; he gave advice which showed that he took perfect account of everything. I observed it very often, for example concerning employments and lack of order. One Sunday when he had not been able to attend the dinner during which the compositions were read, he passed through the yard just at the moment when this proclamation was being made. He stopped to hear it. As I was a server and found myself outside, he asked me some questions about the compositions that had been read and went on his way. I saw by this that he never lost his people from sight.

When he crossed the dormitory in the evening after we were in bed, I saw him on occasion arrange the blankets or sheets. One of my fellow pupils hid entirely in his sheets; I saw the Father uncover his head and tell him it was unhealthy to bury it so. Another having arrived in the month of December, the Father, passing through the dormitory, noticed that he had no night-cap and went at once to fetch one, so that his head should not be cold.

The letters he wrote when far away show how he took an interest in his children, above all the humblest; having learned that the cook was making exaggerated economies, he wrote to the Father who was replacing him for the time this letter, which I cite textually: “Take great care of my Latin students; give those who are ill wine and meat several times a day, as much as shall be necessary to them. We do not take children to make them suffer, and it would be a sin for us not to give the necessary to those with whom we are charged; the good God would ask an account of it from us.”

He often entrusted to his mother the care of preparing the extra little snacks for those of the children who needed them, so as not to overburden the cook. I also saw him, more than once, bring himself in the evening to the dormitory an infusion or hot milk to children whose tiredness he had noticed or whom he had simply heard coughing in the day. He then inquired with care whether they were sufficiently covered, whether they needed anything. Among his letters there is one in which he forbids depriving his Latin students of their snack; it is a penance he did not admit.

When the Father had sick persons he visited them often and was anxious to know whether they had what they needed. He knew how to console, encourage, make suffering accepted by thoughts of faith. He did not wish them to be deprived of holy Communion; he had it brought or brought it himself. When he had gravely ill persons, he preferred to have them nursed at home than to have them put in the Hospital or at La Charité. Far from finding that it was an overburden for the Work, he said that it was a blessing for it. It was said, in the

time when I was a pupil, that nowhere were the sick better nursed than at the Prado. This office was entrusted to very devoted Sisters. Sometimes, however, Father Chevrier had sick children carried to La Charité. That was when, in the case of a contagious illness, the patient could not be isolated enough, or when special care was needed that could not be given at the Prado.

When the employees of the house were old and could scarcely render service any more, he never dismissed them: he would have thought he failed in all justice by getting rid of them. Nobody would have dared propose such a thing to him, thinking well that he would have been indignant.

Duties of Justice: Workmen and Suppliers

The Servant of God often made his examination of conscience on this duty of justice which he had to fulfil toward souls, and despite the care he took of it, he was so delicate on this point that, in his spiritual Testament, his humility makes him discover various negligences which were unfounded:

> *"Pardon to you, poor of the earth, for not having always been generous enough and eager to succour you. Pardon to you, sinners of the earth; my duty was to labour for your conversion, and I feel that I did it with too much coldness and negligence! Pardon to you, souls whom God had entrusted to me to lead and save; pardon for my negligence in instructing you and my weakness in correcting you! Pardon to you, venerated confrères whom Providence had given me. I have perhaps been very indifferent to you. I did not busy myself enough with you and did not give you the care you had a right to expect! Pardon to you, children whom Providence had sent into the house to instruct you and make you Christians. I pray God to forgive me if some have perished through our fault, and to repair by His grace what negligence may have done to these young souls. Pardon to those whom I may have offended in any manner whatsoever."*

Father Chevrier was exact in paying workmen and suppliers as soon as he could. He says on this subject:

> *"As for creditors and the workmen who have worked for us, it is only just to pay them, not only when they ask, but even immediately after their work is finished. The workman is worthy of his hire. [Luke x, 7.] It is better to suffer and wait oneself than to expose oneself to making others wait or suffer."*

[The following sentences are in the first person of a woman witness:] When I was charged with paying the baker, he wished me to settle with him every Saturday. When he had no money, he turned to the good God to ask for some, but he did not wish people to have recourse to credit. "A master," he said, "pays his workmen; if we work for the good God, He will give us the necessary; but He pays only when one works for Him." When the bread did not arrive, he added: "There is something that is not right in the house, that grieves the good God." [Fr. *il y a quelque chose qui ne va pas*.] He also said to us: "Do not trouble yourselves when I make an expense; I would not make it if I had not the means to pay. See, my children, if you have four sous, spend only two, you will never be in difficulty."

The Father wished people to be good to workmen, to let them earn their living. He did not wish too much haggling in buying, but that care be taken to deal only with worthy people. He himself took an interest in the workmen who came to work at the house. He wished them to be given drink when the work was a little hard. The plasterer who did the work at Limonest was at his first undertaking as master. Father Chevrier was very good to him; he wished him to be given dinner although it was not in the agreement: "Young man, you will succeed," he said to him one day. It did happen. This man often reminded me of this word of Father Chevrier, for whom he kept much veneration.

One day the Father gave a coin to a roadmender on the road, saying to him: "You take great pains to repair the road by which we pass. Here, this is for you and your companion."

Gratitude Toward God, His Parents, His Collaborators and His Benefactors

Father Chevrier was grateful to God for all the benefits received, notably the grace of baptism, those of the priesthood and of his particular vocation. He showed me one day the value he attached to the grace of

baptism. It was 4 February 1878. I go to his room to ask him permission to receive Communion the next day, which was the anniversary of my birth. He said to me: “Yes, my child, but it would be better for the anniversary of baptism.” “Father, I do not know exactly which is the day of my baptism.” He then made me a little reproach that I knew the day on which I came into the world while I did not know on what day I had been made a child of God and of the Church.

I saw him show his gratitude to God by working every day at His holy service, by making His gifts bear fruit, as we see by this succession of works he created for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls. Father Chevrier had us say prayers of thanksgiving when a subject entered to devote himself to the Work or when he obtained a grace for his Work, such as that of having his deacons complete their studies at Rome. I shall not forget the good Father’s joy at the arrival of Father Jacquier and Father Dutel: “Come,” he said, “let us recite a *Benedictus* in the chapel to thank the good God for the grace He does us in sending us a new confrère.”

One finds constantly in his letters, as in his words, the seal of his gratitude toward God. “I thank the good God”: such was the phrase that came as naturally to his lips or under his pen.

[A Sister’s deposition:] On a feast of 10 December—it was the 14th anniversary of the foundation of the House—the Father had assembled us at the Sepulchre to renew our profession. He began to speak of the Work and thanked the good God for the graces He had granted him in fourteen years; then, turning his gaze to the altar, he said: “It is not I who am superior, it is He who is exposed on this altar who is the Master of this house, it is Our Lord Jesus Christ to whom everything belongs. He must reign, He must govern, it is for Him to command, He is superior, I am nothing.” And, continuing to humble himself, he expressed to Our Lord his respect, his love, his profound submission. And his voice was covered, stifled by tears, he could scarcely speak; then afterwards he renewed his profession on his knees, aloud, before all his moved religious.

Father Chevrier showed his gratitude to his parents, whom he surrounded with respect and veneration. He tried to render them in spiritual benefits what he had received from them. During his father’s old age he visited him frequently and gave him particular marks of tenderness, to console him in the isolation to which his state of health condemned him. When he was far from him and knew him to be alone, he wrote him touching letters full of delicacy and asked friendly persons to care for him and to relieve his boredom. Here is what I read in letters addressed to the Misses Mercier and Bonnard:

> *“If you go to see my father, kindly tell him that he must not be bored, that he will see us again Saturday. You will cook his dinner tomorrow, for you know that he is not a good cook and does not know how to manage. If I did not know all your charity and your devotedness for us, I should not dare charge you with such errands; but I know you and that is why I do not put myself out.”*

Another time: “My mother takes care of me and with her I lack nothing.” Now it was known for certain that she was rather a bad nurse. A few days later he writes again from Chatanay: “My mother and I thank you for the care you are good enough to take of my good father.” From Rome he writes to them in 1864: “Kindly console my parents a little for my long absence and tell them that the few days that remain before my return will soon be past.” In 1877 he writes to them again from Rome: “Embrace my mother for me and tell her that I love her much.” In a letter addressed in 1868 to Mme Franchet, he says that he needs rest and that he will take a few days, to please his mother.

I was for a long time a witness of the Servant of God’s gratitude toward his mother. He was ceaselessly full of respect, affection and consideration for her, and it was touching to see with what delicate and devoted care he made it a duty to surround her old age; but he took great care to keep himself independent of her in everything that concerned his ministry. If he missed no occasion to manifest his filial piety, he let it be clearly understood that he did not listen to the voice of flesh and blood when it was a question of the things of his priestly ministry. I remember he said to us one day, apropos of the miracle of Our Lord at Cana: “The authors torture their minds to explain the word of Our Lord to His Mother: *What is it to me and to thee?*

[John ii, 4.] It is, however, quite simple. Our Lord wishes to make us understand that parents have nothing to do with the things of the ministry." He often recommended to us renunciation of the family, and he has left on this excellent counsels in his *True Disciple*.

When I entered the Prado, my mother presented me to Father Chevrier, who made a sign of the cross with his finger on my forehead, observed that I was very little, then told my mother not to be anxious, and told some pupils who were passing to take me to the study room after I had had lunch.

The separation took place immediately. My mother, who thought she could take me back to town, wept much on leaving. I have always thought that by this abrupt separation Father Chevrier wished to imitate the conduct of Our Lord, who intended that one should follow Him at the first call, without regard to the voice of flesh and blood.

In his advice to his priests and seminarians the Father insisted on nothing so much as renunciation of the family, and throughout his life he showed that these were no vain words for him. It was by formally opposing the desires and wishes of his mother that he gave himself to the macerations of penance, to the most painful labours of the ministry, and even threw himself into that undertaking, frightening for his timidity, of the foundation of the Prado.

Father Chevrier assisted his father to his last moments and felt great pain at his death. Abundant tears flowed from his eyes; nevertheless he bore this trial, so hard for his heart, with an admirable spirit of faith and a quite supernatural resignation. A person who had expressed to him her sentiments of condolence on this occasion admitted that she was extraordinarily struck and edified by it. The Servant of God had a picture of the resurrection of Our Lord placed on this dear tomb with these words: "I am the resurrection and the life." [John xi, 25.] Each year, as long as he could go out, he led, on 2 November, the whole community and all the children to Loyasse, to his father's tomb. There he had five *Our Fathers* and five *Hail Marys* said for the repose of this soul which was so dear to him.

The Servant of God showed great gratitude to the bishops and priests who honoured his Work with their visit or protection. Everyone remarked it, particularly on the occasion of the death of Cardinal de Bonald. On learning the news he showed a profound sadness.

The Father was very grateful to all his benefactors, but above all to the poor, the workmen who rendered him some services. Poor benefactors held a special place in his gratitude; not only were they visited, but they received the care of the Sisters who nurse the sick when illness or infirmities came to try them. The good Father's purse, and even the Prado, were open to them.

A poor workman brought the Father, every Sunday, a few ring-loaves of bread [Fr. *couronnes de pain*], as many as his savings allowed him. He brought them from Vaise. One day the Father told him that, to tire himself less, he ought to buy it near the Prado, but he answered that he bought this bread at a widow's and that thus it made him two acts of charity. Later this man entered the service of the house. The Father often told us that he was an upright and pure soul. Each morning, from 4 o'clock, he found him in the chapel at prayer.

The Father recommended to me, before dying, an elderly married couple. "They were very devoted to our Work, these worthy people, and they are not happy; you will take care of them." They had indeed been benefactors from the first hour; they were of that legion of workmen and workwomen who helped the Father in the foundation of his Work, less by pecuniary resources, of which they were destitute, than by their personal devotedness, giving gratuitously their time, their work, their industry to the service of the house, sharing with the Prado their bread, their clothing, their furniture, taking from their necessary and making themselves collectors to bring some help to the Father and meet the needs of the children.

Gratitude toward the persons who did good to him and his Work was profoundly engraved in the good Father's heart. In his letters one often reads the following phrases: "Thank you for your charity. Thank you for the interest you take in my poor person. I shall never be able to repay you all that you have done for me." To persons who had sent him some provisions during one of his retreats at Chatanay, he answers: "I am confounded by the kind attention you show. May the good God repay you in spiritual graces all that you do for us." He says to the Misses Mercier and Bonnard, who had fallen ill, these words which I cite textually from a letter: "I should like to be able to do something for you; be well persuaded that all I have and all I can dispose of is at your service, and I beg you to use it as belonging to you. If you need our Sisters for your errands and your indoor work, they will take pleasure in going to render you service." Once he writes to them from Saint-Fons: "Although in my solitude, I shall not let your feast of St John and St Peter pass without sending you a little word of remembrance, joining to it a little flower of the mountain."

The Father charges his deacons who are at Rome to present his grateful sentiments to the Franciscan Father and the Lazarist Father who have taken care of them, and he adds in a letter: "If you think that anything can please them, kindly tell me; I should be happy to be useful to them."

The Father often said to us: "One must be very grateful for all that is done for us; and if we are needed, for our services, be generous and ready to give ourselves without counting." Thus, when he learned of the illness of some benefactor or of a painful event, a trial, a bereavement, he hastened to pray and have prayer made for this intention. He then made, according to the case, a visit of charity, of condolence, or sent a few lines of consolation, a few kind words; one felt that his heart truly shared the sadness of those who suffered. I accompanied him myself several times on this sort of visit, and I admired his great heart, his delicacy, this deep sense of faith and piety which holds to souls a lofty, Christian language. When he presented himself in these afflicted families, he was received with respect, effusion of heart and an emotion at times very lively: "O Father! we have great need of you; we were counting on you; we were waiting for you; you understood, oh! thank you!" One felt that he brought with him calm, peace, courage and resignation: it was the visit of the good God.

"We must be very compassionate, my children," he said to us; "show the persons who have done us good a profound sympathy, show them that we are neither indifferent nor ungrateful, and that we share their pain. We must pray for them, take an interest in them and render them the services we can render them that are compatible with our vocation and occupations."

He acted likewise toward persons tried by reverses of fortune. He always welcomed them with much kindness, spoke to them affably, however frequent their visits might be, without ever letting it appear that he was in a hurry or that they could importune him, and devoted to them all the time they needed. I have in memory numerous examples of this kind. On seeing certain persons arrive, we said to one another: "Well! the poor Father is in for a while! he is not at the end!" or we made this remark to him himself: "Must we not," he replied, "be very charitable toward these good people and take the time to listen to them, to encourage them, precisely because the world draws away from them and abandons them on account of their reverses? Can we thus forget the charity they had for us, the help they so generously offered us in better times? And would charity, and gratitude, and justice itself be thus observed?"

"I recommend these good persons to you," he said to me some time before his death, speaking of two elderly ladies; "take care of them, see that nothing is lacking to them. We shall never be able to repay them all they did for us. Oh! how good and devoted they were! How they helped me largely, generously and without counting!"

It is above all by praying for his benefactors that Father Chevrier acquitted the gratitude he owed them. Every day his Mass was said for them; this is why he did not receive stipends for his Mass. Several times a day he had an *Ave Maria* said at the end of prayers for the benefactors. He profited by the feast-day of a

regular benefactor to express to him his gratitude for what he did for his Work.

The Father, in his spiritual testament, expresses his gratitude to the benefactors of his Work and to all those who devoted themselves to it as his collaborators, and to the Sisters:

> *"I thank the benefactors of the Work who helped me to begin it, to develop it, and who, I hope, will continue to protect it after my death; let them be well convinced that, in sustaining it, they will do a work very agreeable to God and very useful to the Church.*
>
> *"I thank these poor workmen and workwomen who economized on their necessary to bring me their alms each Sunday or each month. How many times I wept on seeing so much generosity on the part of the poor to help us to bring up our children! How many times I admired their generosity and devotedness! May the good God repay you a hundredfold, dear brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ, who showed yourselves so good to us, to our poor person and to our Work! Thank you, yes, thank you! May the good God repay you in spiritual graces what you have done for us.*
>
> *"I thank all those who lent their benevolent concurrence to help us do the work of God. I shall pray for all in the heaven which I hope for from the mercy of God.*
>
> *"I thank also those who were pleased to devote themselves to the Work by their personal devotedness, such as the Sisters and the employees; I beg them to remain attached to our Work and assure them that their devotedness will not be without reward before God.*
>
> *"May Jesus Christ bless them! May He grant them strength, grace and perfection, and heaven as the price of their patience and sacrifice."*

[A Sister's deposition:] One day when the Father had gathered us to give us his instructions on the religious life, he said to us: "I thank you for being willing to help me do the work of the good God: without you I could not do it." And one felt the humility and gratitude of his heart. I often admired how the Father raised us by humbling himself; he, superior, founder, thanking his children for their devotedness to the Work, while he loaded us with spiritual goods. It is I who thank you, O venerated Father, for having called and received me into your Work. From the heights of heaven, obtain that I may be less unworthy to be your child!

The Father knew how to inspire in us a universal gratitude toward everybody, telling us that it was everybody who fed us. He inspired in us the desire to work particularly for the salvation of workmen and the poor, out of gratitude for all they did for us, and which was the more meritorious coming from persons who gave of their necessary. He often said to us: "Remember that you eat the bread of Providence. Render thanks to God, promising Him to serve Him as true disciples of Jesus Christ." And by all sorts of words of this kind he impressed strongly on us the resolution to ask ourselves, at the beginning of each meal, whether we had truly earned our food. When one had heard him speak on this subject, the idea of being demanding would have seemed to us monstrous. One thought only of showing Providence a great gratitude for all the goods it lavished on us. The canticle *O douce Providence!* is one of those he had accustomed us to prefer.

The Father had a great respect for alms. He never disposed of them for the superfluous or the agreeable. This stood out from all his conduct as from all his words. When expenses were necessary, he was, on the contrary, very generous; for example as to the quantity of food. Never did I see him measure the ration of food. Nor did he spare anything for the care of the sick. He said: "Gratitude is so beautiful a virtue that we must not neglect to put it into practice."

In the rule of the Clerical School he recommends the children to have respect and gratitude for the Sisters who devote themselves to the Work, and to be ready to render them service. He writes to his seminarians: "Thank well these good Fathers who instruct you and give you good counsels. Be grateful to all who do you good, not only in words but also in actions, by rendering all the services you can." He asks Father Jaricot to remain a while longer in the community where he finished his studies, in order to be able to render it some services. He imposes on his seminarians to work during the vacations at the service of the house, in gratitude for the benefits received. He also said to his children, on the eve of vacation: "On leaving these poor walls

you ought to kiss them, and when you come back, greet them from afar, because it is to their poverty that you owe receiving so many benefits."

His gratitude extended to everything. He wished God to be thanked "for the good animals He has given us to help us and feed us in our needs."

Chapter VII. Fortitude and Patience

Chapter VII. Fortitude and Patience

In his childhood, his studies, his ministry, his foundations. — His life at the Prado. His Writings. — Forced rest. Condemnation of laziness. Perseverance in his designs, in his direction. — Patience in sufferings, persecutions, insults; in contradictions, oppositions, lack of regard.

In His Childhood, His Studies, His Ministry, His Foundations

The Servant of God showed throughout his life a truly heroic fortitude, overcoming with courage the difficulties in the pursuit of good. From his tenderest childhood he made himself remarked by the firmness of his character and his energy at work. When his mother had to be absent, she ordered him to sit on a chair with his toys and to stay there until her return. The child was master enough of himself not to leave the place assigned to him and to keep the promise made to his mother. Already in those days he never lost a moment. At home he was ceaselessly occupied with household tasks; his mother taught him to sew, to knit stockings, to wash his handkerchiefs, to wind silk [Fr. *dévider de la soie*—Lyon being the silk city]; all who saw him were much edified by this application to work at so tender an age.

It was already foreseen that he would later be a man who knew how to master himself, to govern himself and to prefer duty to pleasure. He showed this strength of will by his fidelity in returning home immediately after the end of classes, without lingering in the street with the other children. Once when he had amused himself playing with stones at the door of the house he arrived five minutes late. His mother reproved him for it, and never had to return to it. He had asked as a favour to serve the five o'clock Mass at Saint-François, and even anticipating this early hour, he waited in prayer for the church door to be opened, content, as he said, to be present at the awakening of the good God. Is it not a heroic fortitude for a child to rise very early, every day, in every season, and that for several years, to have the happiness of serving the first Mass?

At L'Argentière and at the Grand Seminary the Servant of God always gave proof of this firmness which triumphs over laziness and all obstacles. He showed himself constant in duty, energetic at work, and as firm as he was gentle in character. Here is what Abbé Brunel, who was his professor of philosophy, writes of him: "Antoine Chevrier was an accomplished pupil in every respect, the first for application to study, regularity, piety. He was resistant to bad examples and to the lures of dissipation, inflexible in all that concerned the rule—in a word, a man of character."

Before receiving priestly ordination he declared himself ready to make all the sacrifices that God should ask of him. In the thoughts he drew up during the last retreat of his Grand Seminary, one sees that he is resolved to work actively in the service of God and souls. He wishes to be a true priest, forgetting himself and disposed to sacrifice everything for the Gospel, like St Paul, like St Vincent de Paul in the galleys, like St Francis de Sales in the Chablais. He envied the lot of the missionaries who had the happiness of suffering and dying for the faith.

As soon as he was appointed curate at Saint-André, the Servant of God busied himself at once and courageously with the ministry entrusted to him. Never did he complain of excess of work or ask whether the job to be done did not fall to another. Thus the sacristan, speaking of him, said one day: "The poor big sheep, he will always let himself be shorn!" This remark having been reported to him, he contented himself with answering with his good smile: "It is true, I am a big sheep and they make me go where they like, but Our Lord was indeed a tender lamb, always ready to let Himself be shorn."

For two months he visited every day a young man struck with smallpox; to subdue the instinctive terrors and repugnances of nature, he never failed to embrace the sick man. During the floods of 1856 he several times

exposed his life to bring help to the unfortunate victims of the scourge.

It is in the foundation of the Prado that the supernatural fortitude of the Servant of God shines out particularly. Naturally distrustful of himself and full of apprehension before heavy charges, he said that his vocation seemed to him rather "to be in a little corner, unknown, and to do the work that presents itself, without going forward." He felt himself little made to undertake a work which was perhaps to draw on him difficulties and vexations from the authority, as well as impose grave responsibilities; his health was not robust, and the events of that time announced nothing very reassuring for the future. In spite of all these reasons which urged him to remain quietly in a second-line post, he enters resolutely into the new and unknown way that opens before him, and for nineteen years he will bear, so to speak alone, this crushing charge of keeping alive, without the least resource, the work of the first Communion and all those that circumstances added to it. It was only after having struggled two years that he accepted "this cross," as he said, and bore it courageously to his death. He must have recognized well the will of God in the foundation of the Prado, otherwise he would never have dared to undertake it. He who appeared so gentle, so timid, had an unshakable constancy, which stopped the less before obstacles in that he had an absolute confidence in Providence.

He walked on through contradictions and criticisms, even from certain of his collaborators who, while holy people, had ideas opposed to his and let themselves be too much guided by the counsels of human prudence. In these circumstances one saw his fortitude, his patience and his humility shine; he listened gently to criticisms, testified to his little personal worth, said he was incapable of doing much, spoke gently of submitting to the will of God, and ended by disarming oppositions, even of those who had gone as far as insults toward him.

In the midst of the so incomplete and so imperfect elements of which he had had to form his house at the beginning, Father Chevrier's situation was difficult. He had accepted all devotednesses, but some came from persons little prepared for community life or even of a character that lent itself ill to it. These devotednesses acted, the catechism was well learned and well known by the children, each person brought the best will in the world to fill her office, but several wished to fill it in their own way. Father Chevrier, obliged to content himself with these auxiliaries, got the best possible out of them, but all the difficulties of co-ordination fell upon him. His efforts ran up against an obstinacy that was not easy to overcome; he suffered greatly from it but made no one suffer, bearing all these defects with a patience that never belied itself. Others would have fought until they were broken; he tried to get the best out of what he had at hand, without ever letting himself be discouraged.

The Work, at the beginning, offered no attraction: it began in the most complete destitution, to such a point that there was but one cooking-pot and that the cooking had to be done in the open air.

When the parish priest of Villeurbanne came to propose to him to found the parish of Moulin-à-Vent, the Servant of God agreed to take charge of this enterprise, although he already had much to do at the Prado and was absolutely destitute of resources. In spite of so many obstacles he accepted "this cross," for it is thus that he viewed it, since on this occasion on the Sunday evening, at the Way of the Cross, he wished to act as clerk and follow the stations carrying the cross. During the time he was at the head of this work, he carried on abreast the most diverse occupations, continuing to govern his house in Lyons and doing all that his new parish demanded. The devil raised great obstacles for him by sowing seeds of mistrust and hostility against him; the Servant of God bore everything with patience. When M. Martinet, his curate, obtained to be named parish priest of the parish, Father Chevrier, who had not been warned, was sensitive to the blow struck against him, but he accepted without murmuring and offered to God "one of the greatest crosses of his life," thus making the fortitude of his soul shine out the more.

His Life at the Prado. His Writings

Father Chevrier's life in our poor Prado was always very tiring and beyond the strength of a man. Besides the direction of his house and the catechism, he was overwhelmed with visitors, with persons who came from all sides to consult him. As soon as he appeared in the chapel, his confessional was besieged by penitents; he often remained there whole hours and left it only to go to the parlour and the sacristy, and there other sittings began again which often lasted long hours. He always stood, so as not to prolong the talks with the same person. At the end of his life he leaned against the credence table of the sacristy and finally had a little easel made for himself to serve as support. One understands the fatigue that this attitude imposed on him, above all when the sittings lasted several consecutive hours. On going up afterwards to his room, it happened that he was obliged to lean against the walls.

His patience showed in the welcome he gave to people, even to those who came to him for the most futile things and abused his time. He listened to them all with equal benevolence and let them speak as long as they wished. In him it was charity and not weakness. He answered all that crowd. Always gentle and good, he made himself all to all to win them all to Jesus Christ [1 Cor. ix, 22], and that with so much kindness, amenity and suavity that one went away under the impression of a heavenly charm.

In the beginnings of the Prado it happened to him to hide in a retired place in order to find a moment to say his breviary. It is even told that one day the porter, looking for him on all sides, finally discovered him there: "How, Father, you are there! and everyone is waiting for you downstairs!" "But, my good Brother, you do not then wish to let me say my breviary?" And the Brother in a sententious tone: "Father, Christian for oneself and priest for others." The good Father accepted the lesson, and it is said that from that moment he no longer thought of withdrawing from the crowd, even to say his breviary.

He received everyone with the greatest benevolence, without ever appearing in a hurry, so that each withdrew with the conviction that he was the object of a special charity on the Father's part. And whatever fatigue he felt from these long audiences, whether at the confessional or in the sacristy, he never let any of it appear. When evening came, his priests, who had often not been able to join him in the day, went in their turn to find him when he had retired into his poor room. And there the good Father, seated near his desk, lightly leaning on a little board fitted for that purpose, listened to them with great kindness and gave them his paternal counsels.

What makes this fortitude and constancy of the Servant of God appear still more is that in the midst of so busy and so sacrificed a life he was still able to find time to study much, as the considerable writings he left testify. It is that in fact he did not lose a moment, worked with method, pursuing unceasingly a determined aim, as he counselled his priests: "It is good," he says, "to have a serious work to do and a firm will to finish it, to fix one's attention and mind constantly on it, and to be little distracted from this work."

He noted down as they came to him, on sheets fixed to a board set up against the wall, the ideas that came to him; it is thus that he was able to compose his *True Disciple of Jesus Christ*, which sums up his whole work. Here is the enumeration of the Writings of Father Chevrier that we possess:

> *The True Disciple. The Priesthood. The Catechism. — The Mysteries of the Rosary and the Rosary Beads. — The Way of the Cross, the Passion, the struggle of Our Lord against the Jews. — Different methods of hearing Mass. — The Holy Spirit. The divinity of Jesus Christ. — The titles of Jesus Christ. — Prayer and Meditation. — Teachings of Jesus Christ and of St Paul to the faithful. — Gospels. — Epistles and Parables. — God and man. — Angels and demons. — Humility, charity, faith and poverty. — Various rules of the Priests, of the Brothers, of the Sisters, of the Clerical School. — Various subjects.*

Let us add to this nearly a hundred and twenty sermons and more than five hundred letters. One may say that the common ground of all these writings is always and solely the Gospel and the Epistles. He said that one finds everything there, and he kept to that, at least at the end of his life, for we see from his rules from the beginning of his priestly life that he gave each day a considerable time to the study of theology and history.

He had bought in 1852 the *Encyclopédie du XIXe siècle*, published in more than fifty volumes. He also had the *Universal History of the Catholic Church* by Rohrbacher. Comparing this work with the ideas of Father Chevrier, I noticed that he must have studied this author with care, for I found several times visible traces of Rohrbacher in his thoughts. Perhaps this reading contributed much to strengthening in the Father the love of Rome and the opposition he had to all Gallican and Jansenist tendencies. He speaks at different times, in his books, of the works of Guillois and Collot. These are probably the books he used for his catechisms. For his sermons he consulted notably Billot and Cardinal Giraud. I have also been told that he read Mgr Gaume much, in particular his *Grand Catechism of Perseverance*. In his rule of the Clerical School he recommends the *Catechism of the Council of Trent*, and I remember that in Father Jacquier's class we translated the greater part of it, day by day.

Father Chevrier wished that in the studies of his Clerical School a large share be given to Christian authors. I remember he once showed us his pain that a professor had put into our hands the *De viris* [a Latin school reader on illustrious men, *De viris illustribus urbis Romae*]. He said to us: "People know by heart the history of the great men of pagan antiquity, of Alexander, of Caesar, and do not know Jesus Christ and the saints."

Father Chevrier did not lose a minute. What a man of prayer, study and work! I cannot, without being touched, recall a word he said to me when he was at the Hospital of St Luke: "I have not worked enough at my Work. If I had worked more I could have left you something, whereas I have not finished my work." These were indeed the sentiments and words of a saint, whom humility makes find faults where there are none.

Forced Rest. Condemnation of Laziness

Father Chevrier accepted only with repugnance the rest required by his state of health. I believe I can assure that one of the greatest sacrifices of his life was to go and take, on the doctor's order, his two seasons at the waters. When he is obliged to take some rest, he humbles himself for "his idleness" and desires to be cured so as to work again. "I am ashamed," he writes from Vichy, "to live in idleness when you are working and can scarcely manage the work." Yet he does not lose his time, as the same letter, dated 25 June 1878, testifies: "Send me a little sheet of examination of conscience. I am working at copying out my catechism, which must be an important matter for us." — "Time hangs heavy on me to come back among you all," he writes to Father Jaricot. "I am not much better, but one must not lose time when one still has much to do." In 1877 he wrote: "I think I shall get the upper hand again, not to continue the work of former times, but at least to do a part of it." He writes from Chatanay, where he had gone to be cured of a loss of voice: "Time drags when one does nothing and leads a life as idle as that which I am obliged to lead."

Father Chevrier, so accustomed was he to being overworked, called that *rest*, because at least he was quiet and could give himself wholly to the things of God. He is far, however, from losing his time; even in these days of forced rest he works at his notes on the Gospel, at the mysteries of the Rosary. He carries these same preoccupations into all the absences to which circumstances condemn him: at La Tour-du-Pin, at Saint-Fons, at Vichy, at Rome. Time soon hangs heavy on him far from his flock; he aspires to resume his work. A person had invited him to go and spend some time at her house, where he could restore his strength. He answers, on 6 July 1878, to Father Farissier, who had served as intermediary: "I thank her much for her charitable intention, but I could render her no service and I have the work of the good God to do before all."

Never did we hear him complain when he was ill, and the persons who assisted him in his last illness always assured that his serenity did not belie itself a single instant, in the midst of his great sufferings.

Father Chevrier did not like lazy people. One saw by all his ways of doing and saying that he had been accustomed early not to lose his time and to work without respite, like the poor, like those who earn their bread each day. When we had bad marks at the Clerical School for work and study, he scolded us sharply; he

had very strong expressions to make us ashamed. Among other things he told us that he who does not work does not deserve to eat, and that in eating he steals the bread of Providence. Thus he wished us always to be occupied, whether at studies or at the employments of the house. We had recreations every day, but if there was some work to be done, such as sweeping, cleaning, peeling, it had to be begun first. All the more should walks be taken only when nothing claimed our presence at the Prado, whether for the material employments, or for the catechism, or to help one or another, for example Father Jacquier, who continually needed someone when he went out.

I remember that Father Chevrier told us that nothing was so painful to him as to hear someone say to him when he went out: "You are going for a walk," as if priests had nothing to do but take walks. He admitted to us that he would have preferred to receive a slap. [Fr. *un soufflet*.] "A priest," he said, "should walk only in going from one occupation to another." Here is, moreover, what he writes in a note in his rule of the Clerical School:

> *"One goes for a walk only when everything is in order in the house and there is no work to be done. Duty and work before all. One may keep back some pupils to do the work that is behind, while the others go for a walk. To go for a walk indicates that one has nothing more useful to do. The children must be accustomed to work and not to walking. Work serves as walk and exercise for the body. One must earn one's living, we are not rich people and men of independent means, one must unite work and study and remember that the poor man must work before he walks."*

During our year of philosophy the Father writes to us: "Become strong and courageous men. May the good God give you health of soul and body, and may you come back to us full of vigour for good, so as soon to labour to convert the world and to become good little missionaries of the good God."

Perseverance in His Designs, in His Direction

The Father's fortitude appears in the perseverance with which he always pursued the aim he proposed to himself, whether in the foundation of the Prado, or when he put into execution the thought that God had inspired in him for several years, of forming poor priests and, to arrive at this result, of establishing a Clerical School. The Father admitted that in beginning the Prado, God had hidden from him many things that would have appalled or frightened him had he known them. Nevertheless he never lost courage. His constancy never belied itself in the midst of difficulties of every sort. Material difficulties, the contradictions that befell him, even on the part of his confrères, the hostile turn of public events, the weakening of his strength when he had still almost everything to create—nothing turned him from what he considered the will of God.

His difficulties were very numerous, for he carried for long alone, or in company with insufficient auxiliaries, the whole weight of his new foundation. We saw him with several auxiliaries of whom one lacked confidence and wished to go away so as not to see the ruins of the Prado, another wished to put order in the house, Father Jaricot wished to leave for the Trappe; in spite of all, the Father remained firm and confident, leaning only on God; but how he suffered in all sorts of ways! Yet one never saw him complain. Crushed at times under the weight of fatigue, he contented himself with saying: "My God, if I had not confidence in You, I would put the key under the door and retire to the Trappe."

A year and a half before his death, when he could hope that his Work was definitively established thanks to the four new priests of the preceding year, the departure of Father Jaricot for the Trappe brought discouragement to his new auxiliaries, who had had time to realize the difficulties of life at the Prado and the continual renunciation it demanded. Some proposed to leave, at least momentarily. The Father then wrote to Father Jaricot, on 9 April 1878. [See Chapter II.] All who have read this letter have found it very beautiful. If it shows that Father Chevrier was not a stranger to human nature, it also shows that he knew how to tame it and silence it, by the strength of his submission to the will of God and the unshakable firmness of his confidence in God. Father Chevrier is a saint who knew the sentiments of our poor humanity but who was

able, with the grace of God, to supernaturalize them and use them to attain perfection.

This thought: Let us work for God, let us do the Work of God, sustained his strength and courage in difficult hours. There were moments, circumstances, when everything seemed to turn against him: men and things. I heard him repeat several times: “I want one thing only: the will of God. If I saw the Prado crumble before my eyes, I should accept it in submission to the will of God; I should be ready to set fire to it myself, if such were His will.” But difficulties did not rebuff or discourage him. Counting neither on himself nor on the persons who might, from the human point of view, seem to him most indispensable, his confidence was solely in God. “If we do the Work of God, God will not abandon us, and if the first called go away, God will send others.”

Father Chevrier was persevering also in the direction he gave. Once he was convinced that a design, a thought, a way of doing came from the good God, he made it the subject of his meditations, of his recommendations, and always came back to it. He insisted unceasingly on what he had recognized as necessary or useful. These are the same ideas that he sets forth in his talks, in his letters, and which one finds in his *True Disciple*. Thus he constantly recommended the study of Our Lord, the mysteries of the Rosary, the spirit of poverty, the invocation of the Holy Spirit, the necessity of teaching the catechism, the greatness of the priest. He returns to it unceasingly and everywhere, apropos of everything, turning and re-turning the subject to present it under all its forms, in his talks, in his letters and in his sermons.

What struck me most is the recourse to the Holy Spirit and the care always to bring everything back to the three pictures of the Crib, Calvary and the Tabernacle. He made use of everything to inculcate this fundamental doctrine of reproducing Our Lord, particularly in these three mysteries, by the practice of a life of poverty, sacrifice and devotedness. He had them represented in all his chapels: at the Prado, at Limonest, at Saint-Fons, and in all the meeting or study rooms of his houses. This insistence appeared in all circumstances; it escaped as naturally from his lips and his pen. Apropos of the feast of Christmas which had just been celebrated, he said: “It is indeed the aim of our life: simplicity, poverty. To imitate Our Lord, poor Himself, and to labour to evangelize the poor.” On another occasion he wrote:

> *“It is in the practice of these devotions that you will find the knowledge of Jesus Christ, our Master. Recall from time to time what I told you about poverty, because this virtue is the basis of our life. Oh! how one must pray, dear children, to learn something! How a priest must know Jesus Christ and His Gospel. That is the whole priest. Our clerical school is very numerous; may there come out of it priests according to Jesus Christ, our divine model, and like Him animated with His spirit of poverty, of sacrifice, to be useful to souls.”*

Patience in Sufferings, Persecutions, Insults; in Contradictions, Oppositions, Lack of Regard

The heroic fortitude of the Servant of God shines in his patience in bearing insults, persecutions, illnesses and, in a general way, all sufferings, whatever they were. In his childhood he accepted without a word the reproaches that his mother unwittingly drew on him by preventing him from doing his school homework at home. He thus began the hard apprenticeship of this motto of his life: “To suffer everything from everybody and make nobody suffer.” Sensitive as he was, he felt affronts keenly, but he always remained master of himself. He often felt strong vexations, but he knew so well how to dominate himself that nothing appeared of it, except that at such moments he spoke in such terms of suffering that one guessed he was under the blow of some hard trial.

I can affirm that the Servant of God bore not only with patience but with courage and joy all the sufferings he had to endure. I saw him harassed and exhausted with fatigue, I saw him vexed and contradicted, even publicly, by the people of his house, I saw him criticized by certain priests who judged his work ill and misrepresented his acts and intentions; in all these circumstances I admired his unalterable patience: not a complaint, always the same calm and the same serenity.

When he had bought the Prado hall [the former dance-hall], which entailed the suppression of that establishment, to the great displeasure of the shady population of the quarter, he was very often, in the open street, insulted and jeered at. He never lost his composure: he kept silence and contented himself with praying for these unfortunates.

Nothing more admirable still than his patience with his children, some coarse, without education, veritable little savages when they arrived; the Father tamed them so well that after some time they were quite changed.

One day, it was for Corpus Christi, he was going with his children to the parish procession, but they would not have him carry his banner representing the bloodied Christ. He accepted this refusal with calm and humility, saying to those who questioned him: “It is a misunderstanding.” In the early times of his Work, when it was still disputed, he had brought his children to a parish of Lyons for Confirmation. They affected to leave them aside, and he himself was obliged to take his place in the pews with the simple faithful. When he was asked afterwards whether he had not felt pain at this sort of humiliation, he answered quite simply and laughing, turning the thing into a joke.

[A witness’s deposition, evidently from a child of the household of a family that knew him:] His patience was so great, and my father was so struck by it, that he often said to me: “You see, this priest will be a saint, because he is too patient and bears too well everything that is done to him.” Precisely because of that, my father already treated him as a saint, and when M. Chevrier came to our house, he took off his cap, knelt down and rose only when Father Chevrier had asked him to let him speak quietly with the children.

Several times the Father was insulted, and once stopped by evil-doers. Always he answered aggressions or insults with the most unalterable gentleness. By the wise and condescending explanations he gave, he brought one insulter to acknowledge his wrongs and better appreciate Religion and the Clergy. Stopped on the road to Saint-Fons, he was quietly handing over his purse and watch to the young men who were robbing him when these recognized Father Chevrier, with whom they had formerly made their first Communion. The Servant of God profited by the occasion to make an act of humility by remarking that his work at the Prado had not been very solid, and spoke with so much force to these unfortunates that he decided them to come to the Prado to make a retreat of four days, to put them back on the good road which misery had made them leave.

There was, near the Prado, a person with an exalted head who for some time attached herself to the Servant of God’s steps, to the point of following him everywhere: to the confessional, the sacristy, the chapel. Dominated by jealousy, she was suddenly seized with a furious hatred against him. It was necessary to place a man at the back of the chapel to watch her movements and prevent a misfortune. When she went out, she stirred up the passers-by and told all sorts of calumnies about the Father. During the month or six weeks that these scenes lasted, the Father was imperturbable, and although he must have suffered much, he let nothing appear outwardly.

When the first repairs were being made to render the Prado habitable, the Father came to see the works, from Saint-Jean-de-Dieu where he was on retreat. He was assailed on the way by a woman who overwhelmed him with insults, sarcasms, frightening prognostications. He quickened his pace and lowered his eyes without answering. “I have always thought,” he said, “that this woman was the devil himself or a possessed person who served him as organ. She knew about the Prado, about my plans, about my intimate thoughts, details of an astonishing precision.”

In the exorcisms which the Servant of God had occasion to perform several times, the devil took pleasure in tormenting him, speaking to him of the sacrilegious Communions of his children or of the failings that were to occur in his Work. He addressed him directly and even exercised violence on him, as he did at Saint-Fons, but the Father was not moved by these threats or persecutions; he saw in them the mark of the works of God.

The Servant of God found himself, from the beginning of his Work and all his life, the target of contradiction and opposition, even from good people. This is what he made someone understand who consulted him about a foundation. He told him that he must be prepared to see his work crumble after he had sacrificed himself for it, to see it fall through the efforts of those very persons who seemed to be his best supports, and to bear the confusion that attaches to every failed enterprise. The consultant, struck by the tone in which these things were said to him, questioned the Father in his turn: “You have then met, Father, many oppositions, many difficulties in your work?” The Father raised his eyes to heaven and contented himself with answering: “God knows!”

The Servant of God had very often to suffer lack of regard, forgetfulness of propriety, which his delicacy made him feel very keenly. A person related how she had admired the Father’s patience, in the parlour, on an occasion when someone of the house had gravely failed in respect to him; she could not help saying to him: “But, Father, you feel nothing then, to bear such things!”

Another time a lay professor, through a misunderstanding, falsely attributed to the Father a deed that affected the prestige of his authority. Furious at the confusion which fell back on him, he goes to find him and, in a very harsh tone, makes him the most violent reproaches; the witnesses were indignant. The Servant of God receives, without a word, this avalanche of insults, with head bowed, as if he recognized himself guilty; he pronounced not a word to justify himself or complain, the most complete calm reigned on his face. When the interlocutor had gone off abruptly, hurling a last insolence, the Father said only: “It does one good to be put in one’s place from time to time, one deserves it so often!”

I remember that once, at Limonest, he came suddenly into the study room while there was a little dissipation. Each of us, thinking only of recovering his attention, forgot to rise at his arrival, as we habitually did. His first impression was astonishment, but he said not a word to mark his pain. It was only after his departure that we perceived our incivility. Nor was it at once that he was accustomed to give the advice useful to our formation after these lapses. He began by accepting the humiliation on his own account, then generally gave the advice without telling the pain that had been caused him.

The Servant of God had something of the character of his father and of his mother. From his father he had the gentleness and amenity; from his mother the firmness and authority. Thus he was gentle and good, but without weakness. He could not see evil nor tolerate it, and he strove to combat it. Never was there anger on his face, in his words or in his gestures, but he knew how to act and say to all when it was needed: “That is not permitted, you must not do it.” He was always moderate, just and restrained.

If the strong and energetic perseverance of Father Chevrier appears when, pressed by his charity toward the neighbour, he struggles, in a frail boat, against the waves of the Rhône in fury, how much more admirable it appears when one sees him conduct peacefully and strongly his barque of the Prado, in the midst of the storms and tempests of poverty, sickness, suffering, disappointments, and arrive at doing the Work that God entrusted to him! A perseverance which would certainly have allowed him to say at the hour of his death, like the Apostle whom he was pleased to call his Master: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice.” [2 Tim. iv, 7–8.]

Chapter VIII. Temperance

Chapter VIII. Temperance

Mortification in food. He contented himself with the necessary. He avoided gluttony, luxury, refinement. — Mortification of the senses. Correction of faults. — Bearing sufferings. Practices of penance.

Mortification in Food. He Contented Himself with the Necessary. He Avoided Gluttony, Luxury, Refinement

Father Chevrier mortified his flesh to please God the more.

> *"We must live as a heavenly man," he says, "and for that make the earthly man who is in us die and make him disappear, as far as we can. We must make of our body a living victim, bear the death of Jesus Christ in our body, that the life of Jesus Christ may appear in it. [Cf. 2 Cor. iv, 10.] We become living victims by consuming ourselves for God, like a victim who immolates himself each day for Him, like a candle which consumes itself by fire, like the incense which consumes itself in burning and annihilates itself in spreading a good odour before God. Everything in us must spread this good odour of Jesus Christ; this heavenly life, this divine life that we must have within, must show through in our exterior. We must make to God the sacrifice of our whole self."*

That is to say that Father Chevrier loved and desired mortification and that he practised it. I always saw him mortified in all his senses: he mortified his eyes by modesty, his ears by not taking part in useless conversations or by bringing conversations back to God when they did not tend to Him.

He ate what was served him, without worrying whether it was good or bad; he made no remark on what was presented to him and did not speak of drinking and eating when he was at table; nobody ever could know what his preferences were, and in this respect he was the despair of cooks. Never did he complain of the food, however badly prepared. He did not drink pure wine but always mixed much water with it, and did not fail, in his catechisms, to recommend to the children not to take the bad habit of drinking pure wine. He was naturally gifted with a good appetite and, as long as he was not ill, he always ate with the community and never complained of the diet, even while the state of his stomach made him suffer from it. "We are workers," he said, "and we must maintain our health in order to do the good that God asks of us." He recommended to the cooks to make nothing elaborate, but to give everyone good food; he made remarks only if he found a little luxury, a little refinement, or not enough cleanliness.

Later, when he was ill, he followed the doctor's prescriptions very regularly and accepted everything he was given, out of a spirit of obedience. He never commanded anything. Once, however, being ill, he asked me whether I would do his cooking that day, and begged me to take a pot, put in it water, meat, cabbages, potatoes, beans, and cook everything together. As I refused, saying that it did not suit his state of health: "Well," he said, "give me what you think suitable." His request corresponded to the thought he had that he was being treated too well. Even during his illness he wished to be served with the greatest simplicity. One day I brought him milk in a bowl of white earthenware; he refused to drink it, saying: "You are treating me like a bourgeois!" and I was obliged to put the milk in a simple earthen bowl to make him consent to take it.

At the presbytery of Saint-André, when there were big dinners, he never stayed to the end; he always found a way to leave at dessert. When it was the Perpetual Adoration, he stayed little time at table and went before the Blessed Sacrament while the others went on dining.

During all the time I lived with him, when he was not ill, I saw him weak, sickly and overburdened by a constant and painful work. Nevertheless he observed with rigour the fasts prescribed by the Church and those imposed by the rule of the Third Order, in particular every Friday. He was likewise faithful in keeping abstinence three days a week: Wednesday, Friday and Saturday, in conformity with this same rule, which he gave to his house.

On the return from the pilgrimage to Lourdes, in 1874, at the refreshment room of Valence, plundered by the famished pilgrims, given the advanced hour, I met the good Father and Abbé Dutel, who had not been able to procure the least morsel of bread. Being accustomed to lunch early, my father and I, provided with small provisions, had already finished our meal. Some remnants were left to us. In the presence of the absolute penury of the holy pilgrim, I dared, blushing, to offer them to him. But it was Saturday, a day of abstinence for the tertiaries of St Francis; he would therefore accept only bread and a few fruits, and he thanked us more warmly than if we had procured him a feast. [*Deposition of a woman pilgrim.*]

He added voluntary fasts when he had special graces to ask, conversions to obtain, exorcisms to perform. If it happened that he could not fully accomplish the fasts he proposed to make, he insisted that there be on those days a difference, as a sign of penance: the food was coarser, for example bread and fruit, nothing cooked or prepared expressly. Figs had his preference, not on account of their taste but because Holy Scripture mentions them in various passages. He then ate standing or kneeling, effacing himself in some dark corner. If his health did not permit this mortification, he recited prayers to replace the fast.

Father Chevrier gave his body scarcely the necessary. How many times he deprived himself of food voluntarily and involuntarily too; he endured hunger, for example, when he begged his food in the time of his retreats. Once he gave a poor man who said he had not eaten all day the soup that was waiting for him and went to bed without taking his meal, although the day had been very tiring. One evening he came back from a journey a little late; on entering he passed by the chapel: a crowd of persons were waiting for him; he answered all those people and went up only very late to his mother's, who had prepared nothing for him, thinking he had eaten; she contented herself with making him an infusion. The Father had taken nothing since ten in the morning and it was nine in the evening. As he drank his infusion, he said to his mother: "If you would give me a little piece of bread to dip in this? I have not eaten since this morning and I am hungry."

Overburdened by work, the Father did not even think of eating. Often his mother or the Sister cook complained that the Father stayed in the confessional or in the parlour at meal times or even several hours after; they might send for him, every step remained useless as long as an act of charity remained to be done. He seemed to say to them, like the divine Master to His Apostles: "I have meat to eat which you know not of." [John iv, 32.] When he yielded to their desires and repeated solicitations, the time he was absent, and in which he kept a person waiting, was scarcely sufficient to take in haste an ounce or two of bread.

I remember that at the moment of celebrating my first Mass, at which the Father was to assist me, at nine o'clock, he was returning from the confessional where, according to his habit, he had stayed all the morning. In the sacristy a person said to him: "Father, you have taken nothing, you must go and eat something." He answered, pointing to me: "And has he taken anything?" The essential for Father Chevrier was thus always to do the work of God; it was his first food. He ate in haste and when he could; the glory of God, souls, in the first place. With such a principle faithfully put into practice, one can imagine to what consequences the rigour of the fasts of the man of God could lead, who gave these fasts the name of "fasts of charity", obligatory for a priest who wishes to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

When his last illness declared itself, the doctor said to him: "Father, it is excesses at table that have put you in this state," giving to understand that there is excess also when one does not eat enough. The Servant of God excused himself, saying that indeed he had not always taken his meals regularly, but that it was impossible for him to keep waiting or send away without hearing them, without speaking to them, these poor people who came to him at all hours of the day.

When, on account of his poor health, he was obliged to take something lighter for his stomach, he was humiliated by it. One day when I was serving him, he said to me: "Do not be ill edified, my child, if I take some relief; it is my poor stomach that requires it."

The Servant of God took with simplicity the food necessary for life, but he refused to accept anything that could flatter the taste or gluttony and everything that savoured of luxury or refinement. He did not wish dishes of too good an appearance to be put on the table. One day when a turkey had been given to Father Bernerd, the cook had arranged it as artistically as possible. The Father happened to pass through the kitchen and, perceiving this so appetizing dish, so pleasant to see, said: "This is not a poor man's dish, and if I were not afraid of grieving Father Bernerd, I would throw it all in the middle of the yard." And the Sister cook was punished for having arranged her roast too well. Several times again, when there was a dish prettily arranged, if he cast a glance into the kitchen, he upset it so that it should not have so provoking an aspect for gluttony.

He did not use delicate dishes, even in time of illness. He did not take coffee and did not drink fine wines or liqueurs, but if he was obliged to dine in company, he contented himself then with taking, at the bottom of his glass or his cup, a little of what was presented to him so as not to make himself singular, excusing himself humbly and simply for not being able to do better. Besides, he avoided going to dine out, and among the reasons he gave for this abstention there was this: that gluttony often finds its satisfaction there and that it is contrary to the spirit of mortification. When he was curate at Saint-André, his parish priest said of him: "When we are invited into town, my 'big sheep' always has some sick person to see or something to do which prevents him from accompanying us."

I do not remember having seen even once in Father Chevrier's room wine, liqueurs, sweets or lozenges. When he did not attend the common meal, he ordinarily placed himself in a corner of the kitchen to eat and ate on his knees [i.e., with the plate on his lap]. To please his old mother, he sometimes took his meals at her house when he was a little more tired than usual. I can say that what he ate on these occasions was in no way better, nor more appetizing, nor better prepared than in the community kitchen, and the table service was no richer. If I remember well, there was from time to time an "extra": it was an apple baked on the stove. When the Father was alone, his ordinary was: in the morning, a soup and a dessert; at dinner, two dishes and a dessert; at supper, a soup and a dessert, sometimes a dish warmed over from dinner, and plenty to drink. Out of charity the good Father thought it his duty to make an improvement in the ordinary of the common table of the priests and professors and to add one more dish.

He sometimes carried to his mother, that she might make him take them, little "sweets", but he had them distributed to the sick of the house and even of the outside.

"When he had the kindness to replace me," reports the parish priest of Saint-Fons, "he always said he had been well looked after. On the contrary, when he left he used to leave in my presbytery everything that generous souls gave him in the way of strengthening foods to restore his much-exhausted health. Fine wines above all he took good care not to touch."

He had as a principle that we must not bring more attention and importance to the nourishment of the body than Jesus Christ Himself brought, when, being thirsty, He waited patiently for someone to come and give Him to drink at the edge of Jacob's well [John iv]; when, being hungry, He rubbed ears of corn in His hands with the apostles [Luke vi, 1]. He would have liked to eat like the poor, like travellers, like soldiers.

> *"They do not put so much importance and preparation into their meals," he said; "they have for table their knees, for chair or bench a stone, for utensil an earthen or wooden bowl and a wall to lean their tired back against. We ought not to be more difficult than soldiers, who cook everything in the same pot. What is the use of making oneself poor, if one will not live like the poor? Ought we not to blush at being better treated than they, at having dishes well prepared and well seasoned, while they have only the strict necessary?"*

He would have liked to imitate the holy Curé of Ars, crossing the square with a pot in his hand and eating his soup while going to see his sick, or again cooking a pot of potatoes which he then ate as long as the supply lasted. "How much simpler," he cried, "and more conformable to mortification!"

Faithful to his principle of eating only out of necessity, in whatever manner the food was, and to put into practice the word of the divine Master: *Eat what is set before you* [Luke x, 8], he took things as they were presented to him. I do not remember having seen him take even a little salt, which was at his disposal on the table, except to eat asparagus, which he contented himself with dipping in a little oil, without vinegar. Asparagus, indeed, had been prescribed him as a remedy. He required cleanliness, regarded this quality in food as very hygienic and said that many indispositions and even illnesses were occasioned by lack of care in the preparation of food.

The Father liked to see his Sisters sometimes make a few little extras, a little religious family feast, on the occasion of the Superiors' feast-day or during the vacation. He said: "We must gather together sometimes for a little feast; it does good and maintains charity."

Mortification of the Senses. Correction of Faults

The things of earth were nothing to the good Father, who lived only for heaven. He deprived himself of the sight of useless objects and willingly paused only at the contemplation of those that could serve to raise him to God, such as the stars, the beauties of nature. When he went to Rome, in 1857, he was obliged to stop two days at Marseilles. His travelling companion proposed to him to go and see in the harbour a big ship that had arrived the day before and which everyone was visiting out of curiosity. He refused: "We did not come to Marseilles to visit ships," he answered with his usual calm.

He absolutely deprived himself of reading newspapers and took no interest in the news of the world. He never used tobacco; if a snuff-box was presented to him, he dipped his little finger into it out of complaisance, but so as not to touch the snuff. He tried to deprive himself of sleep by way of mortification, but he did not counsel it to others, and admitted that if one can accustom oneself to not eating, one cannot accustom oneself to not sleeping. "Health often suffers," he says, "because one does not take the necessary rest or goes to bed too late," and he gives excellent advice on the matter of rising and retiring, which he regards as very important for passing the day well. Writing on 5 May 1856 to Abbé Convert, he says: "Try to preserve your health well. Do not sit up too late above all, for you could not believe how contrary night-watches are to health; I know it by myself." He never devoted to sleep more than the necessary time, six and a half or seven hours, and was all his life faithful to early and regular rising.

He never found it hard to get up in the night to render a service, for example to go and see a sick person or to go to a fire; he did not make himself wait, he went with eagerness, happy to be able to devote himself and render service. In the morning, at five o'clock, he never failed to come and preside at the meditation of the members of the Work, and that to the prejudice of his sleep.

He had for a bed only a poor straw mattress. Often he found this couch still too delicate and lay on a plank or on the ground. He sometimes counselled, for a passing circumstance, to take a stone for a pillow. Those who knew him know that if he gave such a counsel, it is that he first practised it.

The Servant of God applied himself in every way to mortify his body, which he called brother ass, after the example of St Francis of Assisi. "It is a servant that must obey," he said; "one must lead and direct it as one leads an animal." One may say that his mortification was of every instant, varying only with the circumstances. His bearing and his steps were inspired by that spirit of faith and penance which animated the saints. Yet there was nothing affected or exaggerated, so that one would have said it was natural to him.

The good Father breathed in his whole person the greatest modesty; everything in him was regulated: the glance, the head, the arms, the hands, the legs, the whole body. His bearing was at once grave, modest and noble. He never permitted himself a soft and effeminate attitude and sought his comfort in nothing; everything in him breathed propriety, mortification. When he was seated he leaned neither to right nor to left, he did not lean his back against his chair in spite of his great fatigues. All that he permitted himself, in the

evening in his room, was to lean his arms lightly on a little board which he fitted for this purpose to his desk, and there he received those of his house who still wished to see him. Until his illness he made no use of an armchair, and when he had to accept one, out of politeness, in company, he never installed himself in it entirely, in the ordinary manner; he used it as he would have used a chair. In his room he had only three or four poor chairs. One day we had offered him an armchair; he said to us: “In offering me this armchair you have done your duty, now it is for me to do mine,” and he pushed it away. He never crossed his legs. However tired he was, he did not relax, as is too often done, by stretching out his legs or arms; he always had a grave bearing, nothing constrained, everything in him was simple.

When he received persons in the sacristy and the parlour, he neither leaned nor sat. It was only towards the end of his life, when his strength was progressively abandoning him, that he permitted himself to rest his hands on the credence table of the sacristy; later, not being able to stand any longer, he had made for himself a sort of raised trestle on which he sat. It is preserved precious at the Prado.

In his room he behaved as in public. I often saw him working at his desk: he was only lightly leaning, his legs modestly one against the other, which he likewise did whenever he was seated. Standing, he leaned on neither one leg nor the other, and all this, not in passing, but habitually and always, without any constraint, without any awkwardness, simply and modestly.

The good Father’s walk was grave, composed, ordinary; if he was obliged to hasten his step, he was not hurried but always restrained by the propriety of his dignity and character. He did not gesticulate with his arms, whether standing or seated; he did not move his head. When he walked he did not swing his arms in the manner of soldiers; if he was in the streets, he did not have the look of an idler, he was occupied, he always had something in his hand, either his breviary, or his rosary, or at least he held a hand on his chest. I can truly say that all he wrote on the manner of glorifying God by the exterior of the body he faithfully put into practice, and that it is quite right to say that he made of his body an instrument of justice and a living victim for the glory of God and the edification of the neighbour. [Rom. vi, 13; xii, 1.]

Often he prayed kneeling on the ground without any support and sometimes, when he was alone, with arms in the form of a cross or entirely prostrate on the ground. He prayed and had prayer made with arms in the form of a cross at the chapel of the Sepulchre, on Friday, after Mass, during the five *Our Fathers* and *Hail Marys* that were recited in honour of the Passion.

Convinced that the faults of the body can greatly harm a priest’s ministry and religion itself, he attached great importance to the correction of external faults. “The world,” he said, “has its eyes ceaselessly on us and is scandalized by our slightest faults.” Thus it was remarkable to see what vigilance he exercised over himself, what care he brought to the correction of the smallest faults, and to what perfection he had arrived in this respect. There was nothing in him but what was simple, yet everything in him was great, majestic, without a shadow of affectation. He had managed to become that model priest whose portrait he draws in his *True Disciple*, and he could not arrive at it without a continual mortification and a constant vigilance over himself:

> *“We must have a grave and serious air, a dignified bearing, a clean and suitable dress, polite and honest manners, a calm and silent step, a humble and modest glance, speech full of reserve and prudence; the whole ensemble of our body must recall that we carry God in us and that we represent Him to the world.”*

People said that St Vincent de Paul or St Francis de Sales cannot have acted or spoken otherwise. How beautiful he was in the streets, with his tall stature, his head a little bent to the right side, his grave and silent walk, his gentle and modest glance; everything in him led to edification. Thus one never tired of looking at him; people turned round to see him and said: “He is a saint!”

It happened fairly often that he made observations to us on our external faults, for example, when there was occasion, on our awkward air. He said that Our Lord had not that air. Writing to a seminarian in 1868 he says:

"Correct yourself of the little faults I pointed out to you; take serious manners without being sad and sulky. Picture Our Lord to yourself often with you, acting, speaking, and ask Him how He would do if He were in your place. In your Communions, pray Jesus Christ to keep so united to you that you may be but one with Him in all you do."

The good Father applied himself to doing little things as well as great. He did them simply, as if by habit; nevertheless he could not act so without great vigilance and continual application, so that he could say with the Apostle: "I die daily." [1 Cor. xv, 31.] This perfection in all the little details of his conduct, even in the most ordinary things, demanded more than ordinary mortification and struck those who lived constantly with him. Father Jacquier was asked one day whether Father Chevrier was really a saint; he answered: "I do not know whether he works miracles, but what I do know is that he shuts a door very well." Indeed, he did not shut doors with noise, but guided them with the hand.

One did not hear him walk. His presence was betrayed only by his bad cough. He could not bear abruptness. One day the wind took a door out of a Sister's hands and made it shut very hard. The Father, present, thought it was the Sister's fault and imposed on her as a penance to kiss the door and shut it very gently two or three times in succession.

His dignity was so great that it inspired respect; his speech was simple but equally very dignified. Not only did he never permit himself a trivial word, but he could not bear it in his entourage. In his speech he was full of restraint, modesty and gravity; he said only what he ought to say, he was moderate and prudent. In company he spoke little; his speech was always charitable, full of reserve and without affectation. He smiled gently but never laughed loudly. He did not seek to make his sentiment prevail in conversation; he was always modest in his appraisal of things and events, of which he spoke only out of charity and politeness. No exuberance either in gestures. He mastered himself in everything and everywhere. On leaving affairs that caused him much trouble, he needed only a few minutes or even a few seconds to return at once to his calm and be capable of the most serious work.

Father Chevrier was gentleness itself. That is what captivated in him. His professor of philosophy says of him that he was the gentlest man he ever knew; never did he see him in quarrel with anyone; he would have thanked you if you had given him blows with a stick. He takes care to add that this gentleness was not a soft gentleness, the gentleness of those people who drag themselves lazily everywhere and take and keep the last impression of everything they have touched, but that his pupil was resistant to bad examples and dissipation, inflexible in all that concerned the rule—in a word, a man of character. His gentleness was truly supernatural, for by nature he was very lively.

It cost him much to reprove, to cause pain; he corrected nevertheless, as he had the duty to, and when it was necessary and useful, but with words so full of charity and gentleness, with so much benevolence, that one may say he took all the vinegar out of correction and used only the oil. "To heal wounds one must not poison them."

He suffered from lack of regard, although he kept silence, if charity or prudence prescribed it. Never was there anger on his face, in his words or in his gestures; he was never carried away, always reserved. Did a cause of indignation happen to surprise him? At once one saw appear in him the man of character; he knew how to speak and act. One read quickly in his glance when he was not satisfied, and when he had some reproach to make, he seemed saddened but remained always good.

One of us, when we were new priests, had shown himself a little young and too violent toward an employee against whom he had to deal severely. The Father recommended him to use more consideration another time. "Experience and time will teach you," he said, "that it is not thus that men are to be governed. There is a door by which to reach people's hearts; they all have a good side by which they can be taken; the point is to discern it and to have one's authority accepted by persuasion." [Cf. Chapter IV, "His Mercy"; the same

saying is repeated.]

One never saw him in bad humour, and one noted no abruptness in his words or manners; he always welcomed you with kindness and a smile on his lips; he won souls and hearts by the attraction of his virtue. He was often seen with the importunate; he had always the same gentleness and the same kindness. All who came to him went back saying: “How good he is, this Father Chevrier!” Patient with all, affable toward all, he was even toward our children of a benevolence that went as far as respect.

In January 1877 he writes to his deacons a letter which shows how he understood gentleness, dignity and charity. It seems to me to trace the portrait of Father Chevrier himself:

> *“Be very united with one another in one same spirit and one same heart, remembering that you are brothers, that you are the privileged children of the good Master, and that you must love one another in God and for God. Avoid useless disputes; respect one another, thinking that you are deacons, that you will soon be priests, and that, participating thus in the dignities of the Church, you must respect one another and obtain from others the respect due to your character, preserving nevertheless the humility which is the basis of all virtue. Give good example to everybody by your modesty, your restraint and your gravity, wherever you go: in your walks, your classes, in church and everywhere. I ask God for you every day for the good spirit, and that you be for all and for our house a subject of edification and good example, and above all that you become good catechists, since that is our great mission.”*

Bearing Sufferings. Practices of Penance

The Servant of God practised temperance by making of his body a living victim immolated each day for God. It is in this spirit that he accepted all sufferings, the little daily miseries; he called that bearing the Saviour’s cross and considered these trials as a heavenly blessing: “It is small change which must not be allowed to be lost, because it is precious before God.”

When he had a loss of voice he wrote to Mme Franchet: “I should however need my voice to speak during the days of Lent and of confession, but the good God takes it from me assuredly because I do His work badly. May His holy name be blessed and His will be done. I am going to profit by this time to study the Passion of Our Lord; it will not be time lost: there are such beautiful things in the Passion of the Saviour!”

“Remember,” he writes to one of his Sisters, “that to build a house on solid ground one must give many blows of the pick and dig deep, otherwise it crumbles. Let yourself be well given blows of the pick, and when you come to tell me: I received today two or three blows of the pick without saying anything, I shall be very glad. Come, all for the good God who suffered much.”

He sought to die to himself, repeating this word inscribed on his board at Saint-Fons: “The more one is dead, the more one has life.” He also liked to repeat the text of the Gospel: “Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” [John xii, 24–25.]

Each day the Servant of God examined himself on the way he bore suffering, which he called the particular character of the religious and the priest, since it is to His disciples that Our Lord said: “Take up your cross and follow me.” He gave admirable explanations of the evangelical text: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” [Luke ix, 23.] And to mark outwardly his will to bear the cross of the Lord, to recall the better that there is for the disciple of Jesus Christ an obligation to love suffering, he always wore a crucifix on his heart. He kissed it morning and evening, at each station in making the Way of the Cross, and had it kissed also by the persons who asked his blessing.

The Father was truly generous for God, very good and indulgent for the neighbour but very severe to himself. He was not content with the sufferings the Lord sent him and imposed voluntary ones on himself by the practice of penance, crucifying his flesh, chastising his body and bringing it into subjection. [1 Cor. ix, 27.] When he was at Saint-André he was already given to great penances. His mother found a hair-shirt in his bed,

which she made disappear pitilessly. The Servant of God procured other instruments of penance and made habitual use of them all his life.

Here is, in the rule he drew up for himself at the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus, an extract of the part concerning mortification:

> *"To unite myself to suffering Jesus, I shall endure all the pains that may arise in my position, with regard to the brothers, the children, and in the observance of this rule. I shall bear, in a spirit of expiation, all that may be painful in lying down, clothing, food. I shall wear for this intention wool and not linen. I shall take the discipline once a week."*

At the Prado the Servant of God was still more severe for his body. He said that it must be marked with the stigmata of Jesus Christ, as St Paul did [Gal. vi, 17], and stretched on the wood like Our Lord. During the troubled period that followed the war of 1870, he had destroyed several instruments of penance such as hair-shirts, disciplines, iron chains, the presence of which in his house the malevolence of searchers might have misinterpreted. There was, in particular, a belt furnished with three rows of nails and a cross, about twenty-five centimetres long, likewise furnished with iron points.

Father Chevrier loved and practised the macerations of the flesh and permitted them with discretion. Father Jacquier said: "If the Father were not ill, he would make us pass by a rough way and it would not be pleasant!" [Fr. *il n'y ferait pas bon*.] The Father tried to deprive himself of sleep by way of mortification, but he admitted that it is difficult to accustom oneself to this penance. Thus he did not wish his Sisters to sit up for their work; he permitted it to them only very rarely and for legitimate reasons. Yet he authorized extraordinary penances; to one person he had permitted to lie on a plank during Lent, to another he had said: "Take the discipline with the first stick or bush you find." But he said that the best penance was the fulfilment of the rule, the bearing of the seasons without complaining, without always saying: "Oh! how hot it is! how cold it is!"; eating the food as it is presented to us, without saying: it is too salty or not enough, it is too thick, it is too thin; accepting without murmuring the sufferings of the body, avoiding complaining, speaking unceasingly of one's ailments; thus he said to us: "See, my children, from morning to evening we can do penance, if we know how to profit by all the circumstances that divine Providence arranges for us."

I heard the Father say that he was never without something to suffer: when it was not the body, it was the mind that suffered. Persuaded that the graces of God must be bought by suffering, as he liked to repeat, he strove to obtain by penance all the graces he asked: the conversion of sinners, the foundation and strengthening of his Work. Those who knew him are convinced that the penances he imposed on himself at the Prado shortened his life. He said: "It is far better to live ten years less working for God than to live ten years more doing nothing." His sight alone brought to penance. By excessive labours, continual privations and devotedness to the neighbour, his life was a perpetual penance. The severity of his rule during the retreats he made alone at Saint-Fons recalled the austerities of the ancient anchorites. When M. Mottard made him a present of the little cottage destined for his retreats, Father Chevrier, going up to the height where it is situated, knelt fourteen times in the snow, in memory of the fourteen stations of the Way of the Cross.

Let us add that he was as careful to hide his penances as he was to veil his extraordinary holiness under the veil of simplicity and humility.

Chapter IX. Humility

Chapter IX. Humility

Father Chevrier never spoke of himself, bore no allusion to his holiness and regarded himself as unworthy of consideration. — He attributed to God alone the success of his Work and regarded himself as a sinner. — He accused himself publicly of his faults and bore contempt and reproaches humbly. — He refused everything that could make him noticed, effaced himself as much as possible, even in his house, and went begging at the door of La Charité. — He formed with care to the practice of humility the souls entrusted to him.

Father Chevrier Never Spoke of Himself, Bore No Allusion to His Holiness and Regarded Himself as Unworthy of Consideration

I never heard the Servant of God speak of himself, of his works, of the good he did, of the graces God granted him, from a motive of personal satisfaction or to provoke esteem and praise. He spoke of these things only when the interests of God or of souls truly demanded it, and then it was always to render to God all praise and all glory. It was never but by surprise that the particular favours God did him were known. He felt a lively displeasure when he heard himself praised. Not only did he never speak of himself in an advantageous manner, but he visibly suffered when praises, compliments were addressed to him and above all when his holiness was spoken of. When he spoke of himself it was always in terms of the deepest humility: “I am only a poor man, a poor priest, without talent and without virtue.” One saw him have so much deference for others that, in my first years of study at the Prado, I believed he was truly, as he said, a man inferior in worth to the other priests, and it is only little by little, before the evidence of the facts, that this way of seeing changed in me.

He was humiliated by the reputation of holiness that he had. He sometimes said: “There are persons who think me something. Oh! how mistaken they are! I am only an ass, a poor sinner. People have too good an opinion of me, I am frightened by it,” he often repeated. “Oh! if my faults were known!” These words of humility were not said with affectation; one felt, beyond doubt, that they were the expression of the most intimate sentiments of his soul, a soul perfectly humble in mind and heart.

I accompanied him one day to Saint-Fons, with one of my fellow pupils. Talk came to a little recent pamphlet written in praise of I no longer know which contemporary personage. “You will think yourselves obliged, one day,” he said to us, “to write my history and my life. Ah! what a lot of eulogies, of gossip will be retailed! Poor children! you must not let that be done!” And ironically: “Ah! yes, it is edifying, my life! if I were known! if my misery were known! They will find there the surest means of leaving me longer in Purgatory, while I am being incensed on earth, instead of praying and having prayer made for me and obtaining for me the mercies of the good God and the pardon of my many faults.”

He manifested by his words the little esteem he had for his person and he said continually: “I am nothing; I can do nothing.” I heard him say several times: “My children, pray for me: people think me virtuous; I am only a wretch.”

Father Chevrier was so humble that one would have said he was jealous of those who really humbled themselves. When he witnessed an act of humility, he quickly humbled himself. Oh! how good he was to humble, simple souls! but he was a little severe on souls that had affectation. One day a person said to him: “I am very little, very poor, and so on.” The Father answered her: “Oh! no, you are not poor, you are full of yourself!”

He did not permit priests to ask his blessing. I was at Rome at the time of his last journey. Here is a fact of which I was a witness. A Capuchin Father had come to see me; Father Chevrier met him. After a few

moments of conversation, the Capuchin Father threw himself on his knees, asking his blessing: “It is for you to bless me,” said the Father, and there was a contest of humility. They ended by blessing each other.

[A priest’s deposition:] I should have feared to offend the Father’s humility by the least compliment, and to this perhaps I owed more freedom in his manner toward me. For several weeks I never saw him without his saying to me: “Pray that I may not work a miracle.” “Why, Father? Miracles are not for you, but to increase faith, convert sinners. If God wishes to use you, you are only an instrument.” “That is quite true,” he said, “but one must be so holy, to avoid a thought of pride! That is why I tremble.”

Father Jaricot affirms that, in spite of his great intimacy with the Servant of God, he never made an allusion, even indirect and remote, to his reputation for holiness. “I saw too well,” he says, “that he suffered from certain indiscretions that people committed in addressing inconsiderate praises to him or putting delicate questions to him. When, in his last illness, the Father who was to succeed him at the head of his house told him of his apprehensions about the future of the Work, he wanted to tell him that his holiness was what attracted the benefactors to the Prado, but he took good care not to use this formula, knowing it would have grieved him. He felt a real pain when good was said of him, and this was seen so clearly that those who approached him hesitated to pay him compliments.”

The reputation of holiness of which he was the object and the concourse of the faithful that it attracted were for him a cause of real sufferings: “I am only a hypocrite,” he said; “people think I have lights and I have none, I have only an appearance of virtue.” One day I found him in the parlour, profoundly affected after the visit of a family who had come seventy leagues to see him and consult him. He was so impressed by these marks of veneration and confidence that he began to doubt whether he was on the right road.

I heard him say one day to his priests who spoke to him of the throng of visitors who came to him: “People are mistaken, they take me for what I am not. I am much afraid that the good God will condemn me to hell.” “Oh! Father,” one of them answered him, “I should like, when you go to the good God, to follow you holding on to your cassock!”

A person who had just lost a relative came to find the Father and asked him where the soul of her departed relative was. At this question the Father blushed and said: “I have never received the gift of seeing souls in eternity. Content yourself with praying for your departed.”

The only priest who could permit himself to allude to the holiness of the Servant of God was Father Jacquier, whose speech might pass for the effect of originality, and even then he took care to season his allusions with expressions far from resembling compliments: “It is a hard trade, the trade of saint, is it not, Father?” he sometimes said to him, seeing him at the end of the day, worn out with fatigue after long sittings in the parlour or the confessional. At the protests of the Servant of God, who said: “Will you kindly be quiet? Does one speak thus to a poor man like me?” Father Jacquier replied: “Come, Father, don’t put on your airs of a great simpleton, as if you did not know that you are a saint!” “I am going,” the Servant of God would then say; “you are too naughty. I shall not love you any more if you treat me so.” And they parted shaking hands affectionately, wishing each other good night and smiling, both of them.

The Servant of God regarded himself as a man unworthy of consideration, incapable of leading souls or directing a work. His correspondence is full of the unequivocal expression of these sentiments:

> *“When you came to find me for the direction of your conscience,” he writes to a person, “you were drawn by the noise of a false reputation of knowledge and holiness, which was made for me I know neither why nor how, and by which I am truly humiliated at times, because many people think to find something in me, and when they have seen me for some time they understand their error and find themselves very disappointed, like you, for example. The good God permits this to humble me and make me understand that all that is done, it is He and not I who does it, and I thank Him for it with all my heart.”*

He said himself that he was astonished to see worthy people come to ask counsel of him and to confess to him; far from being flattered by these incessant testimonies of esteem and confidence of so many persons, he was rather confused by them. In a letter addressed to one of his penitents, he declares that the smallest novice of the religious can give better counsels than he, and that a soul guided by this novice will be safer than in his hands.

A good woman said to me one day that Father Chevrier had no light to guide her, no more than the others. As I told her to leave him in peace then, the Father, who learned of it, scolded me for having spoken ill to this person. He carried humility to the point that he might almost have been reproached for lacking firmness in the repression of certain abuses. As I permitted myself to remark this to him, he answered me: “I always fear to speak or act without being sure of speaking or acting according to God.”

When he made his monthly retreat, he went begging his food. One day he presented himself at the Sisters of the Visitation at Fourvière. These, having recognized him, treated him with much consideration: he was brought into the parlour and the Superior held it an honour to keep him company. Seeing this, Father Chevrier said that he would not come back to that house, for it is not thus that beggars are treated.

He writes in his *True Disciple*: “Not to lean on one’s strength, not to count on oneself, nor on one’s mind, talents, industries. To be poor in oneself, because sin has vitiated our being.”

He Attributed to God Alone the Success of His Work and Regarded Himself as a Sinner

The Father recognized himself so much under the dependence of God that he never attributed to himself any of the successes he was able to obtain. How many times he said to me: “What surprised me most in the foundation of the Prado was that God should choose me, so ignorant, so full of faults, for so great a work!” He was astonished that God had chosen so puny a being as himself, and the words of his spiritual testament, “*A Domino factum est istud*—This was done by God,” seem to me to translate his sentiments well.

“I am so poor,” he said, “so sinful, so ignorant that truly, if the good God does not send someone to do His work, it can only perish.” He said again: “Many very learned people say that the work of the Prado cannot last, because I am too stupid; they are quite right, and it is the truth that if our work succeeds it will truly not be I who made it succeed, but the good God!” — “O my God,” he added, “to You the glory, to me the humiliation! Let us not seek to succeed. The good God gives success when it is useful to His glory; confusion suits us better, we are useless servants.” [Luke xvii, 10.]

He constantly asks for prayers to have the light and strength necessary to lead, as he says, his poor shack. He writes from Saint-Jean-de-Dieu, where he was on retreat: “I beseech you to pray for me. Pray for this poor man who ought to stay where he is rather than return to the work to do nothing.”

Not only did the Servant of God believe himself incapable of doing good, but he always feared to be himself an obstacle to the work of God. This sentiment was so sincere, so lively in his heart that he often expressed it in his talks and in his letters:

> *“I am so poor in everything,” he wrote, “and I am quite ashamed of myself; I do not know why the good God has put me at the head of so great an affair. Pray that I may spoil nothing and not be myself the greatest obstacle.*
>
> *“How we spoil the work of God,” he cried. “Rather than make, we often unmake. How my laziness makes me suffer! How poor I am before God! Pray a little for me that my life may not be useless; that I may finish this work the good God has entrusted to me. It is a great task and I feel all my weakness to fulfil it. More than ever I understand that one must be a saint to do anything useful, lasting and good.”*
>
> *“We must glory in nothing, because nothing is ours, nothing comes from us. Everything is God’s, everything comes from God, everything is for God, and we must make serve God all that we are; otherwise it would be a theft committed against God and an iniquity.”*

Father Chevrier often spoke of the uselessness of his life, of his lack of correspondence to the graces of God, of his little generosity, his cowardice. “I feel so much my powerlessness and incapacity,” he cried at the beginning of his foundation, “that I often say to the good God: My God, have You not made a mistake in putting at the head of a great work so puny a being as I! I know well that God chooses whom He will, and the smallest, the poorest often, to manifest His glory and power, but it is also necessary that this poor being correspond to grace, he must be a man of prayer and sacrifice, and I feel that I always resist the holy will of the good God, that I retard His work. Oh! if there are not souls who pray for me, I am lost!”

Two years before his death, a person sent him wishes on the occasion of the anniversary of his birth. He profits by it to humble himself over the uselessness of his life: “Here are already fifty-one years that I am in the world, and I do not yet see what I have done in it.” During a retreat that he was making at Saint-Fons, he writes: “I am frightened at my road and my little correspondence to the graces of God, and at the little good I do and the evil that I do or let be done.”

Father Chevrier would have wished to be able to remain always in solitude. Giving news of his Work, he says: “The house goes on always more or less; it is I who am a bad master. I need the spirit of God. I think of going soon to my cell at Saint-Fons and I should like to be able to settle there for ever, for I see well that I am good for nothing.” It is likewise during a retreat that he writes to Father Jaricot: “When I see that I am still so far behind, I groan before our Master and ask His pardon for having lost so much time. But courage! with the grace of Our Lord we shall walk in His train in perfect poverty, death to ourselves and charity.” These same sentiments return continually in his correspondence. To his seminarians he recalls the obligation of profiting well by their youth to study Our Lord, and adds: “How I regret so much lost time! If I had begun early, if I had not been so cowardly, so lazy, how many things I should know that I do not know, and how much more fruit I could produce in souls! How little we do relatively to what we have to do!”

The Servant of God considered himself a sinner worthy of contempt. When he made the prayer in public or the spoken Way of the Cross [Fr. *chemin de croix parlé*—the Stations made aloud, with a commentary at each], or when he commented on the sorrowful mysteries, he had accents of profound humility and lively contrition which moved the audience. When he was on the point of receiving the priesthood, he placed his sole support in the divine mercy:

> *“Why, Lord, do You deign to call me to such high functions? You know well all my misery and my nothingness! But I hope in You, Lord, and if it please You to show Your power in the lowest baseness, make, by Your mercy, as many virtues shine forth in me as I have guilty weaknesses to reproach myself with.”*

He always found that too much was done for him. During a retreat at Chatanay he had received, as he says, more than the necessary for food: “God,” he wrote to his benefactors, “truly treats me better than I deserve. There are so many unfortunates who are worth more than I and who nevertheless lack the necessary! What right have I to be better treated than they? Believe it well, I deserve nothing, and if I found myself with only a little bread and water, I should still have more than I ought to have. I shall pray God to render you a little of all that you do for His wretched apostle.”

The Servant of God frequently asked for prayers to obtain from the good God the pardon of his faults and what he called his conversion. “Pray,” he said, “that the good God have pity on my misery, that He take me out of the filth of sin. The priest must give life, and I feel that I am dead and that I do not spread this life enough. Pray that God convert me and that I acquire well that humility, that charity and that strength which are necessary to me to accomplish His will. Offer to God some of your prayers and sufferings for the conversion of sinners, of whom I am one. Pray for me, a poor and unworthy priest of Jesus Christ.” Going to a retreat at La Louvesc, he said: “There I shall find good Fathers who will help me to be converted. Pray for me, who am worth nothing!” He was glad to have formed priests: “Because,” he said, “I shall at least have children who will pray for me and who will ask grace and mercy when the good God calls me to Himself.”

He Accused Himself Publicly of His Faults and Humbly Bore Contempt and Reproaches

Far from hiding his defects, the Servant of God put them in evidence and accused himself of them publicly. A Latin student [Fr. *un latiniste*—a pupil of the Latin class preparing for the priesthood] accused himself one day, before all of us, of being a hypocrite. Everyone was edified by this avowal which denoted much humility. But they were much more so when they heard the Father himself answer: "Well, my child, that is also one of my own faults; I am a hypocrite: people think me something when in reality I am worth nothing and I am very much afraid that the good God will damn me."

Having to recall, in the chapel, a scene from his childhood where, thanks to his tall stature, he had put to flight the children of another school who were seeking a quarrel, he said that he had been very proud to see them go off thus and added: "You may conclude from it, in all justice, that I have always been a proud man."

His mother related one day, in his presence, the dream she had had when she was expecting his birth: "It seemed to me," she said, "that I was carrying a golden dog which I then saw shine in the sky." "That is just me," the Father then replied; "the dog is a beggar, who begs and finds his living as he can; that is indeed my portrait." His mother had a presentiment that there would be something extraordinary in this child, whereas the Servant of God, out of humility, took for himself only the lowly side of the dream.

To hear him speak, he had never been a strong pupil in his classes, he knew nothing. "I am only a very poor man, who is good only to be seen from afar and not close up." He sometimes took part in the *coulpe* [the monastic public avowal of faults before the community] and accused himself before us of his insufficiency and of the fact that, by his sins, he was an obstacle to the good being done better in the house. I heard him say that, had he known beforehand the greatness and sublimity of the priesthood, he would never have let hands be laid upon him. He liked to tell us that he was good only for the trade of a shoe-blacker.

I was profoundly touched by the humility of the Servant of God in the way in which he resigned his charge as superior, and by the words he addressed to us on that occasion, which were so far from the esteem and veneration that we had for him. He went so far as to tell us that we had had in him a very poor superior, that he had been a bad master. His humility appeared again in this circumstance when, first of all, he signed a promise of obedience and fidelity to the successor he had chosen, who was one of his first priests, only twenty-seven years old.

The Servant of God humbly suffered the contempt and rebuffs which were not lacking to him during his life. His intentions were distorted: it came back to him that he was called a madman, proud, an intriguer. "Alas!" he said, "how well they know me!" He never sought to excuse himself nor to justify what might escape him of the less perfect in his conduct, nor to attenuate any failure, any word or action capable of drawing some confusion upon him or of lessening his prestige. He said on this subject: "I keep my blunders for myself; they are useful to my soul, they profit my salvation more than the exaggerated esteem in which my person is held." He liked to say: "O my God, to You the glory, to me the humiliation. Let us not seek to succeed; the good God gives success when He pleases and the result when it is useful to His glory. Confusion suits us far better: we are useless servants. It is advantageous to receive from time to time a few showers [Fr. *douches*, i.e. cold douches]; that is useful to our wretched nature, so prone to pride and self-love."

A lady related to me the following fact: The children of the Prado were accustomed to carry a banner in the Corpus Christi processions at the parish. One year the parish priest, during the procession, had this banner taken out. However keenly he felt this affront, Father Chevrier bore it without saying anything, and did not the less continue, in the following years, to bring his children to the procession, but then without a banner.

A person relates that one day she was at Saint-André, her parish. Father Chevrier was then curate there and until then she had not noticed him. He was busy speaking to the young people of his little society of St

Aloysius Gonzaga. The parish priest came up and spoke to him roughly in passing. The Father had something so humble and so gentle in the expression of his face that from that moment this person venerated him as a saint. And when some difficulty befell her she prayed through his intercession, and that in his lifetime.

I constantly admired the profound humility of the Servant of God in the lack of consideration, the reproaches, the criticisms of which he was at times the object on the part of some persons of his entourage. He endured all that without complaining, without being hurt, with an admirable humility and patience. I saw him several times receive painful reproaches, even in his own house. He listened to these observations with the submission of a child, and when I myself expressed to him several times the pain I felt at seeing him so treated, he contented himself with answering me: “Ah! they know me well!” or again: “If they knew me, they would tell me more.”

Father Chevrier accepted with humility and gratitude the remonstrances and reproaches made to him, rightly or wrongly, on his conduct. “I have read your letter,” he writes to a person who pointed out faults to him; “there is nothing in it that displeases me; you say the truth, I thank you for it. I ask pardon of all those whom I may scandalize, and often, before saying my Mass, I am impelled to kneel down in the middle of the chapel to ask pardon of everybody for what I may have done that was apt to scandalize or offend. So, pardon me and pray the good Master that He pardon me my very many sins.”

He asked pardon of those whom he feared to have grieved. Father Jaricot says: “How many times he humbled himself to the point of asking my pardon!” When the Father supposed he had given pain by an observation or otherwise, he never left a person under that impression; he would not have let the day pass without speaking to show that he was not angry; or even, without having given pain, if he saw that someone looked vexed, he came first; and if someone had caused him pain, he never let it appear.

It is above all in his Spiritual Testament that the Servant of God reveals his humility and contrition.

The Father often prayed, and with fervour, to ask the grace of bearing humiliations well. Meditating on the first joyful mystery of the Rosary, he said:

> *“O Jesus, You ever so meek and humble of heart, teach me to become meek and humble of heart like You, that I may find a little rest for my weary soul.*
>
> *“Lord, when I consider Your infinite abasements, how can it be that I still seek to raise myself and to wish to appear something in the eyes of my fellows? You were the eternal Word of the Father, the image of His substance, the splendour of His light, and behold, leaving the brightness of heaven, You came down upon earth to hide Yourself in the womb of a virgin! And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us! God was made man! He took upon Himself all our miseries, all our infirmities, all our baseness, our nothingness; He left aside only sin, and even of that He willed to take the appearances and to show Himself to us as a leper, as a worm of the earth.*
>
> *“O Jesus, You did not blush to humble Yourself to the point of taking the form of a servant, You, the King of kings and Lord of lords, and I, dust, should I still dare to lift my head and seek to equal myself to the Most High?*
>
> *“O Mary, divine Mother of my God, you who in your profound humility called yourself the poor handmaid of the Lord, obtain for me from your divine Son the so precious gift of humility. Grant that I may always conceive only a low opinion of myself; obtain for me the love of contempt and humiliations, and make me understand well that all who exalt themselves shall be humbled, while all who humble themselves shall be exalted, even on earth, and above all in heaven.”*

At the third sorrowful mystery he cried out:

> *“O sweet Jesus, how many thorns on Your divine brow! Oh! who can ever count all those that I have had the cruelty to add to the crown plaited by the soldiers on the day of Your ignominious crowning before the Jewish people! Lord, here is the thorn of pride and vanity, of vain complacency and vainglory; here is the thorn of self-love and of the seeking of myself, of the esteem of praises, of boasting and ostentation. And each day,*

interlacing these thorns around Your brow, I drive them without pity into Your sacred flesh, by obstinately persisting in the love of myself and the contempt of others. O sweet Jesus, cover my shoulders with the mantle of ignominy, grant me the grace to accept humiliations, that they may heal me of the shameful wound which pride has made in my soul."

He Refused Everything That Could Make Him Noticed, Effaced Himself as Much as Possible, Even in His House, and Went Begging at the Door of La Charité

Father Chevrier did not go into society, as much to avoid receiving the compliments and praises with which the world is prodigal as to leave to his ministry a full authority. In the rare ecclesiastical gatherings to which he went from duty and necessity, he kept great reserve and discretion. I have heard that when he was curate at Saint-André, on the days of great ceremonies, he always asked to fill the function of subdeacon, in preference to that of deacon, which he left to priests younger than himself.

He effaced himself in all circumstances, he always chose the last place for himself. Many times it happened that in some public ceremony no place had been reserved for him and his children. Far from taking offence at it, he found it quite natural that it should be so. Sometimes I have seen persons, ecclesiastics or others, come to take his counsel; he refused, they had to insist: "But do you not know that I am only an ignoramus, I am only a poor man!" He yielded only to insistence and then made known humbly his appraisal or opinion. He was not a talker, letting everyone speak, welcoming all that was said around him with a good smile and never putting himself forward.

Father Chevrier was very paternal and very humble in the exercise of his authority; he begged rather than commanded, likewise putting much gentleness in the reproaches when he had to make any. He told us ourselves that one must never command as a master but treat people with gentleness. He liked to tell us: "See the Holy Family; it was St Joseph who was the least perfect, and he commanded and he was obeyed.

I too am here the least perfect, yet you must obey me. My faults will render your obedience more meritorious." He did not wish to be called superior, although he had put that title in the rule of the house. He gave himself only the title of Almoner of the Providence of the Prado. Nor did he wish to be considered as founder: the founder of the Prado, in his eyes, was God, and the cooperators in the foundation were the benefactors. This house he did not regard as his own; it belonged to the poor, and he said that the poor had the right to turn him out of doors if he came to accomplish badly the designs of God.

Having wished to have visiting cards, to conform to custom and also to spare himself making visits, which he regarded as a loss of time, even when made only to benefactors, he charged me with this care and told me to put on the cards: *L'abbé Chevrier, Almoner of the Prado*. I hesitated to write so modest a title and, privately, I should have liked to replace it by that of founder, or at least of superior. Perceiving my hesitation, he looked at me with a very grave air and said to me: "What do you want to put?" and after a moment of silence: "The refuse of the world!" [Cf. 1 Cor. iv, 13.] A saying we have heard him repeat very often!

He was opposed to all publicity for his Work, forbidding anything whatever to be written in the newspapers to push it, opposing in an absolute manner all advertising. He made of it an express law in his *True Disciple*.

I still remember this incident: during one of his stays at Rome, he was advised to ask the Pope for approbation of his Work; he contented himself with answering: "It is one of two things: this approbation, either we deserve it or we do not deserve it. If we deserve it, Providence will know how to procure it for us; if we do not deserve it, it would be a misfortune if it were granted us."

A pupil of the clerical school had thought he did well to send to the diocesan *Semaine religieuse* a laudatory account of a First Communion ceremony at the Prado. The Father obliged the culprit to make himself known and to undergo the severest remonstrances, showing him how much this indiscretion had pained him.

The Servant of God could not bear what flatters, what feeds vanity, for example all useless adornment, judging that one must be very destitute to go and ask ornaments from wood, from stone, from animals, to go begging the feathers of a peacock, a cock, a little bird, to adorn oneself with them and make oneself handsome.

A philosophy student, who was destined for the ecclesiastical state, came one day in the holidays to visit his fellow pupils of the Prado. He was elegant and ostentatiously wore a magnificent gold watch-chain. He presented himself to the Servant of God, who was crossing the courtyard at that moment, to greet him. “Good day, my friend, good day,” the latter said to him; “take off that trinket, it smells too much of the world.” The seminarian remained dumbfounded and kept the lesson.

Father Chevrier did not allow hair to be cut in fashion, so as to give the head some little distinguished air; he wanted the hair short and cut uniformly. He tore up one day a packet of photographs of one of his pupils, to whom he wished to give a lesson in humility. It was only by using ingenuity that he was prevailed on to be photographed. When it was mentioned to him, he said: “You know well that I do not like those things!” He yielded only on condition that this photograph should not be shown in his lifetime. He then took his crucifix and wished to be taken, as he said, “with the good God.”

Twice he put away from his breast the cross of the Legion of Honour: the first time, after the floods of Lyon, when everyone had but one voice to designate the Abbé Chevrier as having best deserved it. He wrote on this occasion to M. Convert: “Do not congratulate me on the honourable mention I received for the floods. The rewards of earth are so little. I can conceive that a man of the world, without faith, may run after a cross and a medal, but a priest would be very base if he thought of those earthly glories which are but smoke. I prefer to hear it said: There is a charitable priest, there is a holy priest, than to hear: there is a decorated priest.” He never spoke of the letter of congratulation that the Minister sent him on this occasion in the name of the Emperor. The second time, when he was on the point of receiving the cross of honour for the good done at the Prado among the children of the people, he declared to the official of the administration that he would never wear it, that he did not want it.

He would not consent to speak in the great churches of Lyon; when he did so, in the chapels of La Charité or of the Hospital, he would not mount the pulpit but spoke from the communion rail.

Even in the interior of his house the Servant of God strove to take up as little room as possible, to disappear; he had nothing haughty or imperious, neither in his tone, nor in his gesture, nor in his manners; he was a father to all, that was the only title he wished to have given him at the Prado. When his occupations did not permit him to go to his ordinary confessor, he confessed to his priests, to his new priests, to the first comer, and all admired his humility.

He never took part in discussions, he recommended avoiding them, and when his opinion was asked, or when he judged it fitting to express it, he always did so in few words and in the simplest manner, without seeking to make it prevail. Except in cases where he believed that the glory of God was concerned, he easily gave up his opinion when he met contradiction. One day two little sick girls had been brought to us. Father Dutel told us it was prudent to send them immediately to the hospice of La Charité. Father Chevrier, who came in afterwards, began to give us his orders regarding these children, but as soon as he knew that Father Dutel had already given some, he at once renounced his view and told us to obey Father Dutel.

Father Chevrier accepted no service from his inferiors for his personal needs; he swept his room, made his bed, polished his shoes, but took good care not to make them shine because the Curé of Ars did so. He went so far as to cut his own hair, because he had noticed that people wanted to keep it as relics. One day I had taken advantage of his absence to wash his confessional; on his return he noticed it and was profuse in excuses for having left this care to another, reproaching himself as a negligence for not having done it himself, and never again was there occasion to render him this service.

He put into our rule this urgent recommendation never to employ the children for our personal service. “We must,” he said, “teach the children order and work for themselves, in all that concerns household care, and not use them for us,” repeating the word of Our Lord: “I came to serve and not to be served.” [Cf. Matt. xx, 28.] He went so far as to comb the little boys of the First Communion; he thought himself very honoured by this office. Every year on Holy Thursday he performed the ceremony of the washing of feet; he spoke with a communicative eloquence of the act of humility of Our Lord washing the feet of His apostles and renewed it himself with a profound spirit of religion, washing and kissing the feet of each of the little boys of the First Communion.

At the beginning of the Prado, the Father slept in the children’s dormitory; he had chosen for himself the worst place, near the door; he certainly suffered much there, for he said to me one day, showing me this place: “God alone knows how much blood I spat in this corner!”

He applied himself to doing his actions well, even the smallest. He told us: “There is nothing small in the service of God. The Blessed Virgin did nothing extraordinary. Great actions are rare, small ones are met with from morning to night.”

Each week the Servant of God made himself a beggar for his children, at the door of the church of La Charité; he awaited the alms of the faithful, without saying anything, often mingled with other ragged or infirm poor. He took pleasure in this company, and when they complained of his presence, he came to their aid, saying: “Beggars should form a family; they are already unhappy enough without having to be jealous and quarrel among themselves.” He had to bear many affronts on the occasion of this quest; he was grossly insulted. Twice he was arrested by the police agents and taken to the station. Like the apostles, he was happy when he had had the good fortune to suffer some humiliation. [Acts v, 41.]

In the chapel of the Prado it happened to him several times, especially in the beginning, to set forth humbly to the faithful, in a few words, the distress of the house or the particular need there was of this or that object. He invited the assembly to unite their prayers to those of his children to ask God for urgent help.

When the *Life of Father Chevrier* by A. Delaserre appeared, which quotes largely the writings of its hero, Mgr Odelin, vicar general of Paris, wrote to the author: “What struck me above all are the chapters where you relate his interior life; it is there one discovers the secret of his apostolate. He was an apostle because he loved poverty, humility, suffering. The interior life explains the beauty and abundance of the fruits. The saint makes the apostle understood. Without interior, supernatural life, no truly fruitful exterior activity. The intensity of exterior action is in direct relation with the intensity of interior action. It is not individualism, the putting into relief of the ego, that created all those works of which the Church is proud; it is on the contrary the renunciation of the ego, the *abneget semetipsum* [let him deny himself], the diminution of the ego, the *oportet illum crescere, me autem minui* [He must increase, but I must decrease. John iii, 30].”

He Formed With Care to the Practice of Humility the Souls Entrusted to Him

The good Father applied himself with great care to forming the children of the clerical school, his priests, his Sisters, to the practice of humility. He taught them to avow their exterior faults, their failures against the rule, to make their *coulpe* well [public avowal of faults], to ask and receive penances for their failings. To make his children practise humility the Servant of God sometimes inflicted on them, as penance for their thoughtlessness, for example for a broken pane, to beg at the door of the chapel, or, for a dispute, to kiss the ground. He made the Latin students come after the children of the First Communion and wished them to serve them at table: “It is they,” he said, “who obtain for us our daily bread.”

He applied himself with particular care to forming his children in humility. He wanted them to go and ask his pardon each day for the exterior faults they committed; he made them declare their defects publicly. He sometimes sent them to gather *grésillons*, or remnants of coal [Fr. *grésillons*—small cinders], in a place near

the Prado where the ashes from the factories were thrown and where poor folk came to rummage among these remains.

"We were along the road that goes from the village to the château of Ars," relates one of his Latin students. "Father Chevrier made us sit on the grass, in the shade of some poplars. He asked me for my book *Fleurs d'Ars* [*Flowers of Ars*] which I held in my hand, opened it to the chapter on humility and read a few sentences, then, closing the book, he spoke off the cuff and told us beautiful things on this subject: 'One must be humble, my children, to do good on earth: see the Curé of Ars. The good God does not love the proud, they do no good. See these poplars, they are indeed the image of the proud: they produce no fruit, give almost no shade. Often also lightning strikes them, and their fall is the deeper the higher they stood.'"

Father Chevrier accustomed his children to consider themselves the smallest in the Church. One day he reproved one of his pupils who had called the clerical school a minor seminary; he found this word too ambitious. Writing to his deacons on the point of receiving priestly ordination, he says to them:

> *"How great you are going to be when you are priests, but how small you will need to be at the same time to be truly new Jesus Christs on earth! The servants of all, the slaves of others by charity, the last of all by humility!"*

There had been question for them of saying their first Mass in the basilica of St Peter; the Servant of God writes to them during their retreat: "It is more fitting to follow our first thought, which is to say your Mass at the Mission. Let us seek on earth no satisfaction. Pius IX wished to say his first Mass in a hospital. Let us too seek what is most humble, most hidden; that must be our lot."

For a moment he thought of leaving one of his new priests at Rome, to enable him to pass his doctorate examinations; he writes: "If one of you wished to sacrifice himself to obtain the title of doctor, I would permit it, provided he remain always very small, and be only for the little and the poor."

The Servant of God returns unceasingly in his instructions to his priests to the portion of the inheritance that has fallen to them at the Prado: the little, the poor, the most miserable. "Our house," he says, "must be the refuge of the unfortunate, of the afflicted, of those whom the world does not want, of sinners whoever they be, and be happy to receive them."

He had had a poor *déclassé* [a social outcast, one fallen out of his station] admitted to the Prado. The priest charged with using him had said ironically that he was making him a fine present! The Servant of God answered: "Yes, it is a fine present I make you, since I give you the occasion to practise humility and charity." It is in this same spirit that he desired that there should always be idiots [Fr. *idiots*—the period term for the severely mentally disabled] in the house. For these poor children nothing but attentions and consideration must be shown in the matter of treatment, for then he was severe in repression.

"As long as you remain little," he often said, "little in mind and heart, all will go well; but if you try to raise yourselves, beware!"

Here is the letter he wrote to his seminarians who were taking the sick Father Jacquier to Lourdes:

> *"Dear children, on arriving at Lourdes, you will go at once to the Blessed Virgin and say to her: 'Here we are! we have walked well, we have come from very far, we are very tired; look at us, please.' And you will remain there, in the presence of God and of Mary Immaculate, who has honoured this place with her visit.*
>
> *"You will then humble yourselves well, well, well, before God and His holy Mother, asking humbly pardon for the sins of your life and for those you have committed on the road. On the road there were idle words, movements of self-love, of presumption, of too great confidence in yourselves, in your actions, in your pains, of complacency in yourselves and acceptance of the little praises you received. You were often too well received, the charity of others was often greater than yours, and you have much to humble yourselves for in the too great naturalness there was in your conduct. Oh! dear children, how one must purify one's soul to receive all the graces of God abundantly! Purify yourselves, humble yourselves well, and God will look upon you. Humble yourselves and do penance for your sins. Say well that you are only useless servants, and that all the benefits of God come only*

from His infinite goodness, and that if He looked at our sins we should deserve only hell.

"These are the sentiments you must have in presenting yourselves before the Immaculate Virgin. After that you will go to confession, you will go and satisfy the needs of your poor body, and you will come back to weep again and ask urgently for your conversion and the cure of your poor sick one, and you will remain there until God and His holy Mother deign to hear you. Courage, patience, perseverance. You may perhaps obtain a beginning of grace, but remember that to obtain an extraordinary grace one must raise one's faith and love, by prayer, to a heroic degree: Are you capable of that without a particular gift of God? No.

"Courage then, prayer and perseverance. If, however, God in His mercy granted you the grace you ask, ah! it is above all in that circumstance that you must be still more humble, and take good care not to grow proud of anything, to boast of anything, and to believe that you have had any part in the merits of the Saviour, and remember what Jesus Christ said to the sick who were healed: 'Tell no man,' so much did Our Lord fear pride for the poor healed sick.

"Humility, prayer, perseverance, use the natural means indicated by the Blessed Virgin. We pray for you all, and we wish for you great purity of heart, of mind and of body. Your father who prays for you and blesses you."

In a letter of 14 May 1859, he lets M. Rambaud know what he has noticed in the conduct of Brother Peter, and shows the account he makes of obedience and humility:

"Brother Peter is always attached to the Work," he says; "we must hope that God will make him understand that it is by humility and obedience that one arrives at the higher degrees. He is not at all of the opinion of washing the dishes and other things, saying that this puts the Brothers too far below the children. Several times I have been tempted to go and do it myself to give him the example; I think I shall come to it. I fear the devil may blind him and throw him into illusion. He told me the other day that he had seen something in the night, while at prayer, and that this apparition had filled him with confidence in the future, that we were going to enter on a new way and that everything was going to go marvellously; and yet, two days before, he had admitted to me that he was full of pride. God does not communicate Himself to this sort of people. 'I give thanks to Thee, O Father, because Thou hast revealed these things to the humble and the little,' says Jesus." [Cf. Matt. xi, 25.]

"The penance most agreeable to God, believe me," he writes to a soul he was directing, "is that which will make you practise humility. I would rather see you eat chicken every day and practise a few grains of humility than see you do great penances and keep your spirit of pride and disobedience. An act of submission of your mind to God and to your confessor is worth a thousand times more than all your fasts and mortifications, and the proof is that it costs you more to obey than to fast. The Holy Spirit Himself says it: *Melior est obedientia quam victimæ* [Obedience is better than sacrifice. 1 Kings xv, 22]. So then: obedience. Obedience, submission of mind in all that concerns your conscience, your mind. Humility, obedience: that is the way of your salvation and your happiness. When you wish to enter truly on this way, tell me and we shall walk. > > "Be very humble; it is the greatest grace God can grant you on this earth; it is by this virtue that you will be saved, and it is when you have this virtue, a little, that you will obtain all graces."

It pleased divine Providence to employ Father Chevrier in the preparation of the Eucharistic Congresses. It sent him Mlle Tamisier, the initiator of this great movement. Father Chevrier had not only the mission of making her know her vocation surely; he had still to form this soul and put it in a state to do worthily the great work for which God wished to make use of her. It is interesting to see how he went about making her acquire, in particular, a profound humility. This fine intelligence might be inclined to pride and presumption. This iron will had need to be broken and made supple. The wise director therefore resolutely employed humiliation. He wished to convince her of the nothingness of the natural qualities which might inspire her with an excessive confidence in herself. He wished to lead her by a dark and apparently contradictory way, now pushing her to action, now holding her back and setting her face to face with her weakness and powerlessness.

"I do not know," she would write later, "whether I should bear today this way of humility, of humiliations, which seemed to me so natural then. I was so persuaded that the Holy Spirit spoke by the mouth of the Father that I drank in these humiliations with delight; it was honey. One day he said to me: 'But you answer

nothing?' 'The more bitter it is, the sweeter,' I said to him. It seemed to me that he was placing the Blessed Sacrament in my soul."

He wrote to her in 1872:

> *"My very dear Sister, do not lull yourself then with so many illusions. Remain very little in the eyes of God and of everybody. A little grain of humility, how it would do your soul and heart good! These anxieties, these troubles, above, below, what is all that but pride, esteem of oneself? Put all that aside and you will be happy and content. One never is so with one's passions. Christian life, death to self, that is what you need, and with that everything will go better. Leave the world in peace, do not busy yourself with it. Think of your salvation, of your perfection, if you are capable of it, and then of nothing else. May Jesus bless you and give you a little humility and true charity."*

He said to her again:

> *"Be very humble, very little, very hidden. Let your existence be scarcely suspected. Let Our Lord alone see you and hear you. Go back to Ars and wait for what God wants of you. One must be nothing, be no longer oneself, give place to God. When you are convinced of your powerlessness, of your misery, when you remain there like a dead dog, then you will be in the truth. Humility is truth; truth is light.*
>
> *"Truly, nothing stops your presumption. You want to turn the world upside down with the Blessed Sacrament adored as you understand it. You believe yourself capable of giving ideas to others; you will never be fit for anything. You will always vegetate, poor useless being.*
>
> *"As long as you do not come to believe, in all truth, that you are the last, the most wretched of all the wretched, the most worthy of contempt, capable of every weakness, every sin and guilty of all the faults that are laid against you, you will not be pleasing to God. Work out your poor salvation; that will already be very fine. Firebrand of purgatory [Fr. tison de purgatoire], alas! what you will have to expiate with your pride! You will obtain nothing, because your desires are not pure enough. They are too mixed with pride. Never, mark well, will the good God make use of you."*

Then, another time, he said to her ironically:

> *"Everyone knows you, you are received by the bishops, and that suits you. They bless you, but all these blessings do not enter because of your pride. They pass over your head without even touching your hair. Ah! I know you well!*
>
> *"Are you anything other than a dog destined to bark? Begin by praying if you want your barking to be heard. You think yourself something. You know nothing, you are a poor ass. You begin to bray. Let us hope at least that you will end by being heard."*

"The works of God," he said to her, "are not done by us, it is God who does them. With your writings, ink and paper, you will get nowhere. God does the works when He wills. The saints, in the works they do, do not know where they are going. They begin and God leads them. It is useless to tell me your projects, your chains of works; all that is worth nothing. Serve the good God humbly in your corner. Disappear. Why always put yourself in evidence? You catch what suits you: biting mockery, disappointments. > > "Do nothing by yourself. All you will do will be undone. God wishes to do His work without you. Your eagerness, your indiscretion, spoil everything. Employ no human means. Let God direct everything by events. You retard Him by your own action. One thing alone can advance His reign of adoration: humility. It is God who does the works, it is not we. All that we do of ourselves is worth nothing and spoils everything. Attract by your virtue, attract by the force of your prayer. > > "Works are not done by human forecasts, nor by money, nor by our calculations and combinations. God takes a soul. It is with souls that He creates works. He takes a soul, turns it, turns it again, fashions it, throws it away, takes it up again, places it here, then there. And He chooses another and another. He groups them, and in His time He makes grace blossom. We must be channels, and that is all. Man is nothing. God's hour has not yet come. Hide yourself well. Make yourself so small that you are not suspected. > > "For the present, nourish yourself alone on the Blessed Sacrament. Be pure to adore. Adoration is the life of the angels. Be pure in mind. Let your thought turn constantly toward Our Lord. He

alone must dominate everything in your mind, absolutely everything. Let Him be at home there. Admit no stranger. Be pure in heart. He, Jesus-Host, must be your only affection. > > “Are you thinking? A great work like that demands holiness. A small work like mine can lean on ordinary souls; but when it is a matter of God in person, of a Eucharistic work, oh! holiness is needed to work for it. Purify yourself unceasingly. Be interior, be a soul of prayer. > > “Take the necessary steps, yes; but above all pray. We shall pray with you and for you. Prayer is the short cut to arrive. Ah! if you were a saint, it would go faster. The Eucharist is in a state of passion in you. Thank Our Lord that it has turned out on the right side; otherwise… My God! what a bad lot you would have made!”

Prayer composed by the Father for one of his penitents:

> *“O divine Jesus, who forgot Yourself to the point of consenting to be humiliated and despised by everybody, to be judged and condemned by men and to die shamefully on the cross, how can I, who wish to be Your disciple and have promised to follow You, have a conduct so different and so opposed to Yours, always seeking myself, occupying myself only with myself and seeking myself in all my actions? How can I be so touchy, so jealous, so hard to bear with little faults in others, when I am full of them myself? How ashamed I am, O my God, to be so far from You, and to live in a manner so little conformed to Your maxims and Your examples! Grant me, O Jesus, through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary, so humble and so small in her own eyes, not to seek myself in anything, to accept everything with humility and charity, to forget myself, never to speak of myself, no longer to occupy myself with myself, to pay no attention to what may be thought or said of me, to put my entire confidence in You, seeking to please You in everything and not concerning myself with the judgments of the world, silencing in me all those interior thoughts contrary to charity and Christian humility.”*

Thoughts on humility:

> *“The works of God begin small: the Crib, Calvary, that is the beginning of all God’s works. What begins otherwise does not continue or succeeds ill. One must accept to be counted for nothing. Accept this, for love of Our Lord, in order to have a share in His Passion, to put something into His chalice.*
>
> *“When the good God chooses someone for some employment, for a vocation, He looks for humility and purity. He grants His graces, His privileges, only to humble and pure souls; that is what He asks, what pleases Him, what draws His gaze.*
>
> *“Humility is the mother of all virtues, and he who possesses it possesses a great treasure of graces for himself and for others. The more one abases oneself, the more one glorifies God; the more one abases oneself, the more one is useful to the neighbour. The practice of humble, humiliating actions strengthens us in humility. A mountain serves two ends: either it raises us or it crushes us. Come, the mountain of our miseries must raise us toward God.*
>
> *“True virtue is humble, distrusts itself and does not expose itself to danger.”*

Chapter X. Obedience

Chapter X. Obedience

Father Chevrier renounced his own will all his life. — He sought only the will of God. — He made great account of obedience in his instructions, his counsels, his direction.

Father Chevrier Renounced His Own Will All His Life

The good Father was convinced that he was not on earth to do his own will, but that of God; therefore, with his divine Master, he put obedience before everything and applied himself to practising it, even in the smallest things, so that he could say with Jesus: “I do nothing of myself, but what I see the Father doing, that I do. The things that please Him, I do always. My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me.” [Cf. John v, 19; viii, 29; iv, 34.] He often repeated and admirably explained these words of Our Lord. His sole preoccupation was to know the will of God; he asked unceasingly for the grace to know it and accomplish it in all things. He would undertake nothing, do nothing, nor say anything of himself, but only what he believed to be according to the will of God.

In his work *The True Disciple of Jesus Christ*, the good Father speaks at length of obedience, of which he says, among other things, that it is the greatest mark of our love for God, the shortest means of arriving at perfection, the surest means of establishing in us peace, tranquillity of mind and heart, the only true mark of salvation. The Father studied obedience in Our Lord, and one may say that he himself did what he discovered in his divine Master, as much and as perfectly as is possible.

> *“To imitate Jesus is to die to oneself in order to be the victim of expiation by prayer and obedience. It is to die like Jesus to save one’s brethren. Jesus expiated by obeying; Jesus obeyed during His childhood, during His Passion, His executioners and Judas, and all His life His Father.”*

Father Chevrier preferred the accomplishment of the will of God to everything, even to his life; he wrote during his last illness: “I thank the persons who ask my cure, but it is better to obey God than to live on privileges and miracles.”

After the example of Our Lord, the Father was obedient unto death, as those who saw him have borne witness. Madame Chevrier [his mother] often said: “My son never disobeyed me.” This obedience to his mother never failed, up to his last moments. Although she was very exacting and obstinately insisted on nursing him in her own way and quite contrary to the doctor’s prescriptions, I never heard the Father make her a remark, in spite of the singularities of diet she imposed on him. His obedience was perfect, admirable, heroic; he obeyed her like a little child. How many times, to please her, he changed his room! It was then that, with the merit of obedience, he had the occasion to put into practice one of his principles on poverty, and he often repeated to me: “To learn detachment and practise poverty, we should have to change rooms every month.” He obeyed his mother in small things, as in his childhood, without replying anything or showing any vexation.

At L’Argentière, as at the Grand Séminaire, his masters and fellow pupils are unanimous in saying that the Father was an excellent pupil, consequently an obedient pupil. Impelled by his love for the glory of God and the sanctification of souls, the young Abbé Chevrier wished to go and preach the holy Gospel in distant missions; but his director, the Abbé Denavit, told him that the good God wanted him at Lyon and not elsewhere. Then, convinced that obedience is better than sacrifices, he submitted humbly to the will of him who spoke to him in the name of God.

Ordained priest, he submitted to his ecclesiastical superiors, who named him curate at Saint-André de la Guillotière; there he was a model of obedience to his parish priest, who at times imposed painful sacrifices

on him. This obedience appeared with brilliance when he accepted, without murmuring and with gentleness, the dissolution of his little congregation of St Aloysius Gonzaga.

He was full of deference for the counsels of his superiors, even when they were in opposition to his way of seeing. Thus at Saint-André, wishing to sell his furniture, to practise poverty as he understood it, he did not hesitate to keep it on the representations of his parish priest, who pointed out to him that his manner of acting would appear a sort of blame cast upon his confreres.

“He always appeared to me,” says the Rev. Father Bruno, “as a model of submission toward all his superiors, full of respect for all who had any authority over him.” He manifested his obedience by the profound veneration which he showed on every occasion to ecclesiastical superiors, without whose counsel he never undertook anything. Each time he took a step in the particular way to which God called him, he consulted his directors and acted according to their indications.

The Father was of exemplary submission toward all his superiors. He was never heard to formulate any complaint, any criticism, nor the slightest murmur concerning administrative acts. He never took part in conversations which, directly or indirectly, seemed to blame authority. According to the recommendations of Our Lord and of the saints, he saw God in the person of his superiors. He undertook nothing grave and important without submitting it to them, and I remember having heard him say: “When the good God wants a thing, He knows how to incline the heart of our superiors to grant it to us in due time; one must pray and know how to wait.” Whether they were favourable to him or not, he submitted, he did not resist, he did not hold out against them. His rule of conduct was in this word of Our Lord: “I came to do the will of Him that sent me.” “I am here to obey.”

When he obtained from Mgr Caverot the permission to send us to Rome to complete our theological studies there and prepare us for the priesthood, he hoped to spend a good part of the year with us, to direct our formation himself, and to leave us, meanwhile, under the guidance and supervision of Father Jaricot. Monseigneur opposed it. “I have granted it to four,” he said, “and not to five. I shall recommend them to the superior of the French seminary and they will be reasonable enough to conduct themselves alone!” The aim of our stay at Rome was, with such a restriction, only imperfectly attained. The Father submitted to it, however, without objection, and contented himself with coming to rejoin us in the month of March, as was granted him, and thus spent in our midst the last three months that preceded our ordination.

Moreover, in spite of the formal promise, implying consequently the implicit authorization, that had been made him to leave him his new priests for the needs of his Work, he did not wish us to set to work without having obtained the approval and blessing of our Archbishop. That is why, Monseigneur having come to Rome, the Father accompanied us to His Eminence, presented us to him and humbly asked his permission to keep us. “Yes, yes, my good friend, I do not wish to separate the lambs from their shepherd, nor Tityrus from his flock. Go, and may Our Lord bless you, and them, and all your works!” [An allusion to Virgil’s *Eclogues*, where Tityrus is the shepherd.] Despite the instances made to him, he wished to have the consent of his Archbishop before presenting to the Pope the rule of his priests. He likewise wished to have the approval of his Archbishop to follow the Roman liturgy at the Prado.

A simple wish of ecclesiastical superiors was for him an order. He showed it well in accepting several times at the Prado, on their recommendation, doubtful auxiliaries whom he foresaw would create serious embarrassments for him. To all his superiors he showed great respect. I accompanied him several times when he went to see Monseigneur the Archbishop. He prostrated himself before him with a profound humility, and I heard Mgr Ginoulhiac answer him one day: “Father, rise, it is for me to kneel!”

At M. Rambaud’s he practised obedience in a heroic manner, in all that did not concern the spiritual, as his rule of that time indicates very well. He wishes to push obedience to the point of seeing the will of God not only in his superiors but even in his inferiors, and among his resolutions and retreat notes, during his stay at

the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus, he writes:

> *"I can practise obedience toward all with whom I live, as Jesus practised it Himself, although superior to the others. I shall obey my cook by thanking him for what he brings me as coming from God. I can obey the will of the brothers by doing what they judge fitting, seeing in that the will of God. Wherever I find the will of God, I must not delay to accomplish it although it come from an inferior. I shall regard this rule as the means of perfecting my obedience; I shall observe it to immolate my will to that of Jesus."*

At the Prado I saw the Father obedient not only to his superiors but also to his equals and inferiors. As soon as the porter came to fetch him and it was possible for him to leave the occupation that held him, he went immediately where he was called. Speaking of his life at the Prado he wrote: "I am not master of my time nor of my life. I live as I can and obey everybody." He did not contest and knew how to yield to the will of each, in all things that were not contrary to the will of God.

He went to the waters, at Vichy, only through obedience. "The doctor wants me to go to Vichy," he says, "I go only reluctantly, for these remedies are those of the great world and I have always been in the little."

He rejoices at the approach of Father Jaricot's ordination, because he will be able to lead a religious life, which is necessarily a life of obedience. Here, in fact, is what he writes on this subject: "I rejoice that we shall be able to begin to live a religious life and one useful to us all, by agreeing on the principal articles which are to make but one of us all." In October 1876 he writes that his aim, in not seeing his deacons at Rome, is to make them "live as religious" and have them "begin a novitiate for the works of the Prado." Thus Father Chevrier wished to live as a religious, although he had taken no other vows than that of the subdiaconate; but he attached himself more to the spirit than to the letter of religious prescriptions. Being before all an apostle and preoccupied with souls, he interrupted his meals, his exercises of piety or of community, to work for the sanctification of the souls which claimed his ministry, and in that he still obeyed, for he did the will of God manifested by circumstances and the needs of souls. He was always very regular as to rising, prayer, holy Mass, catechism, and strove to put as much regularity as he could into his days, his labours, his meals, but all was subordinated to charity, which was his great rule. Caprice had no part in it.

When, in the course of his last illness, he had resigned his charge as superior and had Mgr Caverot name a successor, who was one of his young priests, scarcely twenty-seven years old, he was the first to sign the formula of obedience which he had drawn up himself. He had been given the nickname "lamb" on account of the facility and gentleness with which he obeyed everybody, especially his confreres. One day I heard him say: "It seems to me that I should be ready to submit to a little child."

He Sought Only the Will of God

"What a responsibility for me," he said, "if I should fail to do the will of God!" And for a long time he had made this prayer: "Oh! my God, if You have need of a fool, here I am; if You have need of a poor man, here I am, to do Your will." I often heard the Father say in prayer: "My God, here is Your servant who comes to ask Your orders. Make known to him Your will that he may accomplish it."

The Father did not forestall the hour of Providence; he waited to be sure of the will of God before acting, and said: "The good God waited four thousand years to send His Son on earth!" He undertook the foundation of the Prado only with the approval of his superiors and to accomplish the will of God. He hesitated, prayed, reflected, took counsel, for a long time before deciding, but when the will of God was clearly known to him, he went forward with courage and confidence. Nothing then stopped him: "If I had listened to the world," he said, "we should not be here." He went forward, gently, but he did not recoil.

When he intended to do a thing, he always put this condition which I have read in several of his letters:

> *"If God wills it, if such is His will, if God permits it. May God do it, if it is His will. Let us not forestall the hour of Providence; by wishing to do it oneself, one spoils the works of God. Let us pray well that the will of God be*

accomplished in everything. All in God's keeping. See Our Lord answering His mother: My hour is not yet come." [John ii, 4.]

He greatly desired to have confreres, but he never asked for any priest, fearing not to do the will of God. He awaited the hour of Providence, he awaited God. During his illness of September 1876, he writes: "My God, if I am still useful to Your Work, keep me; if not, take me." And in his Spiritual Testament, drawn up several months before his death:

"I accept death willingly in expiation of my sins. I submit willingly to this law of God: Thou shalt return to dust. I accept the suffering and the dissolution of this body, that it may be reconstituted by Jesus Christ, my Redeemer. May God help me in this terrible passage and give me the grace to make it without resistance, with faith and submission. I know that many persons have asked my cure. May God reward their charity and good will, but it is better to obey God than to live on privileges and miracles."

He Made Great Account of Obedience in His Instructions, His Counsels, His Direction

Father Chevrier strongly recommended obedience as the great means of not deceiving oneself; it was, besides, the practice he had followed on his own account. This manner of acting appears very clearly in his letters of direction. To a scrupulous soul he writes: "A life of rule and obedience is worth more for you than a hundred confessions."

"We must," he said, "apply ourselves to doing always and in everything the will of God. This holy will is manifested to us by the commandments of God and of the Church, by our Holy Father the Pope, by our Superiors, by our rule, which tells us at each hour of the day what we must do to accomplish the holy will of God."

Writing to his seminarians at Alix, in 1872, Father Chevrier recommends obedience to them: "Begin by becoming little saints, by carrying out your rule well. Obedience in all the smallest things, remembering that your Master was obedient unto death: *Factus obediens usque ad mortem* [Phil. ii, 8]," and he asks them to give him an account, in their letters, of the way in which they follow their rule. He goes so far as to recommend to one of his seminarians, who was a soldier during the war of 1870, not to neglect his Third Order office. "It can be said at any time," he says, "while working, by day, by night, in the guard-room, in the barracks, at the post as in church."

"Obedience," he said, "consists first in fulfilling the rule of the house, in submitting to all the exercises, in leaving everything to go to them when the bell calls, in preferring the accomplishment of the rule to our own will.

When one cannot fulfil a point of the rule, one asks exemption from it." And he wished obedience to be universal, that is, in all things and with regard to all the representatives of God toward us. Here is what he writes, on 9 February 1874, to his pupils of the major seminary, concerning the little rule he had traced for them:

"As for the little points of your rule that you cannot fulfil exactly, supply by other little exercises, and know that the love of God replaces everything and that there are in the day a thousand occasions of making little penances which are very agreeable to God, such as silence, obedience, charity, bearing with the neighbour; all these acts of virtue bring us very close to Our Lord, our divine Model. Be very faithful to your little week. (By this he meant the whole of the exercises of piety or penance special to the Prado.) I quite approve your resolution to reread your profession each month. These little means remind us of our aim."

Among the notes which he came to read each week at the clerical school, there was one for silence and another for obedience and regularity. At these meetings he said to us: "In study, silence must be kept, my children, but if you need something, ask for it quietly from your neighbour, who must charitably render you the service requested."

He formed our will to the practice of sacrifice and personal self-denial, which are the bases of obedience. He sought to instil in us the habit of acting from conscience and spirit of faith and not from constraint or because one is seen. Often we had as sole overseer one of ourselves who was appointed censor. Father Jacquier, who liked to push things to the comic, sometimes had his biretta placed in the overseer's place to represent authority. I do not think we abused this regime or conducted ourselves otherwise than if we had had masters to watch us. Suffice it to say that the censors were always much loved by their fellow pupils. Besides, they were clerics, and the clerics were named after consultation of the pupils. Father Chevrier told us so often that we must not be "eye-servants"—*non ad oculum servientes*! [Eph. vi, 6: "not serving to the eye".] I remember, however, that a pupil who was mischievous once went and asked permission to go out of Father Jacquier's biretta, as if it had been a person. This pupil became Mgr Guillermin, who died Vicar Apostolic of Nyanza.

One of the principal aims of the weekly *coulpe*, which he imposes on his priests in their rule and which he had made at the clerical school, was to give him an account of fidelity to the rule. The *coulpe* bore on three principal points: failings against the rule, employments, character. "Each pupil," he says on this article in the rule, "must come and give account to the director of his week, that is, of his prayer, of his particular examen and of the rule. Each pupil must give account of the efforts he has made to practise the assigned virtue and avoid the defect which is particular to him." Father Chevrier adds that this article is the most important of all, and he asks that this direction be done by the director with exactness, zeal, piety and intelligence.

Here is again what the Servant of God says on obedience in the rule of his priests:

> *"We submit in mind and heart to all the laws of the Church. We shall regard Monseigneur the Archbishop as our immediate Superior, and if he deigns to approve our rule, we shall consider it as the expression of the will of God for us and shall conform to it with joy. We shall make obedience our principal virtue, as being that which can contribute most to the glory of God and the sanctification of souls, as well as to the good order of a house."*

Below the approval of His Eminence Cardinal Caverot, Father Chevrier wrote: "We subscribe with all our heart to the present rule, approved by His Eminence the Cardinal Archbishop of Lyon, and we propose to follow it as faithfully as possible." He signed this declaration, which Father Jaricot and his first four priests also signed.

I heard the Servant of God several times express the great apprehensions his charge as superior caused him and explain that it is far easier and far safer to obey than to command, because, he said, when one has only to obey, one is always sure of doing the will of God without having to seek it, whereas when one has to command, one must at each instant know the will of God for oneself and for others; how much more difficult that is and what a great responsibility! These are the same sentiments that he expresses in the following passage of his *True Disciple*:

> *"How difficult it is to be a superior! A superior must be filled with the spirit of God, a superior must know the will of God at each instant and have it executed by his inferiors. What a task! what a responsibility! What intimate union with Jesus Christ this man must have, in order to say and command only what Jesus Christ wills and desires to see accomplished in His members. With what care a superior must study Jesus Christ, His divine word, His doctrine, His spirit, in order to command according to Jesus Christ, to direct according to Jesus Christ, to lead according to Jesus Christ each house, each person, each soul in particular. Distrust of self, prayer, study, counsel."*

These words express very well the sentiments of Father Chevrier in regard to the will of God. I can affirm that it is thus I always saw him act, in a perfect submission and a complete and filial abandonment to the holy will of God.

The Father strongly recommended to us obedience to those who have authority. He said one day:

> *"Whoever your superior be, you must obey him. See the Holy Family; it was St Joseph, the least perfect, who commanded. Whom did he command? He commanded the Child Jesus, the Son of God made man, and the*

Blessed Virgin, and he was obeyed. It was the will of the good God that it be so. And [Jesus] was subject to them. The Child Jesus obeyed the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph. When the angel came to warn them to leave for Egypt, it was to St Joseph that he addressed himself, and the Blessed Virgin and the Child Jesus obeyed at once. That is how we must do: we must always obey Superiors, we must not look at their faults. Obedience destroys all self-will and makes everyone in a house walk together toward one same goal. The will of the superior must be conformed to the will of God and that of the inferiors conformed to that of the superior."

He spoke of the submission of the Blessed Virgin when the angel announced to her the great mystery of the Incarnation, and of the submission of Our Lord offering Himself to His Father, and he quoted this word: "Sacrifices and holocausts Thou wouldest not, O my Father; therefore I have taken a body, and behold I come to do Thy will." [Cf. Ps. xxxix, 7–9; Heb. x, 5–9.] He asked of us a simple and entire submission, without reasoning, for all that he required of us in the way of the counsels.

In his instructions the Father often spoke to us of obedience, but he wished it to be inspired by love and not by fear. He did not want children to be made machines by leading them by signal, and said: "If obedience is not inspired by love and the imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ, it makes only slaves and not children."

One of the first years of the Prado, the big boys of the First Communion got it into their heads to go and fetch boxwood for Palm Sunday, and took no account of the Father's prohibition. They went off to fetch boxwood and came back triumphant: they brought all that they had found most beautiful. The Father had this boxwood piled up in the middle of the courtyard and had it burned, saying that he would not bless what came from disobedience.

The Father brought the persons he directed to the spirit of obedience, reminding them that nothing should be dearer to us than the holy will of our good Master, and that we must see the holy will of God in all things. He wrote to a person on 15 July 1870:

"He is perfect who knows how to accept everything and sees the holy will of God in all things, whether for the expiation of our sins or for our spiritual advancement. In making the Way of the Cross on Sunday, I said, at the eleventh station, that Jesus Christ saw the will of His Father in the executioners who persecuted Him and nailed Him to the cross, and that He obeyed these cruel men as He would have obeyed His Father had He commanded Him visibly. If that is true for Our Lord Jesus Christ, why should it not be true for us, and why should we not see in all things the holy will of God, who permits everything for our sanctification and our salvation?"

"It is very sad," he writes to another person, "to witness each day the demolition of those whom one loves, but such is the will of God in regard to our body: this body must be destroyed and then reconstituted on the model of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Have then faith and submission to the holy will of God, regarding this destruction as the just punishment of sin. In heaven there will be no more sickness."

A person wrote to him that she had continually the desire to die; he answered her: "I judge that an act of submission to the holy will of God is worth more than the desire of death."

He liked that, from a spirit of obedience and simplicity, one should submit to him one's thoughts, desires, temptations, because the devil has no hold on the soul that submits everything. He said: "Some, one must push; the others, one must hold back." He did not like those exalted natures who at one moment wish to suffer and die for Our Lord and let themselves be discouraged at the slightest difficulty: "There is St Peter, who accepted death for Our Lord and an instant later denied him! One accepts suffering and death, but from afar. It is far more perfect to prepare oneself to accept death well when it comes than to desire it."

One of his penitents asked him by letter for some counsels of direction. The replies he made show well the way he understood obedience:

First question. When in meditation or communion I have some attraction of particular grace bearing on an interior reform, such as a defect to fight or a virtue to acquire, must I submit it to my director, or is it better to remain silent, calling no one's attention to oneself?

Answer. It is more in conformity with simplicity to speak of it to one's director and thus submit to obedience.

Second question. Is it perhaps a resistance to grace not to wish to make a retreat?

Answer. You ought to dispose yourself to make your retreat through obedience.

Third question. Never to speak of one's soul, nor say what one does, nor ask anything, offering to God the pain this may cause: is that an illusion?

Answer. Yes, it is an illusion, because in acting thus one does only one's own will and conducts oneself alone; one must submit one's thoughts, one's desires, to the will of those who direct us.

The good Father, who had always been a model of faithful obedience to the rule of the house and to the rule of the Franciscan Third Order, urgently recommended to his children this same fidelity, and it was again one of the last recommendations he made to them in his Spiritual Testament, before leaving them for a better life:

"I recommend to them above all charity, union, obedience to their little rule; let them remember what I often told them: God and souls, nothing for us, all for God and souls! With this principle they will be able to walk and continue the work of God."

Thoughts on obedience:

"Obedience sums up the whole Christian and religious life and makes the happiness of the houses where it reigns.

"Obedience is the surest mark of the respect and affection one has for one's superiors. One must submit to the wills of those who direct us, whether it concerns the temporal or the spiritual. One must obey in everything, in the smallest things as in the great and difficult. True obedience consists not only in saying but in doing. Obedience is the greatest mark of our love for God. When there are faith, love of God and truly Christian submission, then there is truly obedience."

Prayer on the third sorrowful mystery of the Rosary:

"O divine Jesus, sole and true King of heaven and earth, under the insignia of derision with which the Jews clothed You, I recognize and adore You as my King and my true Lord. Your crown of thorns speaks louder to my heart than the crowns and diamonds of kings; You are really the man of victory and You deserve to be crowned king, because You alone have destroyed the empire of the devil, You alone have conquered flesh and blood by meekness and patience, You alone have conquered the world, delivering it from the slavery of sin, You alone have formed a true people of saints and just, who are Your soldiers and who fight to the end against the enemies of God on earth. Yes, You are the King of the holy Church which is on earth, You are the King of heaven where You reign with the saints in Your heavenly kingdom. I salute You then, O my King, my only true King! I am Your conquest because You have acquired me by Your blood; I belong to You since You have delivered me from slavery; I wish to be Your subject and I wish to have no other master than You.

"Yes, reign over my heart, that all its love may be for You; reign over my mind, that all its thoughts may be for You; reign over my body, that all its actions may belong to You. I wish to be Your faithful subject on earth in order to reign with You in Your kingdom.

"Lord, give me Your humility, Your meekness, Your patience. When I see You in the midst of all these impious men accepting their contempt and their insults without saying anything, how ashamed I am of myself, seeing myself so proud, so impatient and so touchy; grant that, after Your example, Lord, I may accept humiliations, contempts, insults, without murmuring and without growing angry with those who act thus toward me.

"Lord, Your kingship will subsist until the end of the world and until the end there will be soldiers who will plait thorns to crown You. Pardon for the ignorant who wound You every day by their insults and contempt. Until the end there will be Jews who will excite the people against You and bring them to demand Your death and to have no other king than the devil and their passions. Woe to them, for Your enemies will be vanquished and they will have only death for their portion. Until the end there will be ignorant men who will let themselves be led by the wicked, and demand Your death without knowing You. Pity for them, Lord, because they know not what they do. Until the end there will be Pilates who will proclaim Your kingship and Your innocence and who will not have the strength to do their duty; Lord, the number of these is great, and am I not of that number? I see well what must be done and I do not do it! I acknowledge You as my King and I do not obey You! I call myself Your disciple

and I do not follow You! Have pity on me, Lord, and grant that I serve You as a faithful subject and that You give me a share in Your eternal kingdom."

Chapter XI. Poverty

Chapter XI. Poverty

His predilection for poverty. — Motives for the choice of this virtue. — Teaching and examples of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the saints. — The present necessity for the priest to bear this distinctive character. — How the Ven. Father Chevrier realized this ideal of poverty. — At Saint-André. — At the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus. — Foundation of the Prado, house of poverty. — Poverty in lodging. — Poverty in clothing. — Poverty in food. — Poverty in goods. — Poverty in work. — Poverty in service. — The priestly work: his ideal of the poor priest. — Realization of his priestly ideal. — Pradosian formation of his pupils whom he destined for the ministry of the poor.

His Predilection for Poverty

Evangelical poverty was the Servant of God's virtue of predilection, says M. Broche, and he made of it the distinctive character of his life and of his Work, the spirit of the Prado. The principal preoccupation of his life was to live as a poor man and to imitate the poverty of Our Lord. He was as if fascinated by the poverty of Jesus Christ. He strove to imitate it in all its rigour, applying himself with a frightening logic to practising the holy Gospel particularly on this point. Without discussing or reasoning he accepted the Gospel to the letter and in its integrity, in spite of the repugnances of nature for this so austere poverty. He had continually before his eyes Our Lord poor at His birth, poor during His life and at His death. It was to practise poverty the better that he abandoned the ordinary ministry, in order to live more freely a life truly poor.

He carried poverty as far as it could be carried, says the Rev. Father Bruno, and I do not believe that there is any religious vowed to poverty who has practised it better than he, effective and affective [Fr. *effective et affective*—in fact and in heart]; and yet he was held to it by no vow; it was the sole attraction of grace that impelled him on this way.

Father Chevrier defines poverty thus:

> *Poverty and the spirit of poverty are contained in this word: To have the necessary and to know how to be content with it.*

Motives for the Choice of This Virtue. Teaching and Examples of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Saints

Enraptured by this virtue, the good Father made a special study of the poverty of Jesus Christ, of which no point escaped him, and he is the faithful copy of the divine Master, such as he has depicted Him for us in his *True Disciple*:

> *"When Our Lord Jesus Christ sends His apostles into the world to preach and heal," he writes, "He commands them to give freely, to have neither gold nor silver, not to make for themselves treasure on earth. To be perfect, the Master tells us, we must leave all the goods of earth, sell what we possess and follow Him; it is impossible for a man attached to the goods of earth to follow Him really, for no man can serve two masters; God takes it upon Himself to feed and clothe those who work for Him and they shall never lack anything. Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all the rest shall be added unto you. The good Master has moreover promised, to those who leave all for Him, the hundredfold in this world and life everlasting in the other.*
>
> *"The divine Master, in coming on earth, had to take the most perfect state. Now He disdained riches and wished Himself to practise holy poverty. He chose for Himself poor parents; He was born in the greatest poverty, in a stable; He took pleasure in the midst of the poor; He lived, worked and suffered as a poor man. He was despised and rebuffed as a poor man; He lowered and humbled Himself as a poor man by washing the feet of His apostles; He hungered as a poor man in the desert; He thirsted on the cross as a poor man. Finally He died as a poor man on a cross, naked, despoiled, abandoned, despised. In all this He acted thus because He willed it, out of love for*

poverty, to show us the way of truth, to encourage us: I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you do also. [John xiii, 15.] Since our divine Model loved this virtue so much, we must love it too and follow His examples.

"Poverty is the first virtue that Our Lord shows us on coming into this world, and He practises it to death; we must love it if we wish to be really God's, for the first step in following Jesus Christ in the perfect way is poverty of spirit and heart. Blessed are the poor in spirit!" [Matt. v, 3.]

"How persuasive good Father Chevrier was," says one of his first pupils, "when he explained to us the texts of the Gospel on this subject, and how easy it was to see that his sole ambition was to realize the evangelical counsels!" In his work *The True Disciple of Jesus Christ* he carefully collected and classified all the passages of the holy Gospel where Our Lord teaches renunciation of mind and heart, the formal condition required of whoever wishes to come to Him. All the doctrine of the divine Master on poverty, His promises to the poor, the examples He has left us of the practice of poverty, are developed at length.

The Tableau of Saint-Fons, which expresses in so striking a manner his ideal of apostolic life and priestly perfection, begins with the crib, poverty; and in the prayer which the Father composed for the third joyful mystery of the Rosary, he considers the poverty of the Word made flesh and asks it of Him ardently:

"If You are born thus poor, O divine Child Jesus, it is to teach me that the first step in the perfect life is poverty. I embrace it then with joy and love, this beautiful virtue of poverty, and I wish to make it my preferred virtue. Since it is by it that You come to me, it is also by it that I wish to go to You."

He writes to a priest: "This beautiful mystery of the Incarnation is truly the foundation of our zeal, of our actions, and a great motive for humbling ourselves before God. It is this mystery that led me to ask God for poverty and humility and that made me leave the ministry to practise the holy poverty of Our Lord." His ideal was to draw ever nearer to the poverty of the Crib. "The Crib," he said, "that is the beginning of every work of God."

Prayer at the Crib:

"O holy crib of my Jesus, annihilated, near you I forget all the rest; near you I love only poverty, littleness and humiliation; I wish, I seek, I await nothing more than the treasure of grace and the riches of heaven; all the rest is nothing."

After the example of Our Lord, all the saints, and in particular St Paul, that great imitator of Jesus Christ, had a marked predilection for poverty. The great apostle, in order not to be a burden to anyone, works with his hands, as a poor man; he eats no man's bread free, he has no one to serve him, on the contrary he makes himself all to all. He endures, as a poor man, all sorts of sufferings: hunger, thirst, nakedness, ill treatment; and if he excuses himself, so to speak, to the Corinthians for having preached free of charge, it is to tell them that it is his glory and that he does not wish to change his manner of acting. [Cf. 1 Cor. ix, 12–18; 2 Cor. xi, 7–9; 1 Thess. ii, 9.]

According to Father Chevrier, seven conditions are required to practise evangelical poverty: 1° To renounce in mind and heart the goods of earth; 2° To be content with the necessary; 3° To give to him that asks; 4° Not to meddle in temporal affairs; 5° To ask nothing of anyone; 6° Not to worry about the future; 7° To count on God alone. In a series of quotations borrowed from the Gospel, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St Paul, Father Chevrier sets forth the way in which the saints, and in particular the great St Paul, accomplished the counsels of the divine Master and bore the character of poverty.

Father Chevrier honoured the poverty of the Most Blessed Virgin, and in the prayer of the third joyful mystery of the Rosary he addresses her: "O Mary! the poorest of the handmaids of the Lord, pray for me, that my heart may detach itself from the riches of earth, and that, being well emptied of all the things of this world, it may enrich itself with the treasures of grace and be filled with all the virtues." He had a particular devotion to St Joseph, whom he called the Father of the poor; and a great devotion to St John the Baptist

because of his poverty: “See,” he said, “St John the Baptist in his desert: he had for clothing only a camel’s skin, a leather girdle about his loins; for food only wild honey and locusts, and all Judea went out to him.” [Cf. Matt. iii, 4–5.]

St Francis of Assisi, the seraphic poor man, reproduced eminently in his person, his life, his works, the divine poverty of Jesus Christ; after his example, the Father wished to make poverty the inseparable companion of his life. He gave St Francis of Assisi, whose Third Order rule he adopted for himself and his own, as protector and model, above all to his priests and his Sisters. He wished that a particular cult be rendered him at the Prado, because, as he says so well: “Poverty maintains in humility and confidence in God. Riches and treasures ruin houses, poverty preserves them and keeps them in vigour and charity.”

It is for the same motive that he had a special devotion to the holy beggar Benedict Joseph Labre, and during our stay at Rome he often talked to us of the heroic virtue of this saint, who so eloquently condemns the refinements of the age, this thirst for enjoyments, this need of luxury, of comfort, fashionable today, and of which one sometimes believes oneself obliged, under pretext of dignity, to accept or submit to all the demands. A regrettable influence from which one no longer knows how to withdraw and which becomes a sad necessity, a veritable slavery. He advised us to go often to pray at the tomb of this great servant of God; he himself accompanied us there and wished to bring back from it a notable relic, today preserved in the chapel of the Crib at the Prado, with a large picture of the saint, likewise brought back from the Eternal City.

He also had a predilection for St Cajetan of Thiene, founder of an order of poor priests, living on alms and exercising the holy ministry free of charge, without demanding other recompense than what the faithful would offer spontaneously. One day when I had gone to him and he had his breviary in his hand, he said to me: “Little one, just read this passage.” And I read aloud the first sentence of the fifth lesson of the office of St Cajetan. I translated the passage for him, but he wanted something else: “What do you think, my child,” he added, “of this manner of living?” And he took up each of the principal points of the sentence. I answered him that all that seemed to me very conformable to the Gospel. He did not insist further. That was his great and broad manner of acting. He contented himself with drawing attention to the substance of the doctrine, with casting the seed, with exciting good will, persuaded that the grace of God would do the rest in time.

The Present Necessity for the Priest to Bear This Distinctive Character

This real poverty Father Chevrier had put at the base of his ideas on the priesthood. It seemed to him necessary to destroy the present prejudices of people of the world who regard religion as a religion of money.

> *“How are these bad impressions to be destroyed in the hearts of the peoples?” he writes in his True Disciple; “how to make confidence and respect for the priest be reborn there? It will be by detachment and poverty, it will be by putting into practice this counsel of perfection given by Our Lord: Freely have you received, freely give. [Matt. x, 8.] The poorer and more disinterested we are, the less exacting, the more access we shall have to the people, the more we shall be loved by them, and the easier good will be for us.”*

He grew enthusiastic in thinking of the holy independence which this beautiful poverty would give priests and of the strength they would draw from it to fight against the vices of this world, which thinks only of money.

> *“It is in poverty,” he said, “that the priest finds his strength, his power and his liberty. What can be done against a poor and detached priest? Today more than ever one must be poor to fight against the world, against earthly enjoyments, luxury and well-being, which are taking on a prodigious growth everywhere. The priest must not follow the world, he must go before it and be its master to stop it and lead it. If the priest does like the world, how will he be able to lead and instruct it? Luxury and well-being today are ruining the world; it is for us to act otherwise and to give the world examples quite opposed to its own. The more the world loves luxury and riches, the more we must love poverty. The more the world loves well-being and softness, the more we must shine by mortification and penance, charity and devotedness. The world must see our works, we must carry it along, astonish it by our words and above all by our examples.*

"The priest is the ornament of the house of God, it is he who must be its wealth and glory. A poor and holy priest, in a wooden church, is more pleasing to God, more useful to the faithful than an ordinary priest in a church of gold; what converts sinners is not rich, exterior things; these on the contrary serve only to excite their curiosity and jealousy. It is a great error to believe that one attracts by this exterior splendour; one may excite curiosity, but if one thinks to produce grace one is mistaken. If luxury, well-being and all these exterior things had been necessary, Our Lord Jesus Christ would have employed them; but no, He rejected them far from Him. He had for a house only a stable, for bed only a little straw; He had to die on only a rough cross, and He said: And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself. [John xii, 32.] The poor and bloodstained cross drew the world. Poverty and suffering will therefore attract more than all the pomp and all the exterior beauties of the world. An ounce of holiness and poverty is worth more than all the splendour of the world.

"Not that one should condemn exterior worship, since the Church asks it and since, being composed of a body and a soul, we are helped by exterior things to arrive at God. But let us not give way to this passion which exists in our day. Let us not go seeking money in the world, losing our time in drawing-rooms, in visits to the great. All these money-seekers do not do the work of the good God, and above all a priest must not lose his time at a thing so harmful to him and to others. Luxury and riches, in a religious or a priest, are the scandal of the peoples, the ruin of souls, a source of temptations for themselves and the greatest obstacle to salvation, for themselves and for others.

"In our day the passion for building seems to invade all priests, those above all who are at the head of religious establishments or parishes. All want to enlarge their church, their presbytery, their boarding school; then what happens? It is that they must leave the spiritual work, the work of souls, to busy themselves only with the material work: the stones, the walls, the pulpits, the altars, and they are obliged to leave catechism, prayer, confession, the work of souls. The apostles had said: We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. [Acts vi, 4.] One must therefore leave exterior things, except in case of necessity, to busy oneself only with the things of God; that is the principal affair of the priest. How much time lost for God, for souls, for one's own sanctification! The more we resemble the poor, the freer our soul will be to raise itself to God. Poverty keeps us in humility, gentleness, confidence, prayer, toward God and toward men."

The Father taught that the strength of religion, the power of the saints, is in poverty, abnegation, sacrifice, renunciation. "As long as we do not have that," he said, "we shall have nothing stable, solid, in the matter of virtue." One of his axioms was that the priest must always, in the face of the people, bear on his person the characters of the poverty and sufferings of Our Lord.

In his intimate meetings he often spoke to us of the exercise of the holy ministry in poor parishes. He liked to describe to us the arrival of a priest, animated by his ideas, in one of these parishes.

"My children," he said, "how edifying it would be for the faithful to see arrive in their midst a priest having furniture like the poor of the parish! What a great subject of edification if he were seen buying two trestles, three planks, a little straw to make his bed! How much good that priest would do if, by his devotedness, he made his parishioners touch with the finger that he has resources only for the poor, health and life only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls! Oh! my children," the Father would cry out in his great charity, "we must not criticize the good parish priests who do not live as poorly as I say; they are not obliged to. I speak for ourselves, who have a particular vocation, and if we wish to convert souls, we must astonish them by our poor and truly evangelical life!"

He returned unceasingly to a virtue which he esteemed as one of the most efficacious means of bringing populations back to God.

Praise of the Poor Priest:

"How beautiful he is, this man of God whose feet scarcely touch the earth! Quam pulchri pedes evangelizantium pacem, evangelizantium bona! [How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things! Rom. x, 15.] How beautiful are the feet of those who evangelize peace, who evangelize good! Neither hands, nor heart, nor head touch the earth, and his very feet are beautiful because they only brush the earth!

"What liberty, what power this holy and beautiful poverty of Jesus Christ gives the priest! What strength he acquires to fight against the vices of the world! What an example he is for the world! this world which works only for money, thinks only of money, lives only for money! And beside this material, sensual world, a man wholly spiritual, who does not live for the earth, who despises money and the goods of here below, who wants none of these things of earth and who says to the world: Keep your gold and your silver, my treasure is in heaven, my life is Jesus Christ; who gives to whoever asks of him, who is content with the strict necessary, who asks nothing of anyone, who works for God alone, who does not quarrel either over his robe or over his cloak, who lets his cloak be carried off by him who wishes to take it and does not ask back what has been taken from him, and who abandons himself into the hands of divine Providence.

"How beautiful, how great, how admirable he is, this man! And how the world must turn round on seeing him and admire in him the power of faith, of love and of confidence in God! Where are they, these men? They will do admirable things, says Wisdom. [Cf. Ecclus. xxxi, 9–11.]

"O Poverty, how beautiful you are! Jesus Christ my Master finds you so beautiful that He wished to espouse you in coming down from heaven, that He made you the companion of His life and wished to die with you on the cross.

"Give me, O my Master, this beautiful poverty: let me seek it with solicitude, take it with faith, embrace it with love, to make it the companion of all my life, like St Francis, my father, the true poor man of Jesus Christ, and let me die with it on a piece of wood, like my Master!"

Hoc fac et vives. [Do this and thou shalt live. Luke x, 28.]

Mgr Faugier, in the *Revue de l'Université catholique* (July 1891), writes on the subject of this praise of poverty: "A veritable dithyramb in honour of the dearest virtue of our holy priest. One would say a page of the *Fioretti*, one of those flaming canticles whose air Brother Pacifico had composed and which the Poor Man of Assisi went about repeating along all the roads of Umbria." Speaking of Father Chevrier's priestly ideal, he says again: "It seems to us that this ideal of the priest's life would have been applauded by all the great masters of the clerical life, the Charles Borromeos, the Philip Neris, the Vincent de Pauls, the Oliers. Would to God that a great number realize it, as Father Chevrier realized it himself until his death!"

How the Ven. Father Chevrier Realized This Ideal of Poverty. At Saint-André

Struck by the grandeur of the destitution of Our Lord in the mystery of the crib, and by the force of His teachings on the obligation of renouncing what one possesses in order to be His disciple; struck also by the conduct of the saints in regard to this virtue and by its efficacy in making the ministry fruitful among souls, Father Chevrier resolved to renounce entirely the goods of earth and at once set himself to keep his resolution.

The feast of Christmas 1856 was for him a date for ever memorable, which was to decide his whole life. He was before the crib of the little Jesus and was meditating the word of the Gospel: *The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.* Suddenly a particular brightness invaded his mind and warmed his heart. Jesus made him understand the depth of His abasement among men, made him share His love of humiliation and poverty. He spent the night savouring thus the sweet inspirations of grace. Blessed night, fruitful night, which was the cause and the date of his extraordinary vocation. He called this moment that of his conversion. "It is the mystery of the Incarnation that converted me," he said. By that he meant the settled resolution to abandon everything to follow Jesus Christ in devotedness to souls and in poverty. The memory of this meditation remained so vivid in his soul that he could not speak of the Mystery of the Incarnation without a communicative emotion.

I remember that he said to us once, at recreation, while we were grouped around him: "My children, you must love well the poverty of the Prado, because it is to it that you owe being fed and being able to aspire to the priesthood." And he added that it was by meditating on the Incarnation, before the crib of the Child Jesus, that he had decided to practise the strictest poverty. "I said to myself," he continued: "The Son of God came

down on earth to save men and convert sinners. And yet, what do we see? How many sinners there are in the world! Men continue to damn themselves! Then I decided to follow Our Lord Jesus Christ more closely, to make myself more capable of working efficaciously for the salvation of souls, and my desire is that you yourselves also follow Our Lord closely."

So as not to act on his own in so grave a matter, Father Chevrier made, shortly after, a journey to Ars and communicated to the holy Curé what Our Lord was making him feel interiorly:

> *"I have constantly present to my memory this word of the Gospel: If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me. [Matt. xix, 21.] It seems to me that God calls me to this life of poverty, and yet I should not wish to renounce the parochial ministry, where I believe it is easier to do good, more than anywhere; otherwise I should not hesitate to enter a religious order."*

The holy Curé encouraged him in this way of perfection, told him that these inspirations came from heaven, that he would meet many difficulties but that, if he had courage and perseverance, he would reap an abundant harvest of souls. Encouraged by the authority of a man whom the whole world venerated, the Abbé Chevrier decided to go resolutely forward. To begin with, he wished to enter effectively and practically on the way of renunciation and poverty. From then on he stripped himself little by little of various objects he judged useless. He found too fine the desk and the table in his room and proposed to exchange them for a desk and a table of white wood, hewn with the axe. It required the direct intervention of the parish priest to prevent this bargain, which was almost concluded with a neighbouring carpenter; but it was only a delay. When, some months later, he left the parish of Saint-André, his first care was to carry out the bargain concluded with the worthy carpenter.

A circumstance, in appearance fortuitous and insignificant, made known to him the way he was to walk first, to prepare himself for his definitive vocation. Some months after the floods of La Guillotière, having made in company with the Abbé Giraudier, his friend, a visit to the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus, which was then under construction, Father Chevrier was enthusiastic over what he saw and heard. When he came back, he spoke of M. Rambaud as of a new John in the desert. "I have seen," he said, "a young man of brilliant future who has left everything, who has taken a poor man's habit to put himself at the service of the poor. That is an example, oh! yes, that is an example!" He insisted on this word with so much conviction, and made such a praise of poverty and of the power it gives to reach the heart of the people, that his confreres said among themselves: "We shall not keep him much longer, his favourite virtue is going to take him from us." And in fact, a few days after his return from Ars, where he had consulted the holy Curé, he left his poor room at Saint-André in order to find one still poorer.

At the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus

The duration of his stay at the Cité was four years, which he employed in evangelizing the poor and above all the children. There he was free and he used his freedom to practise poverty fully. Here is an extract from the rule he proposed to follow, towards the end of 1857:

> *"Jesus was poor, He was born in a crib, on straw; He says Himself that the birds have their nests, the foxes their dens, but that the Son of Man has not where to lay His head. Jesus, having no money to pay the tribute, asks for it from the fishes of the sea; His disciples, being hungry, eat the ears of corn they find in a field. Jesus died on the cross stripped of all His garments.*
>
> *"Jesus says to His apostles: Possess neither gold nor silver, nor two coats; and in the holy Eucharist He clothes Himself with the poorest appearances; He dwells in the poorest sanctuaries, He comes into hearts still poorer and more unworthy. For Him, it is true, gold is as poor as straw; but ill-prepared hearts, that is the real misery!*
>
> *"Could not the priest exercising the ministry practise the evangelical counsels? Would his situation be incompatible with the intentions of the divine Master?*

"To conform myself to the poverty of Jesus Christ, my model, I renounce the possession of all the goods of earth, abandoning myself to Providence who feeds her children, and leaving to M. Rambaud the care of furnishing me with all that shall be necessary for me. I give up to him my almoner's salary and the money of my Masses, so that I possess nothing of my own. I regard him as my procurator, that is, as St Joseph with regard to the Child Jesus. I rely upon him for all that concerns lodging, clothing, food, asking of him only the necessary in everything.

"As for the indispensable small expenses, such as postage stamps, the penny for the poor in the streets or that for crossing the bridges, I shall ask him each month for a small sum. Thus disengaged from all material embarrassment, I shall have to busy myself only with God and the holy ministry: Nos vero orationi et ministerio verbi instantes erimus. [But we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. Acts vi, 4.] A priest ought to think of nothing else. Jesus had given up His purse, first to St Joseph, then to Judas; the apostles, after Him, entrusted to deacons the care of the poor and the goods of the Church.

"To conform myself more to the voluntary poverty of Jesus, I renounce all that savours of refinement in clothing, lodging, furnishing and food. In my cell there will be neither tapestry, nor pictures, nor furniture of precious wood, nor armchairs, nor anything that savours of luxury and well-being. On entering my room one must not be able to say: There is something beautiful or pretty! on the contrary, everything must breathe the poverty and simplicity of the crib.

"My desk, my table and my bookshelves will be of unvarnished pine, of the commonest form. My bed will be quite simply, like that of the poor, a straw mattress on a pine plank.

"I shall wear a cassock of coarse cloth. Sometimes luxury and vanity would make of this robe a narrow garment resembling the clothes of worldlings. I shall keep to the true and ancient form: my cassock will be wide in sleeves and body. Instead of a silk sash, I shall ask to be permitted to return to the primitive cord, more conformable to poverty and expressing better the spiritual meaning. I shall wear neither overcoat [Fr. douillette], nor velvet skullcap, nor gilded breviary, nor cloak; the poor have none. I shall approach as nearly as possible to the exterior of the Capuchins, while keeping however the black costume of the secular clergy.

"May only these exterior signs correspond in me to a true interior poverty! May my poverty resemble in everything that of Jesus Christ!"

Father Chevrier was not a man to form resolutions only on paper; he firmly wished to put them fully into practice. He realized therefore to the best of his power this hard, poor, austere, penitential life, all of devotedness.

Entrance into the Franciscan Third Order. He admired in St Francis his poverty and simplicity, his detachment and penance, above all his great love for Our Lord and for the holy Gospel taken to the letter. So he took advantage of the stay he made at Rome with M. Rambaud to enter officially into the Third Order, whose Rule he had practised since his arrival at the Cité. On 9 January 1859, in the interior chapel of the convent of the Capuchins in the Piazza Barberini, the Rev. Father Alphonse, Procurator General, gave him the habit with the name of Francis Mary. The Rev. Father Bruno, who had warmly encouraged him, assisted at the ceremony and, as secretary to the Procurator, countersigned the certificate of clothing.

Foundation of the Prado, House of Poverty. Poverty in Lodging

This poverty, already so great, became still greater at the Prado. The Servant of God, says M. Broche, wished poverty to be truly the proper virtue of his house. The premises he chose to establish his Work are of the most extreme poverty. I know many religious houses, charitable works; none of them approaches the poverty of the Prado; Father Chevrier's room, in particular, is of a poverty which astonishes and edifies still more. It is not the ordinary poverty of convents, it is the poverty of peasant and workmen's dwellings. One sees doors as in the country, chairs as in the homes of peasants and workmen. It is not an artificial poverty, imposed by a will of religion, but a poverty heroically undergone by the force of things: one has not, one possesses not, hence one is poor in dress, food, bedding, furnishing. It is the poverty of the Prado, as was the poverty of Father Chevrier, real, effective poverty, come from reality.

Before the foundation of the Prado he had already given it his affection, but afterwards he lived constantly in its company. He loved poverty as people of the world love and seek riches. He kept it with more care than the miser watches over his treasure; his eye was ill at ease where it did not meet the austere poverty which, from the Crib to Calvary, so faithfully accompanied Our Lord. When he was installed at the Prado, in his poor shack, as he called it, he was content to find himself in a place which breathed, even better than at the Cité, the poverty of the Crib. “Oh! how lovable poverty is!” he said. “The more a house resembles the stable of Bethlehem, the better one finds Jesus in it.”

Having come to see one of his Sisters who was for a few days in a religious house, he was shown into the reception parlour; it was very beautiful, adorned with fine paintings, the furnishing was blue. “Oh! my child,” he cried, when he was alone with the Sister, “may the good God preserve us from such things! Better for me to be a shoe-black at a street corner, and for you to lead cows to the field.” I cannot say, she added, the expression of pain that was painted on his face on seeing this luxury.

When he bought the Prado it was a veritable hovel, and he had only the indispensable repairs made to consolidate it and make it habitable. I heard him many times express his sadness that future restoration works would perhaps make him lose a little of its stamp of poverty.

He feared that, for convenience, large, quite regular rooms would be made. A person having offered to bear the cost of a complete restoration of the house, he refused. According to his instructions the walls were to be simply plastered, without any ornamentation. His lodging was as simple as can be imagined, as one may see by visiting his room: no tapestry, no gilding, an austere cleanliness excluding too delicate a whiteness, no useless ornaments but rustic furniture.

“A religious, a priest,” he said, “must not lose his time in frivolities, nor put too much care, too much refinement, too much perfection into the upkeep of his house; before all he owes himself to God and to souls, he must therefore reject as unworthy of him whatever would be of a nature to turn his attention from this double duty, sacred for him, or to absorb precious time. One must go to what is most pressing, as Jesus Christ gives us the example at Bethlehem, at Nazareth, and throughout His public life.”

From the moment the Father founded the Prado, he could not bear well-being there. He wanted neither tapestry, nor armchairs, nor elegant tables or bookcases, nor anything that bears the stamp of luxury, even in objects of piety. He wanted a poor lodging, walls plastered with mortar or roughly whitewashed, quite ordinary chairs or better little crates, beds composed of two trestles, three planks, a straw mattress and a few grey blankets. Once a priest bought some blankets of white wool. The Father was vexed at it, nevertheless he kept them because he respected this priest and feared to hurt him; he was not one of his own priests, otherwise he would have acted with more freedom and would not have allowed them to be kept. The cupboards, tables, bookshelves were to be of pine, and a large Christ the principal ornament of the dwelling. That is the kind of cell he cherished, the stamp of poverty he liked to find in all the corners of his house.

The novelties and improvements which managed to be introduced without his knowledge did not remain there long, as soon as his vigilant eye had discovered them. When he had the Sisters’ house built, the workmen had made the windows all alike. The Father did not accept them so; he had a row of bricks put in to reduce those that gave on the courtyard. When the Father’s first room was being prepared, the person who had taken charge of the expenses thought she could have a quite simple chimney put in. They were busy placing it when the Father came to see the repairs; scandalized at such luxury, he took a hammer and demolished it. He accepted only a flue. At Limonest his room was papered, because it was so when the house was bought; he often said: “Take this paper out of there!” He left it, nevertheless, so as not to hurt the persons who had given him the property.

He had a horror of luxury, and even of simple refinement, in food, clothing and furnishing. One day he had ordered curtains made for his room; finding them too well made, he had them removed. That is how he was

accustomed to act each time he found too much refinement in anything. He watched with care over the maintenance of the poverty of his house down to the smallest details. Thus, being away from the Prado while the new parlour was being fitted up, he wrote: “You will have the windows painted the same colour as the great door.” It was a dark colour.

On 8 September 1874 he wished to choose himself the most retired place in the Sisters’ house to realize the desire he had formed of making a little novitiate. He went up to the attic, fixed the place that was to serve as dormitory, kitchen, refectory, and traced himself the limits of a little cell for the mistress of novices. Below, he took from the children’s dormitory to make a room for study and work. The workmen began at once an outside staircase which was to make this little novitiate independent. The Father rejoiced at the thought that he could form truly religious souls such as he desired. On 24 October 1874 he opened the novitiate: it was a Saturday, the feast of the Archangel St Raphael.

[A Sister’s deposition:] Everything was ready and to the Father’s taste: the beds were old, of wood, very ugly, not even solid; an old stove, an old table, old benches; our crockery was of yellow earthenware. An old cupboard served us to shut up our food and all our household things. A wretched chest of drawers contained our linen. When we lacked something quite necessary, the Father wished us to ask for it humbly from the Sisters of the Community, or even to say to some people of the world that we needed this or that. The Father had had placed in our workroom a crucifix, a little picture of the Crib on one side and, on the other, one of the Eucharist, without frame, a simple pasteboard image. Poverty was extreme in everything. He said to us one day, looking at a brick-work which had been whitened with plaster: “I do not like this, it is not poor enough. If you understood me, you would take a boxwood broom and fling mortar on these walls.” He said this to us in a tone which impressed us and made us understand how much he loved poverty in the interior of our dwellings.

I heard him say several times that, to learn to strip oneself of the things of earth and practise holy poverty, it would be good to change rooms every month.

> *“The first day one inhabits a room, one is poor, one is content with the necessary. A Christ, a bed, a chair or a crate to sit on, a table that stands more or less on its four legs, a nail to hang one’s hat, two or three books to study, one’s breviary: it seems that is sufficient. One is content, one is poor, one feels at ease, one prays well, one loves the suffering that one does not feel because one lives with the good God, having nothing that hinders this union. One is with Jesus Christ at the Crib; what more can one desire? But, little by little, one adds a nail here, another there, a picture elsewhere, a chair to receive a friend, and in the end, from one thing to another, one arrives at not being too badly off, one has one’s little comforts, one is no longer poor, one is a little bourgeois; one becomes attached to a chair, to a book, one becomes a proprietor. The life of penance has gone with poverty, one no longer prays so well, one is no longer so united to God. By changing rooms, one gets rid of what is useless and contents oneself with the necessary.”*

Such were the good Father’s thoughts and very nearly his words, when he wished to show the advantages of changing rooms often.

The last room he inhabited, and in which he died, is indeed the one he loved best. The little house in which it is situated was built and finished during the years 1869 and 1870. He himself gave the plan; it is according to his tastes. The walls, inside as outside, are roughly plastered with the broom; only the windows have received a coat of dark-coloured paint. One goes up to this room by one of those staircases commonly called a “miller’s ladder”. It is separated from the corridor by a partition of rough pine boards, badly joined, which the Father covered with grey blankets nailed by his own hands. The coarse door, like all those of this little house, was bought second-hand in a demolition yard; the paint it had contrasts with the rough pine wood, blackened by time, which was added by the carpenter. On entering the room everything there breathes poverty and suffering; everything that savours of well-being, comfort, is excluded from it. The walls are roughly plastered with the broom; a few pictures framed in the simplest wood, without glass or colours, two or three chairs of grey straw, a cupboard of pine entirely worm-eaten. I have seen poor households, but I

never saw so poor, so old a cupboard. A table of white pine with a few shelves, likewise of pine, to put his books and notebooks; a prie-dieu of pine above which is a wooden Christ; a bed of rough pine, a straw mattress, two sheets, a few grey blankets; the window curtains are of green or blue glazed cotton [Fr. *lustrine*], faded by time and sun.

In the *True Disciple*, under the article "The necessary in lodging", the Father gives precise and detailed rules on poverty in lodging, such as he desired to see it practised in his house. He always dreaded that on entering his room or the house one might say: "You are comfortable." He also recommended us never to seek this compliment, wherever we might be one day. "It is better that on entering your home it be said, if not aloud at least inwardly: How simple it is, how poor!"

One year, to practise poverty better in heating, he devised putting, between his room and Father Jaricot's, a stove which heated both. He excelled at discovering and annihilating the false pretexts that can cause failings against poverty. "People find," he said, "that it is not sufficient, not solid enough, not clean enough, and a thousand other specious reasons which the love of well-being and comfort shows as decisive; from change to change, one comes to do like the people of the world and to lose the spirit of poverty. One must know how to be content with the necessary in everything; the poor always lack many things." He did not even fear to make expenditures to preserve his virtue of predilection, and himself wrecked a work that was too luxurious, or obliged the masons to change what they had done too well.

At Saint-Fons, reports one of his first Latin students, we made the apprenticeship of the evangelical life, living for a week in a stricter poverty. We had for beds only thin straw mattresses, filled with wheat straw, spread on the floor, with a blanket under which we lay fully dressed. Father Chevrier himself inscribed, in large characters, on the walls of the principal room, the programme of his priestly ideal, which he sent us to meditate on the spot. In the picture of the Crib, at the foot of which is precisely a crib recalling the primitive destination of this dwelling, one reads "Poverty". The Father took good care not to have this crib removed, which recalled that of the stable of Bethlehem, and it is still seen in the same place.

In the chapel too the Father liked to meet the stamp of true poverty. There, as elsewhere, he distrusted all that can attract the eyes. He liked to repeat that the Prado had for mission to represent the mysteries of the Crib and of Calvary, and that consequently it must leave to others the care of representing the mysteries of the Saviour's glory.

> *"The simplicity of the holy place must not be excluded," he said; "there is too much tendency in our day to adorn churches worldlily, to put all one's devotion in exterior things, in pretty ornaments, the profusion of flowers and lights, fine music, sometimes arranging stage effects there. What does piety gain by it? It is alleged, as a pretext, that nothing is beautiful enough for the good God, that nothing is great enough or worthy enough of Him, but it is not said what vanity and self-love reserve for themselves in all that; it is certainly not all for the good God and He does not often derive all the glory from it. The great cathedrals have a character of majesty and severity which is far more in keeping with Christian simplicity and which recalls more the sovereign Majesty of God! With more simplicity, and consequently less superfluous expense in churches, the poor would feel more at home in them. One could perhaps dispense with making them pay for their place; that would be preferable, and devotion, instead of losing, would doubtless gain by it.*
>
> *"One must go to church to adore, pray and recollect oneself, and not to take a recreation or find distractions there! It is not for me to appraise or judge what is done in the great churches; I speak of what concerns us and what suits us, who are poor and must busy ourselves with the poor. And how much time lost in all these decorations! we have no right to waste our time! It is not piety that fills the churches on certain days, it is curiosity, and it must not be so.*
>
> *"How simple everything was in the catacombs! How much more solid faith and piety were; so the Christians of that time had more austere morals and a simpler life. God seeks adorers in spirit and in truth. [John iv, 23.] Let us take good care not to confuse the accessory with the essential and the principal; the exterior presupposes faith, charity, but does not give them."*

No doubt he was of opinion that altars might be adorned more or less according to the solemnity of the feasts, on condition however that one avoid making the altar a "jumble" [Fr. *fouillis*], that was his expression, by overloading it with ornamentation. This luxury does not suffice for the sanctification of a feast; all this exterior brilliance is nothing without piety, without devotion of the heart, and he often repeated to us, commenting on it, this word of our Holy Books: *Omnis gloria ab intus* [All the glory of the king's daughter is within. Ps. xliv, 14], all glory, all true beauty is within. The good God has no need of our chandeliers and our lights, it is our heart He wants.

And Father Chevrier writes in the *True Disciple*:

> *The most beautiful ornament of a church is the priest. The most beautiful chandelier of a church is the priest. The most beautiful bell of a church is the priest. The most beautiful furnishing of a church is the priest. Put a holy priest in a wooden church, open to all the winds; he will attract and convert more people in his wooden church than another priest in a church of gold. It is the priest who gives life, and it is neither the stones, nor the chalices, nor the ornaments, nor the chandeliers, nor the fine altars, nor the fine pulpits that convert; they attract by curiosity, they do not convert and do not heal. And today, nevertheless, people work far more to make fine churches, fine presbyteries, than to make saints. It is that it is easier to make a fine church than to make a saint. One will never be able to replace holiness by the most beautiful exterior things.*
>
> *"Let us not attach ourselves then to all that. Let us use it, but without giving it too much importance, and let us not put the accessory before the principal, the stones before virtue, the ornaments before holiness. Martha, Martha, sollicita es et turbaris erga plurima." [Martha, Martha, thou art careful and art troubled about many things. Luke x, 41.]*

As much as he held to cleanliness and order in the objects of worship, so much did he seek to remove from them the glitter, the tinsel, all that is fit only to flatter vanity and curiosity and to awaken the jealousy of the faithful. I often noticed the pain he felt in seeing altars too richly adorned, or in vesting in too fine ornaments for the offices. "It is no use saying that it is for the good God," he said; "our poor nature always finds its share in it."

Gilded trimmings did not please him. Thus he scattered gilded ears of wheat in the midst of other natural, dried ears which had been made into a decoration for Holy Thursday. Gilded candelabra had been given; the Father had them sold, for he did not want what could excite the curiosity of the faithful or the jealousy of the poor. He found too beautiful a magnificent carpet on which the body of the Curé of Ars had been laid out and which was offered him. "It will be sold for the poor," he said, "it is too beautiful for us." He did not like too much embroidery on albs. He wanted surplices of coarse linen, little starched; he permitted only a few pleats so that they could be folded. He gave his preference to candelabra and candlesticks of wood. Quite simple glass cruets were those he preferred; he did not long suffer those which savoured of refinement.

However, if his tastes of simplicity made him reject the pretty and the showy, it was not the same with the truly beautiful and precious, provided that this beauty were simple in form; thus he accepted with pleasure a chalice whose cup was entirely of gold, but little worked and of simple appearance.

He said: "One may have beautiful things, but simple ones. For God, gold is as poor as straw." And he repeated with joy this saying of a Sovereign Pontiff: "Chalice of wood, priest of gold." [A proverbial saying, attributed here only to an unnamed Pope.] He said again: "Jesus built nothing, He made apostles."

Poverty in Clothing

> *"To enter into the spirit of poverty of Our Lord, we must be content with the necessary in clothing, as St Paul says [1 Tim. vi, 8], and not make of it an occasion of vanity or self-love. To be content with a poor and simple stuff, to put no refinement into the cut, to avoid all that savours of fineness, taste, elaboration, beauty, elegance; all that is useless and serves only to content self-love and to please men."*

These rules, given in his *True Disciple*, the Father faithfully followed. He wore a cassock of serge cloth, ample, without train and without pronounced waist. He would have no narrow, elegant cassock of fine stuff. “Amplitude,” he said, “simplicity and a coarse stuff ought to be the fashion among friends of true poverty.” A woollen sash without fringes, a cloak with sleeves reaching to the knees or a *camail* [short hooded cape] of the same stuff as the cassock, a plain hat, ordinary shoes, a tunic of brown wool according to the rule of St Francis: such was the Father’s dress. He detested watch-chains, trinkets or knick-knacks [Fr. *brimborions*] put in evidence, even exterior objects of devotion; in a word, everything that had some appearance of vanity. He did not permit his seminarians to wear watch-chains and all the little useless ornaments, recommending to them unceasingly evangelical simplicity, modesty and poverty.

Mesdemoiselles Bonnard and Mercier having proposed to buy him a cassock because his was no longer capable of mending, he would not leave it to them to choose the stuff and insisted on choosing the cloth himself at their supplier’s. Father Chevrier wore coarse clothes, mended but very clean; he took great care of his things, everything was always in good order. Poverty led him to take care of his clothes and of all the objects for his use and to make them last as long as possible: “Provided it covers me, provided it holds together, that is all that is needed; it can last still longer, let us keep it.” He would bear on him neither stain nor tear, and when he noticed this disorder in his children he reproved them. He wished one to be clothed simply, but cleanly and suitably.

Once a pupil asked a garment of the linen Sister, who gave him one, but a little out of fashion. The child tore it and returned it without putting it on. The Father, informed of this, punished the culprit and said: “This child will not stay in the house, he will not persevere.” In fact, soon after, he returned to the world. It was said to the Father, on this subject, that perhaps it had been wrong to let him know of this fact; he answered: “I must always be told these things because it is serious.”

He taught us poverty down to the small details. One day when it was very windy he was going to Saint-Fons. He went in to the Sisters and gave one of them his hat, that strings might be put on it. When it was returned to him, he put on a vexed air because silk laces had been put on it. He required at once that they be replaced by cotton ones. He watched over the poverty of the house like a miser over his treasure and was even a little severe for failings against this virtue. One day, on the occasion of the superior’s feast, the Sisters offered him some fine merino cloth to make a *camail*; the Father, perceiving it, had the stuff returned and had coarse *escot* [a coarse woollen serge] brought for the *camail*. “The preference given to a finer, more delicate stuff is often disguised under a pretext of solidity,” he said. “The good God did not make things unwearable. Well! when the clothes are worn out, we shall replace them. Providence will provide. For ourselves, let us keep simplicity and poverty. Let us not imitate the people of the world who attach so great importance to the choice of stuffs and find in it food for their vanity, for their desire to please and to appear.”

Poverty in Food

The Father was sober and simple at meals. He wanted ordinary food, sufficiently abundant for the appetite and needs of each, but very simple and devoid of those thousand little devices used among worldlings and solely intended to flatter taste and gluttony; simplicity in the preparation of the cooking, simplicity also in the service of the table.

> *“It would be desirable,” he said, “that we could, after the example of a number of poor people and workmen, take our food on our knees; how simplified this exercise would be and how much less time it would take! See the traveller, seated at the roadside, on a heap of stones or in the shade of a tree, his provisions in a little bag or in a paper; with what appetite he takes his modest meal, to continue his road afterwards; the cover is soon laid, and the dishes quickly in order. That is what pleases me, that is what we ought to be able to do! Are we not the humble servants and workmen of the good God, living in the midst of the poor and bound to share their habits?*

"How regrettable, on the contrary, to see the importance attached to this exercise of meals. A priest would think he lacked dignity if he did not have himself served, often like a bourgeois, if he had not a tablecloth on his table and an irreproachable cover, as if his dignity consisted in these exterior things! Dignity is in character and holiness, in austerity and simplicity, in the practice of those virtues of which Jesus Christ gave us the example, by choosing and practising them Himself. The peoples will never be ill-edified at seeing a priest adopt for himself the usages and principles of his Master and make them the rule of his conduct. True dignity consists therefore in following Jesus Christ and reproducing the examples He has given us. This is, besides, His pressing invitation: I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done, and He had just washed the feet of His apostles, consequently performed the action of servants and slaves. [John xiii, 15.] Jesus Christ knew well what He did and what He said, and He did not wish to compromise the dignity of His apostles. How edifying, on the contrary, to see a priest simplify an action which is in short wholly animal, and not be preoccupied with it nor attach to it the importance that people of the world put on it. It happened at times to the apostles, when they followed Our Lord, to rub ears of corn in their hands and eat them along the way to appease their hunger; they must doubtless have received counsels from their divine Master on this manner of acting and profited by His lessons." [Cf. Luke vi, 1.]

In the *True Disciple* the Father indicates the conditions food must meet: cleanliness, quantity, simplicity; exactness for the cooks and quality for the sick. He also gives the rules to be observed at meals: to eat in haste and without ceremony, not to eat between meals without necessity, to avoid dining out, to renounce all that is not necessary and serves only to flatter the palate, such as delicate dishes, fine wines, liqueurs, coffee, sweets, rare and refined things. These things ought to be used only in case of real necessity or out of propriety with strangers, so as not to appear ridiculous or wiser than they, and with great moderation.

Food seasoned like that of the poor was what he preferred, and when his fatigues took him out of the regime of the community and forced him to accept something more delicate, he was profoundly humiliated by it. Being at the retreat at Saint-Fons, I was strongly reprimanded for having put too much butter in the soup and added Gruyère cheese to it: "One must simplify things, my child; you will eat your soup on your knees to remember it another time."

He writes in his *True Disciple*:

"We shall remove from the table all that savours of luxury, good cheer, gluttony. The table utensils will be of iron or ordinary metal, never of gold or silver nor silver-plated. The plates and dishes of earthenware or faience and not of porcelain. The table will be plain, clean, without cloth or ornament, except on the days when we receive a bishop at our table and the day of First Communion.

"Wine and water will be served as far as possible in earthen jugs and not in bottles. The drink must be a mixture of wine and water prepared in advance. Avoid drinking pure wine."

The Father sometimes sent the Sisters to beg their bread and appeared content with it, calling them afterwards "the good God's little poor women". "You will have to make acts of humility and poverty," he said to one of them. "You will sometimes go and beg your bread, like the real poor."

[A Sister's deposition:] At this I cried out, she relates, saying that I should not dare to ask. The Father said to me: "Why should you not do it? Our Lord did it, I have done it too. You are indeed a poor woman, you are not a marchioness. Well then, you will go first; one must never command something painful which one has not done oneself." "Where shall we begin our quests?" "You will go to Saint-Jean-de-Dieu or to the Capuchin Fathers and elsewhere. And if you are badly received, being told: 'You disturb us, you eat too much, you are always here,' you will have to find yourselves happy and become strong, great souls, who know how to suffer. Do not be of those souls to whom one must always give sweets, who are never capable of eating a piece of dry bread, who cry for nothing." One day we set out then to beg at Saint-Jean-de-Dieu. We were recognized as Sisters of the Prado, we were very well received and were even given ten francs. The Father was not pleased with that. He wanted a quest of humility, he wanted us to undergo rebuffs like the poor. Another time we went to the Capuchin Fathers, in another costume, to eat soup in the midst of a crowd of poor. The Father was content, he said: "That is how it is done."

Monthly retreats. His habit was to pass that day in a corner of a church and then to beg his food; happy he was when he passed unknown and received only dry bread.

"One day," relates a person, "a well-dressed young man presents himself at my door and asks for something to eat. My maid announces him to me, and I, precisely because of the young man's good appearance, believe it a mistake and have it answered that my house is not an inn and that there are hotels farther on. The petitioner withdraws. Some days after, I meet the Father, who says to me: 'You refused me the alms of a piece of bread, yet I was very hungry.' 'I?' I cried, 'I never refused you anything.' 'Pardon, search your memory.' 'It is true,' I resumed after a moment, 'that I refused a young man last week, but he did not look at all wretched.' 'One is wrong to trust appearances,' he replied; 'that young man was with me, we were making a retreat together, and I assure you that we were both very hungry; while he was asking you for that piece of bread which you refused him, I was waiting for him in the street in order to share it with him.'"

"During the retreats at Saint-Fons," writes one of his first Latin students, "about ten in the morning the Father sent us two by two to beg our food. The rule was to present ourselves as poor men at the door of the houses designated, and it was forbidden to sit down there, unless formally ordered by the persons. I remember that I was not very proud with my beaten-iron pot on the road to Vienne. On the return, all the alms had to be deposited near the Crib and offered to the little Jesus."

At the presbytery of the Moulin-à-Vent the Father lived on the spontaneous alms of the faithful. "You see, one is very happy when one has nothing; one has no fear, one leaves the house open, and when I come in, instead of having robbed me, someone has brought me something," he would relate with a smile.

Poverty in Goods

> *"The ministry of the priest is a wholly spiritual ministry, we read in his True Disciple. When Our Lord sends His apostles, He does not send them to busy themselves with the world, to work, build, trade, but He sends them to preach and heal; those are the two great missions that Jesus Christ entrusts to them. As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. [John xx, 21.]*
>
> *"The apostles, who had received the teachings of the Saviour, give us the example of this mission, as we see in the Acts of the Apostles. Regarding the care of the poor as an occupation which absorbed them too much and took time that ought to be employed wholly on the spiritual, they established deacons to take care of the poor and they kept for themselves prayer and preaching, as being their sole and true occupation: Nos vero orationi et ministerio verbi instantes erimus. (Acts vi, 4.)*
>
> *"St Paul says it formally in one of his epistles to Timothy: No man, being a soldier to God, entangleth himself with secular businesses, that he may please him to whom he hath engaged himself. (2 Tim. ii, 4.)*
>
> *"This conduct of the apostles and of St Paul must regulate ours, and forbid us every occupation foreign to the holy ministry.*
>
> *"One must therefore not entangle oneself in temporal affairs, that is, one must leave aside every occupation with goods, lands, cultivation, business, sale, purchase, trade; all that savours of commerce or is done to earn money, all that puts one in relation with men of business. These things must be left to laymen; priests must not touch them even with the tips of their fingers. Good laymen must be employed for everything concerning temporal affairs."*

"It is so tedious for priests," he said again, "to go into banks, into credit establishments; one passes for a great *rentier*, a good bourgeois, a clever financier, not to speak of the double danger to which one is exposed: either of taking a liking to riches, of attaching oneself to money, or of being exploited; all that is much to be regretted, and must be avoided as far as possible and as far as prudence allows. One should submit to it only if one cannot free oneself of it without compromising the good of the poor, the interest of the works of God, for it is a real servitude."

It is seen that his dominant thought was to protect the dignity of the priest and the holiness of his ministry, and to withdraw him from all that could touch his sacred character of supernatural man, expose him to avarice, diminish his spiritual influence, occupy his mind and heart too actively with earthly interests and cast him into material embarrassments. People in the world are so convinced that the priest is a man of money that he was concerned to make disappear even the appearances which can lend credit to such a reputation.

> *"To observe this rule of poverty, we propose first of all to busy ourselves only with the works of God, and to put the work of God before everything. The priest who gives the world spiritual life has no need to occupy himself with temporal things; God will send them to him and beyond. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all the rest shall be added unto you. Let us seek God and not worry about the rest; let us live poorly and in charity and we shall become far too rich.*
>
> *"Money, what is it? It is dust. When Our Lord sent His apostles two by two, without money, did He attach importance to the things of earth?*
>
> *"If we give two farthings' worth of spiritual life [Fr. pour deux liards de vie spirituelle—a liard was a very small old coin; i.e. even the least bit], the good God will give us a hundredfold; let us not worry about the things of earth. The workman is worthy of his hire. If we work for the good God, the good God will know how to pay us."*

I often heard him quote these words of the Gospel: If thou wilt be perfect, sell what thou hast, give the price to the poor, then come and follow me.

> *"It is again to conform ourselves to this spirit of poverty and of distance from all that savours of the world that we possess neither lands, nor goods, nor houses, apart from the houses we inhabit. We shall see to it that we possess only the necessary in the matter of dwelling, house, yard, garden, in proportion to the number of persons, so as not to have to busy ourselves with cultivation, farm, workmen, domestics or tenant farmers. All these things always bring with them many inconveniences and embarrassments and are opposed to evangelical poverty, to exterior poverty, so necessary in our day."*

Father Chevrier did not regard himself as the owner of the Prado, and a thing that pained him was when he received a letter addressed: *To Father Chevrier, proprietor*. "If the good God made the Prado," he said, "it is certainly not to give me a property of a hundred thousand francs, since I never asked Him for anything but poverty for my portion!"

Father Chevrier rests the future of the Work of the Prado on alms, but alms merited by the spiritual life communicated and given to souls by its members, by its priests, who must be men of God, apostles, astonishing the world by their poverty, their charity and their devotedness.

"Poverty," he said, "maintains in humility and confidence in God. Riches and treasures ruin houses, poverty preserves them and keeps them in vigour and charity." So he did not at all desire fixed revenues. He even made us this confidence one day: "I was offered to endow the house with a rather considerable sum to constitute a capital for us and assure us a certain income. After reflecting and praying for some days, I refused, to avoid the reef, the danger to which riches expose, and to withdraw ourselves from the embarrassment and the divers preoccupations that the administration of a capital entails; I did not wish to accept these proposals which were made me by various persons; I preferred to reckon only with God and on God alone."

> *"The work of the First Communion will always suffice for itself; if the work of the good God is done as it ought to be, if catechism is well taught, if the spirit of prayer is well preserved, resources will not fail. Moments of straitness may come, but if we persevere in work, prayer and confidence, divine Providence will always send the necessary. Besides, this work is sympathetic; charity and devotedness win hearts, and there will still be found many good persons in the world to support us with their alms and help us to continue this work of the poor, the little and the forsaken.*
>
> *"It is not the same with the apostolic work, that eminent work which is so close to our heart and which is destined for the formation of good and holy priests, true disciples of Jesus Christ, who will consent to lead the*

evangelical and apostolic life in the midst of the world and to take from the virtues and religious spirit all that can be allied with the life of the ministry. Non omnes capiunt verbum istud. [All men take not this word. Matt. xix, 11.] Not all understand this; the importance of this work escapes the greater number. One must already possess a certain dose of piety, of faith, of supernatural spirit to understand it and be disposed to support it by sacrifices and material help.

"'Yet another clerical school,' people generally think in the world! to form priests, but that is not necessary! it is not priests who are lacking, there are enough; and then there are the seminaries!' Yes in one sense, and if one considers simply the priest who quietly and even carefully does the work imposed by the ministry; but priests following the evangelical counsels and truly holy, there are not enough of them, there will never be too many. Up to the present our clerical school has lived, in part, on the funds destined for our poor catechism children; it is the Work of the First Communion that feeds our Latin students; but I hope that one day the Holy Spirit will make some generous souls understand the importance, the necessity, the timeliness of this so apostolic work which responds so well to the needs of the present times, and that He will raise up efficacious devotedness to constitute for it sufficient resources and help us to continue it, develop it and establish it well.

"Therefore, in the future, if you are asked advice on the way in which most good could be done to the Work; if some family, some charitable person expresses to you the desire to make a rather considerable alms to the house, you may accept capital as foundation of scholarships for our pupils, and make known our views, our projects, our hopes on this apostolic Work. But never solicit first; wait till persons ask your advice, or make known to you their intentions or desires; the initiative must be left to the good movement of the Holy Spirit, and then we direct it in that sense according to the occasion. It would be desirable that this Work should come to suffice for itself; it could then develop further. You may assure these good persons that in doing this work they will be agreeable to Our Lord, very useful to the Church, and that their alms will have great merit before the good God."

I spoke to him one day of the Work of the First Communion of the Abbé Roussel. A worldly newspaper had published, under the signature of one of its cleverest editors, a sensational article by which it opened a subscription which in a few days had brought in a very large sum, 300,000 francs, I believe. The good Father told me that he would never employ this means, nor any other of the same nature. He did not blame those who believed they ought to adopt them, but for his own part he preferred to keep to those which had succeeded for him until then: to employ all his strength in making God penetrate the soul of his children and to count on God, who would know well how to send the necessary, according to His promise: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all the rest shall be added unto you."

Such is Father Chevrier's thought on the material future of the Prado. His conduct was in conformity with his thought. He began by doing, then he spoke [cf. Acts i, 1]. *To sustain his Work, he will not use the means, too common in our day, to get money, such as holding lotteries, giving concerts, drawing alms by noisy preaching.*

"We must not draw money," he says, "nor force the world to give it to us; on the contrary, the money we receive must be wholly the money of Providence, and the faithful must give it to us freely, voluntarily, affectionately, spontaneously. We may make our needs known to those who ask us for it but not to those who do not ask us. We may go to the houses of those who invite us, but not to those who do not know us or say nothing to us."

"Do not collections bring with them great inconveniences?" he said. "Must not much time be lost going to one and another; waiting for monsieur, madame, sitting in drawing-rooms, saying many useless words, even sometimes lies, boasting of what one does, and even of what one does not do, relating the troubles one has or has not, hearing flattering words, praises? And one often returns only with the spirit of the world and filled with trifles. In acting thus, is one doing the work of God? And does the good God attach the success of His work to things so vain and so puerile? It will be said that there is much merit in making collections. Yes, no doubt, there are pains, affronts, humiliations. But there is also merit in suffering and in expecting everything from Providence. And are not people of the world often tired of seeing collectors continually at their door? They are often given to only with regret, and people do not fail to blame and criticize these perpetual askers."

Father Chevrier, on his return from Vichy, where his doctor had sent him, in 1875, held a meeting for us and spoke to us of the worldly spirit which is introducing itself everywhere. "People seek luxury too much, and for that one must collect, talk, lose one's time. The children ask for the bread of truth and there is nobody to

break it for them, that is, to teach them catechism. The poor, the sick are not relieved. Ah! it is sad! As for us, let us do the work of God and not let ourselves be taken by this worldly spirit, but combat it by prayer, work and catechism, and not let souls be lost through our fault."

Father Chevrier writes again in his *True Disciple*:

> *"Collectors are often people sacrificed as to the spiritual and as to their vocation.*
>
> *"We may make a collection in church, saying for what motive; each gives what he will. We may put alms-boxes in the chapel; we may go to the door of a church, like the poor, to ask alms. There one is in the ranks of the poor, one disturbs no one, one is truly poor and one receives only what the good God sends us.*
>
> *"We may again, from a spirit of poverty, humility and penance, ask alms for ourselves, as a poor man; that is the quest of the true poor man who asks for bread when he is hungry; it is not forbidden when it is really necessary.*
>
> *"To receive only things conformable to poverty. To receive nothing for oneself in particular, but for the works and the house."*

It is therefore in divine Providence that Father Chevrier trusted, and he was never deceived. Sometimes help was slow in coming; then what did he do? He prayed first, then he worked with greater ardour for the sanctification of souls, finally he humbled himself. To humble himself he made himself a beggar.

Father Chevrier's attitude at the door of the church of La Charité is far more that of the beggar than that of the collector. Every Friday, from eleven to noon, he placed himself in the midst of the poor, at the door of the church of La Charité, a purse in his hand, standing, and sometimes even he knelt. This act of virtue cost Father Chevrier dear. Twice he presented himself at the door of La Charité without having the courage to remain there and hold out his hand; it was only the third time that he could overcome his timidity, but the violence he had to do himself was the cause of his catching jaundice. He confessed that this act had earned him many humiliations and that he had even suffered much from the cold.

They also went to the market with a little cart drawn by a child. Many market-gardeners, knowing it was for the Prado, took pleasure in putting vegetables into the cart without making them pay; and when the city sergeants confiscated milk too much mixed with water, instead of throwing it into the street, they gave it also. Father Chevrier said that, in the beginning, it was above all thanks to the gifts of little people that his Work was able to subsist. The poor were the first benefactors of the Prado. The rich came afterwards and gave generously, like the Magi after the shepherds.

I heard Father Chevrier several times announce humbly in the chapel that we had nothing left, and he invited the assembly to unite their prayers to those of our children to ask for daily bread and urgent help. It was ordinarily at the beginning of the devotion to the Blessed Virgin or to St Joseph, which is held after the community Mass and which he always accompanied with some pious reflections to awaken faith and call attention; or after the Angelus of the evening prayer; more rarely he announced it at the beginning or in the course of his familiar instructions; that depended somewhat on circumstances or on the subject of the preaching. This avowal of our Father, expressed with so much humility and simplicity, always made an impression and was heard by God and men.

It happened to me, while I was a pupil, that being in charge of the sacristy, candles ran short and I could not put any, according to custom, at the various stations of the Way of the Cross. The house's till did not ordinarily bear the expenses of the sacristy; the costs of worship and the upkeep of the chapel were left to the generosity of the faithful. It was a Sunday, the Father was about to begin this exercise, he was in the pulpit, I was kneeling in the usual little corner near the door of the sacristy, I called his attention by gently pulling the hem of his cassock. "My brethren," he said before beginning, "our little sacristan is in embarrassment and begs me to point out to you that the pictures of the stations are not lighted this evening, because we have no more candles; we count on your charity, you will kindly come to our aid." Half an hour after Benediction, I already had more than twenty packets of candles, and more came in the following days.

[A benefactress's deposition:] I had often told Father Chevrier, relates a benefactress, that he would please me by asking me for the things he needed. In spite of my insistence, he did so only twice, and then for small sums. The first time, he told me he lacked 200 francs for the board of his seminarians. The second, he had me called to the homeopathic hospital and asked me for the same sum, always for the same purpose.

He almost never directly solicited the generosity of his benefactors, reports another person; I recall only one thing that he asked of my father: to take charge of the offering of the candles for the First Communion, wax candles, used afterwards for the celebration of the holy sacrifice. "And that," he said to him, "to assure you a share in the numerous Masses that are celebrated at the Prado." In this delicate request, did he not give more than he received?

The Father had later chosen a bursar, to whom he ordinarily handed the alms made to himself, that he might dispose of them. Already at the Cité he had renounced all personal money, even his Mass stipends; he handed everything to M. Rambaud, of whom he asked what was necessary for him each month for his indispensable small expenses, such as postage stamps, the crossing of the bridges, alms to the poor. He did not want one to have, in one's employment, things locked up and solely for one's own use, but that they be lent with charity from one employment to another.

He left his mother in the mediocrity of her position. One day he said to me: "If you could buy a dress for my mother, you would please me. She has to make a little journey and has only one, already much worn."

This same spirit of poverty made him avoid and prohibit all useless expense and all waste. "We are poor," he said, "we live on alms, we must not do like the rich, who can make expenditures without wounding poverty." On one occasion he wrote to his deacons, during their stay at Rome: "Be economical; you know that your money is the money of the poor, that it is to be used only with moderation and never for one's pleasure; the poor man cannot procure for himself all the enjoyments he desires." He wanted much economy; but when there was necessity to make expenditures, as for the care of the sick, he did not want one to count too much. He recalled on occasion the recommendation of Our Lord after the multiplication of the loaves: Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. [John vi, 12.] "There are workmen and workwomen," he said, "who deprive themselves of their coal and of many things to give to us; we should be very guilty if we came to abuse it!"

He said that the voluntary poverty of religious does not equal that of the poor who are in the world and who are at times without lodging, without bread, without money, and that with children. And he added: "What right have we to be better lodged, better fed than the poor? When shall we be truly poor? It is when we have a borrowed lodging, when we are sent away, when we are obliged to move out like the poor; it is only then that we shall be poor."

For the same motives the Father did not like large provisions to be laid in beforehand; he judged it more conformable to the spirit of poverty; he made an exception, however, as to the purchase of potatoes, that staple food of the poor. In spite of the solicitations addressed to him and the demonstrations of economy set before him, he always refused the installation of a bakery at the Prado.

"It is poorer," he said shrewdly, "not to have one's bread on the shelf; that keeps us in greater dependence on the good God; it is true that it costs us more, but it also spares us many embarrassments and responsibilities; and then the good God does not count with His servants, especially for expenses of first necessity, of this kind; besides, the bakers, the workmen must earn their living; we must not fear to give them work, and by preference the suppliers of the neighbourhood; that puts us in relation with them, we are more sympathetic to them, they can do us services and we procure them work; at a given moment we can win their soul after having passed through their heart and their purse; it is often the road one must take with these good folk to arrive at their soul; they are ignorant but not wicked; they are sensitive to their interests, which is understandable.

"The priest's mind must not be too much mixed with material things, nor must one of his principal occupations be to seek in what he may make economies; he has a nobler use to make of his faculties, while not departing from the rules of prudence and wise economy, as befits the poor; but the good God will not reproach him for having given more time to the study of Our Lord and of the holy Gospel and more care to souls than attention to all these little calculations."

[Apparently still Father Chevrier speaking; the source gives no opening quotation mark here:] "It is again against the spirit of poverty to embarrass oneself with a thousand temporal cares, to be a tradesman or to meddle in the affairs of the world, even under pretext of good works, as for instance to set the children to work, to be at the head of workshops. The work of the priest must be a spiritual work; if his mind is too much absorbed by material things, he cannot attend in full freedom to the things of God; he is given over to a thousand solicitudes, to embarrassments of all sorts; he must see suppliers, busy himself with manufacture, interest, speculation; one may be exploited, whence lawsuits or ruins. Add to this that one is the butt of jealousy, of recriminations from competitors or other merchants. What worries for a priest! How reconcile the mission of the priesthood, so lofty, so holy, so supernatural, with this mercantile spirit? That must be very difficult! One cannot serve two masters."

Therefore he absolutely forbade us every advertisement, of whatever kind, with a view to procuring money or even simply gifts in kind; he did not want us always to be complaining of misery. For this same motive he never accepted, in spite of the blame that was not lacking to him, the proposals of certain industrialists concerning profitable work of the children in the house.

"It is tolerated," he said, "that the children of the rich pass whole years and the greatest part of their childhood and youth in boarding-schools, and it would be thought strange that the children of the poor should spend six months occupying themselves exclusively with their soul and their eternity, with being instructed in their religious and social duties and with learning a little reading and writing, without being bound during that time to manual labour? I want nothing in our Prado that savours of commerce or material interest; everything must be done by charity and devotedness, everything is free: Freely have you received, freely give."

At the Prado the children are not made to work, for several reasons: these children must be seriously instructed in religion and in a short time, and they could not if they had a task to fulfil. To those who might have said to Father Chevrier that manual work is not contrary to the benefit of religious instruction, he could have replied that his conduct was that of the Church toward the religious orders, where novices are forbidden to do anything other than what concerns their novitiate. The children are not made to work because this work would look like a speculation and would scandalize the weak, and also the members of the Work would have less authority. "We do not however disapprove," he said, "of a little work in the course of the day, work useful to the house, fit to occupy the body and teach the children to get themselves out of difficulties, such as mending, preparing meals, cleaning, washing, making rosaries, digging a little garden, and so on."

The question of money never entered for anything into the admission of children. Sometimes it was said to the Father: "If you take this child, I shall give you such a sum. Here is such a sum, on condition that you accept this child." "Thank you," he would answer, "if this child can pay his board, send him to another house: here we receive only the poor and indigent." And when two applicants presented themselves for a single available place, he gave it to the more needy. When a person asked to enter the Prado as a Sister, the Father never inquired whether she had something or nothing. To have a dowry, a trousseau, for him that was nothing. But if he saw a detached, humble soul, desiring to devote herself to the poor, for that soul he would have given the whole Prado, as he said.

The Father was happy when he saw the spirit of poverty penetrate the soul of his children. He recalled with joy the desire of one of his seminarians who proposed to him no longer to keep his watch, "because," he said, "it was quite enough to see one in common." In fact, the Father made the Sisters who entered the Prado give up their watches; and if it was thought one was needed, it had to be asked of him, and he gave permission for a determined time. "All that is for our use," he said, "must have the stamp of poverty in form and in matter."

[A Sister's deposition:] One day the Father gave the prayer on poverty. I was so touched by the love he showed for this virtue that I brought him twenty francs, the only money that remained to me at that moment,

adding that I no longer wished to possess anything. The Father smiled with pleasure and, receiving the twenty francs, said to me: “My child, since you desire to be poor, I consent and I promise to give you all that you will need.” Thus the Father was happy to see us poor. He said: “If you are firmly resolved to follow Our Lord, leave everything, that is the first step; for the birds of the air have nests and the foxes have holes, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head.” [Matt. viii, 20.]

A person came to ask him to pray for an important affair and said to him in ending: “If you obtain it for me, I will give you 100,000 francs.” The Servant of God replied with his ordinary calm: “Do you then want me to pray for you as a speculation? Yes, I shall unite with your request, but I should have done it with more ardour and confidence if you had not made me this promise.”

Thoughts on detachment and poverty:

> *“Every work of God must first bear the stamp of poverty and suffering. If one has not what is needed, no matter! Had Our Lord what was needed when He came on earth? Had He what was needed when He was on the cross? If there is suffering to be borne, so much the better! the work of God will only be the more solid and will only succeed the better. One attracts and wins more souls to God by poverty and suffering than by well-being and riches. Besides, it is neither lands, nor houses, nor gold, nor silver that make the works of God; it is men; generous, devoted men, who know how to suffer and are animated by the spirit of God. It is the Holy Spirit who says it: Blessed is the man that is found without blemish, and that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money and treasures; he hath done wonderful things in his life. (Ecclus. xxxi, 8–9.)*

> *“The poorer one is in the goods of earth, the more one possesses Jesus Christ. The poorer one is, the more one glorifies God. Exterior poverty demands humility, flows from humility of mind and heart. Without that it would be only hypocrisy. To be truly poor according to the Gospel, one must be humble at the same time before God and before men, and contemptible in one’s own eyes.”*

Poverty in Work

Apostle of the little and the humble, having taken to the letter the evangelical watchword, *the poor have the gospel preached to them* [Matt. xi, 5], Father Chevrier said: “Our vocation is poverty and the service of the poor, the little, sinners. Our Prado will last as long as it keeps its spirit of simplicity and poverty, but woe to it if it came to depart from it; charity would not subsist long.”

He liked, as he often said, to work upon the poor, and repeated this word of the Psalms: *Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor*. [Ps. xl, 2.] If he was a priest for all, after the example of St Paul, *Debitor sum omnibus* [I am a debtor to all. Rom. i, 14], it is certain that he had a weakness for the poor, sinners, the little, the rejected; he recognized in himself the vocation to occupy himself with them specially. “For occupying oneself with the rich priests do not lack; we are more particularly charged with evangelizing the poor.” For them he would willingly have been a respecter of persons in their favour, and had he followed his attraction, the inclination of his heart, it is always to these that he would have gone by preference.

> *“In the exercise of our ministry,” he said, “we must not consult the share of honour, of consideration, of interest that may come of it to us or to our works, but only the glory that comes of it to God, the profit the neighbour derives from it. There is less danger in occupying oneself with the poor and the little and more merit in giving oneself to those from whom one has nothing to expect or from whom one can receive nothing.”*

Ah! the love of the poor, the care of the poor, the evangelization of the poor, one may affirm that this was the passion of his priestly life; it was wholly consecrated to them, it was worn out and consumed in their service: he lived and died for the poor!

How I loved to hear him say:

> *“We are not the owners of the house: the Prado belongs to the poor: they are here at home; we are only their tenants, and if we did not serve them well, they would have the right and even the duty to put us to shame and turn us out. They are our first benefactors, and it is not that we may live as bourgeois that they pay us the rent.*

Everything is theirs; we are their humble servants: they can dispose of us and of all that is for our use: our time, our health, our life belong to them. Oh! how desirable it would be if we could regularly admit some of them to our table, if circumstances and the rules of a certain prudence made this practice possible for us! It is one of the motives for which we must suppress in the house all that would shock poverty and cut off from our table, our lodging, our clothing, our habits all that is not of the condition of the poor."

So he treated the poor with great consideration and wished that they always be so treated and never brusquely, however importunate they might be.

"They are the friends and the privileged of Jesus Christ, who took their livery on coming into this world: we must therefore, on that title, honour and respect them the more, without affectation and fuss, of course, so as not to give them cause to believe or think that they are mocked; we must have for them benevolence, kindness, little attentions. Look how one behaves in the world toward the rich, toward persons who have money; how they are welcomed, how they are surrounded, how people fear to displease them, how they seek to be agreeable to them, how they dread to lose their friendship; well! the charity of Jesus Christ toward the poor must be in our heart and lead us to use the same proceedings toward them. We must have truly the fear of displeasing Our Lord in the person of the poor. Not to sadden the poor! To love them, surround them, seek them out, welcome them well, procure them some joy."

The Father was inexhaustible on this chapter and he pleaded with holy eloquence the cause of the poor and the little! When he was awaited in the parlour by some poor people, he always greeted them with affability, listened to them, took an interest in their little affairs, and on taking leave of them he usually accompanied them as he would have done for the charitable persons from whom he received largesses. What others do for money, he did for love of the poor. He gave great attention to their confidences, patiently bore their importunities, gave them counsels, distributed to them help or consolations and always left them under a good impression.

Here is a fact which proves his solicitude for his poor children and his desire to honour them. In 1879 he fixed the little ceremonial for First Communion days relative to the refectory:

"You will put on each table a bottle of good wine, a pie or cakes; you will also put cloths and give a napkin to each child. You will make sure that the meal is suitable, a feast meal, at least three dishes and several desserts; and, putting on an apron, you will yourselves serve the first communicants at table. It is good that these poor children perceive, even in the refectory, that it is a great solemnity, and that their piety be edified by this conduct of the priest, making himself their servant on this occasion, and that this spectacle leave in their memory and in their heart a good and salutary impression. For ourselves, it is useful and advantageous that we profit by these occasions to realize, at least from time to time, the counsels of Our Lord and imitate His examples: I am in the midst of you as he that serveth. [Luke xxii, 27.] We are the servants of the poor and the little! Let us be truly poor and draw as near as possible to the poor."

Ministry to the poor. Counsels and confession. Always at their disposal. "I had the thought," I heard the Father say, "of fixing days or at least hours for the parlour and the confessional; I even tried to put it into execution, as I had been counselled many times; but after a few days I ceased to act thus: I had not the courage to make these poor people wait or to send them away to another day. It pained me; and then, praying and reflecting before the good God, I understood that the priest must hold himself at the disposal of souls at every hour of the day and night, and that he owes himself above all, after the example of Our Lord, to the poor, to sinners, to the afflicted. Let me alone, said this good Master, I must go and preach the gospel [cf. Luke iv, 43]. And to His holy Mother: Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? [Luke ii, 49.] — I came for this, I came to serve. Now, the servant is constantly at his Master's orders. This soul, whom you refuse or whom you put off, has perhaps been touched by the grace of the moment, and the grace of the moment passes; who knows whether it will come back? Have not examples of it been seen? Ah! one must take great care not to rebuff anyone; this simple little movement or this delay might have fatal consequences."

"Love the poor well," he said to one of his Sisters, "go and see them; and do not fear to lower yourself; on the contrary, one is raised. Besides, we are worth no more than they. The more we resemble the poor, the freer our soul is to raise itself to God. It is a happiness for us to be able to practise poverty."

In his Spiritual Testament his humility makes him say: "Pardon to you, poor of the earth, for not having always been generous and eager enough to help you."

Poverty in Service

A faithful disciple of Our Lord Jesus Christ, who worked until thirty in the shop of Joseph the carpenter, a fervent imitator of St Paul who would be a burden to no one and wove tents to provide for his needs, Father Chevrier wished to live also as a poor man, in humility and work, and in his *True Disciple* he describes thus the life of the true poor man:

> *"He is content with little and lets nothing be lost.*

He complains of nothing, because he loves poverty, which makes him like Jesus Christ. He works with his hands to earn his living and has no servant. He does all the work of his house, and employs workmen only in cases of necessity, when he cannot do better. He does not fear to do the humblest and lowest things. He has a horror of all that savours of luxury and vanity, well-being, comfort. He renders service to everybody. He takes great care of all he has, of his belongings; he wears them out, he mends them. He avoids profusion, prodigality, and makes no useless expenses. He is economical without avarice."

At the Prado very little was bought beyond the strict necessary. They ordinarily waited for the good God to send. The Father had himself served as little as possible. "When one can manage for oneself," he said, "one must do one's own work. I am not a bourgeois." He made his own bed, would not have his shoes polished, affirming that the poor do not have themselves served, they serve themselves. He would not have gone up to the altar with shoes in a state of uncleanliness, but he did not care for the refinement of shoe-polish and knew how to make the shine skilfully disappear; I do not think I ever saw him with shoes too shiny: cleanliness, but no refinement. "It is good," he added, "to know how to do a little of everything; one must not fear to put one's hand to the needle from time to time, to do some darning to one's clothes." He sometimes mended his stockings in the evening before going to bed, readily giving to others the new ones that were brought him for a change.

The Father said to his children: "My children, you must have order and love work. When I was little I mended my trousers; my mother took me with her to the *platte* [Fr. *platte*—apparently the flat-bottomed wash-boat on the river where women did laundry] and I washed my stockings. One must know how to do everything in life. The missionaries who are in foreign countries must needs maintain themselves, mend for themselves."

One could say of our Father, as of Our Lord: "He hath done all things well." [Mark vii, 37.] He was naturally very skilful at all kinds of work and, from a spirit of poverty and charity, he rendered service whenever the occasion offered. I saw him repair our clock himself, with great simplicity, although it was not for him, priest and superior, to do that. Oh! how beautiful and admirable he was to see, our Father! One thought at once of Our Lord working with His divine hands! "We have no servant," he said; "and we must do our work, that is our labour: to be carpenter, mason, plasterer, sweeper, washer, mender."

At Saint-Fons the Father did the housekeeping, lit the fire, prepared the table. The meal ended, we set about washing up in silence. The Father rolled up his sleeves and washed the cups. A very rough cooking was done by one of us, whose aptitudes one scarcely thought of consulting; all the errands had to be done, and there was nearly a kilometre to go to fetch water. At Saint-Fons or at Chatanay it happened rather often to the Father to do his cooking himself.

Formation of the pupils of the clerical school. The Latin students were not taught to lead a bourgeois life and to be served by domestics: they did all the work of the house themselves. On leaving the pen they took the broom and kept things clean, not only in the chapel but also in the rooms for their use and in the courtyards. Like the poor and workmen, they learned to serve themselves, as they were called to do all their lives. It was each day after breakfast, and Saturday afternoon, that the employments were performed with spirit, activity and in silence. The walk was fixed for Wednesday, but one went only when everything was in order in the house and there was no work to be done.

He reproved us severely when through negligence we let things be spoiled or broken. Sometimes he put himself out to come and make us close the windows whose casements he saw banging. He loved poverty, but sovereignly detested uncleanliness. A stain, a little tear, earned in his eyes a paternal reprimand. He could not bear in the courtyard a piece of wood or paper, a straw. He did not pass on before having made it disappear. He said again: “There are some who imagine that to practise poverty one must be unclean; not at all, my children, one can be very poor and very clean. One must have much order. Were one to see only one thing hung on a nail, one sees at once that a person has order.” When the Father found a little dust on the furniture or noticed that the corridors or apartments were not well swept, he did not fail to make some remark, and said that everything must be done well.

The spirit of poverty led Father Chevrier to be careful and economical. He often recommended us, at the clerical school, to take care of all that was at our service, such as books, clothes and objects of any kind; and to have at heart the interest of the house, so as to waste nothing, nor break nor spoil. I remember that he forbade us to wet the floors too much when we had to sweep, so as not to make them rot. I remember that he several times gave advice on the means to take not to break lamp-glasses. I saw him one day taking care of his razor; he told me it was to preserve it. When he poured wine to drink, he took the neck of the bottle and poured gently, and avoided the manner which consists in taking the bottle by the middle and pouring full glasses. One saw in all his conduct that he had lived in economy from his youth and that he wished to continue it to the end. He knew what it is to earn one’s bread by the sweat of one’s brow. The sight of poverty among the poor whom he liked to visit gave him a habit of economy that he always kept.

He noticed objects that were not in their place, and one day he said to us: “For two or three days now this object has been where it should not be. I left it to see if one of you would think of putting it back in its place without being told; I see that I shall be obliged to do it myself.”

He recommended us to take great care of the large carpets of the sanctuary and to economize them. They were to be put in place only when one had finished adorning the chapel and furnishing the altar, to protect them from the frequent and unavoidable comings and goings, made at times with murderous or bad shoes; and even then he had them partly folded back while waiting for the end of the day, on the eve of feasts, and they were unfolded entirely only after evening prayer. For the same motive, on the evenings of great feasts, before everything else, before stripping, the large carpet had to be removed delicately or sufficiently raised. And as formerly the faithful flocked to the sacristy, especially on Sunday, after each office, to speak to the Father, the sacristan had to take great care, as soon as the office was over, to raise immediately a corner of the carpet, in order to spare it and to leave the passage free, for there was then only one door giving access to the sacristy, that of the choir, which one thus unavoidably crossed.

Always out of compassion for the carpet, and at the same time that the ceremonies might be performed more suitably, the Father sometimes had his little clerics practise these ceremonies, among others the genuflection on both knees before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. He taught us to kneel with dignity and to rise delicately and without noise, and when he caught one of us performing the ceremony awkwardly: “Careful, my friend,” he would say, “go gently, do not drag your feet thus on the floor when you rise; you would carry away tomorrow a piece of the carpet with your nails.”

Journeys. He sought as much as possible to lead voluntarily the life to which the poor are condemned by necessity. That is why he preferred to make his journeys on foot rather than by carriage, when circumstances and his strength permitted it. “The poor go no otherwise.” He was very ashamed when it happened that he was in a carriage on the highroads and met some poor man advancing painfully on foot; he always had the temptation, he said, to get down from the carriage and install the poor man in his place. When his children were generous and strong enough to do the same, he was very satisfied. He greatly encouraged pilgrimages made on foot, and had several made in his community: thus the pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1873 and that to La Salette in 1877. He gave a little money to some of my fellow pupils who had shown him the desire to go off on holiday on foot although they were from far away.

[A woman’s deposition:] I had offered him, in 1875, when the doctor wanted to send him to the waters, to pay all the expenses of the journey to Vichy, and had asked him to write to me as soon as he was installed. I was astonished to receive from La Louvesc a letter in which he said to me: “It seemed to me that the waters of grace were worth more than those of nature, and I came to take them here.” He had left without luggage, without a change of clothes, and the Jesuit Fathers, with whom he had put up, furnished him with everything he needed.

In 1876 the doctor imperatively ordered him, in spite of all his resistance, a season at Vichy. “The doctor,” he said, “wants me to go to Vichy, I go only reluctantly, for these remedies are the remedies of the great world and I have always been in the little.” To Father Farissier, who had told him of his intention to go and see him at Vichy, he wrote: “I should have much pleasure in seeing you, but before satisfying a pleasure one must consult necessity, one must act as a poor man in everything; I am unhappy enough to have acted as a rich man in coming here, it is not a poor man’s place. How quickly one gets used to the bourgeois life, and how difficult it is to come back from it once one has taken the bent!” So every time he was obliged to leave this frame of poverty, even in cases of illness, it cost him much.

The Priestly Work: His Ideal of the Poor Priest

To be well penetrated with Father Chevrier’s thought on the priestly work, one would have to quote entire his *True Disciple*, treatise on the perfection of the priest according to the Gospel, which he wrote to that end and left to his children. For him the priest is the man who must regenerate the world. By priest he means the secular priest having the virtues of the religious, the priest true disciple of Jesus Christ, the priest apostle, the priest walking in the footsteps of St Paul, making himself all to all to win all souls to Jesus Christ.

> *“If the religious must be another Jesus Christ,” he says, “how much more the secular priest, who must live in the world to form Jesus Christ in souls! The priest is the salt of the earth, the light of the world. If the secular priest is not this salt, if he is not this light, how and by whom can the world be regenerated, converted and sanctified? The religious in the cloister lives more for himself than for others, but the secular priest is made to live in the midst of men, it is for souls that he has all his powers, and more than others he must be holy and perfect. He is called to do more good, having necessary relations with the faithful, and we must surpass the religious by that light, halo of glory and holiness, which must shine in priests of the ministry.*
>
> *“The priest must reproduce interiorly and exteriorly the virtues of Jesus Christ: His charity, His prayer, His poverty, His sufferings. The priest must represent Jesus Christ poor in His Crib, Jesus Christ suffering in His Passion, Jesus Christ letting Himself be eaten in the Holy Eucharist.*
>
> *“There are for the priest, as for the faithful, two ways to go to God and fulfil the mission entrusted to him: the way of the precepts and that of the counsels. The first suffices to go to heaven; it is the way of a great number, one is held only to that, it suffices for salvation; but those to whom God gives light and grace must follow the second. The way of the counsels is that of true love; it glorifies God more on earth, contributes more to the salvation of souls, draws many graces on the Church, and assures our salvation. It is to perfection that Jesus Christ calls us, and there are few who follow Him thus. Yet a holy priest does more good than a hundred priests merely good; a holy priest procures more glory to God and converts more souls than a hundred others.*

"The religious observe the evangelical counsels; why should secular priests not observe them? Is not perfection for them as well as for others? In the ministry, must not priests draw near to Jesus Christ as well as others? And even must they not do so more, they who are in the midst of the world and who must carry everywhere the good odour of Jesus Christ, and be the living light that enlightens men?

"How desirable it would be to see priests religious and animated by this spirit of poverty and sacrifice which must exist in the whole life of the priest!"

In this passage of his *True Disciple* he describes admirably the nature and excellence of the attraction to the perfect life:

"Do you feel," he says, "an interior attraction that impels you toward Jesus Christ, a sentiment full of admiration for Jesus Christ, for His beauty, His grandeur, His infinite goodness which led Him to come to us, a sentiment which touches us and brings us to give ourselves to Him? If we feel ourselves ever so little drawn toward Jesus Christ, ah! let us cultivate this attraction, let us make it grow by prayer, meditation, study, that it may bear fruit, and let us say with the Bridegroom of the Canticles: Draw me: we will run after thee to the odour of thy ointments." [Cant. i, 3.]

This life of the evangelical counsels had always attracted Father Chevrier, above all since his priesthood. He desired and loved it because of the influence it could give the priest to convert sinners. It is for that reason that he wished it in the parochial ministry and in the midst of the world.

"Where are you then," he cried in a sermon at Saint-André, "generous souls who desire to live this life of sacrifice, abnegation, renunciation, who wish to give us these great examples of virtue, where are you? Ah! if the good God inspired you with the courage to consecrate yourselves to the care of the unfortunate, to the instruction of so many poor children who languish in the workshops and receive no spiritual food; if He inspired you with the taste to dress wounds, to keep the infirm, to go and seek the bread of the poor, to consecrate yourselves to that by devotedness, with a view to God, by humility, in imitation of Jesus who washed the feet of His apostles, what a beautiful work! what merits for you! ah! follow these holy inspirations!"

It is in this instruction that enigmatic phrases are found, which cannot have been pronounced as they were written, but which are none the less very significant when one knows the sequel which Father Chevrier gave to these projects indicated or suspected at the dawn of his priestly life, for example in the following passages:

"Ten souls animated by the spirit of God! If they existed, I would wish to have these ten souls, and with these ten souls I would wish to convert a whole people. Elite society, ready for every good work; a thought that smiles on me, if the good God lends me life. Ah! I know many miseries, and it is painful for a priest not to be able to relieve them; I would give all I have. I understand that it is sweet to be poor with Jesus Christ, who had not a stone whereon to rest His head, and who had for bed only a cross. Give me, O sweet Saviour, the happiness of resembling You and of living as You inspire me."

Realization of His Priestly Ideal

At Saint-André the Servant of God strove to put into practice this beautiful ideal of priestly life. He had a still more ardent desire of it after the so lively lights which he received, at Christmastide, on the mystery of the Crib.

But he perceived very soon that he would not find there the freedom necessary to follow fully the interior attraction of grace. He therefore went to the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus and could, at his ease, practise poverty there and lead the evangelical and apostolic life to which he felt himself invincibly drawn. God then put into his heart the desire not to remain alone in this way: and he wrote in one of his retreats: "I promise Jesus to seek confreres of good will in order to associate them with myself, to live together the same life of poverty and sacrifice."

In a document of this period, containing the questions to be put to the priest who asks to be received into the Work he is meditating, here is the last question to ask: "Are you resolved to remain with us in this house, or to go elsewhere, if Providence asks it, to work with us in the same spirit of union, poverty, humility, penance,

having for motto this word of the saints: *Sacerdos alter Christus*, the priest is another Christ, striving to conform ourselves in everything to Jesus, our divine model, and seeking to imitate Him as perfectly as possible on earth?" The recipient having answered: "Yes, Father, with the grace of God," the Father adds: "May God be blessed for ever that He gives us today a poor and penitent brother to work with us at our salvation and the sanctification of souls."

But he soon understood that it would be only in a work wholly his own that he could at last carry out his project, with fewer hindrances and difficulties. The project not having succeeded at the Cité, Father Chevrier founded the Prado to carry it out, the work of the First Communions serving at the beginning as a sort of culture-ground or field of action for his priests. Before founding the clerical school he still seeks, as at the Cité, to establish the work with ready-formed priests who would come to him from outside. He awaits them solely from Providence; he prays constantly to this intention. Meanwhile he suffers much from his isolation and his powerlessness, as is seen in a letter dated 1863, that is, about two years after the foundation of the Prado.

> *"How unhappy I am," he says, "if I do not do what the good God wills, what a responsibility! If there are not souls who pray for me, who push me, I am lost. If the good God sent me a good confrere who understood well the work of God, then I should feel more courage; but alone, always alone, I feel that I have not the strength, or an extraordinary grace would be needed that I have not yet merited, for the graces of God must be bought, and to buy the graces of God one cannot do too much, especially when they must contribute to the salvation of souls and the glory of the Church. If I speak to you so openly, it is that I may find in you a soul who prays and helps me to accomplish the holy will of God. Well then! help me to do this work of poor priests. The priest is everything, he is Jesus Christ on earth! And I must be another Jesus Christ on earth so that those who come here may themselves be other living Jesus Christs; that alone can convert souls."*

The following year he wrote from Rome to the same person: "How happy I should be to contribute to the glory of Jesus by poverty and sacrifice; to contribute to there being other Jesus Christs on earth, in His priests, and that we may honour the Crib, Calvary and the Tabernacle by the practice of the virtues of which Jesus gives us such beautiful examples! Pray a little for me and for all those whom the Lord calls to the holy poverty of His Christ."

It was on this journey to Rome, in 1864, that Father Chevrier made known to His Holiness Pius IX his projects, in particular the most delicate part of his programme concerning the free ministry. Father Chevrier's petition was presented to the Holy Father by a religious of the Society of Jesus, a familiar of the Vatican and editor of the *Civiltà Cattolica*. Pius IX praised the work and blessed it, adding that it must undergo the test of time and develop under the protection of the bishops. On his return from Rome, Father Chevrier set to work, as he says in a letter, "with more boldness"! he began by sending some children as pupils to the clerical school of St Bonaventure, then he kept them entirely at the Prado in 1866. The rules he drew up about this period and the letters he wrote show us well the aim he pursued. In 1869 he writes to the Abbé Dutel, who had asked to enter his work:

> *"Here, in summary, is the aim of our house: To prepare for First Communion the young boys and girls who cannot make it in the parishes. To this work Providence has added another: that of preparing for the priesthood some young men who cannot go to the seminary, to make of them poor priests, crucified according to Our Lord, and to apply them to works of zeal, and also, if the good God permits, and this is what I have long asked of Him, to have them lead a religious life in the exercise of the parochial ministry. That is our aim, and you see that we have plenty to do, and that a priest cannot better employ his life than in forming holy priests for the Church. It is perhaps a sin of presumption, but it seems to me that it is today the need of the Church, and that we cannot do too much to arrive at this result."*

A religious life in the exercise of the parochial ministry: such is indeed the formula which expresses the thought of the Servant of God. To be still more exact one should say simply, in the exercise of the ministry of souls, for he excludes none of the offices of the priest. Here besides is what he himself writes in the Rule of the Priests of the Prado approved by His Eminence Cardinal Caverot on 25 January 1878:

"We propose to ourselves as essential aim our sanctification and the salvation of souls. To arrive at this important aim we wish, while remaining secular priests and living in the world, to lead nevertheless a regular life and to approach as nearly as possible the religious, taking from their serious and austere life all that can be compatible with our apostolic life in the world."

Father Chevrier understood very well the difficulties there would be in realizing such a kind of life, and the possibility of certain modifications to be introduced in conforming to the necessities of circumstances, whether in the conditions of installation of his priests or in the exercise of the ministry, but he held to the principle which seemed to him necessary to destroy the prejudices of people of the world: the priest is a man like the others, and the accusation of a religion of money that is brought against the Church. He wanted his priests to apply themselves to practising the evangelical word: "*Gratis accepistis, gratis date.* Freely have you received, freely give." In destining them to exercise the ministry specially among the poor, he wished them to be poor, even in the exercise of the ministry, in order to attract the poor and win them to Jesus Christ. Nothing besides gives a more exact knowledge of his priestly ideal than the picture he traced of it himself on the walls of his little solitude at Saint-Fons. His great thought was the work of poor priests, catechists, devoted to God and to souls in the parishes.

Advantages of community life in the parochial ministry. Father Chevrier greatly esteemed the parochial ministry:

"Parish priests," he wrote, "are called to do more good than the others; their vocation corresponds to that of the apostles. Parish priests living in the midst of the world must give the example of the virtues they preach: You are the salt of the earth. [Matt. v, 13.] They must be holy in the midst of a corrupt and vicious world. And, to be holy and sanctify others, they themselves need support, good examples, good counsels. Considering that a parish priest finds himself often alone, not knowing to whom to communicate his ideas nor how to carry them out, priests desirous before all of saving themselves and saving souls engage to unite to live in poverty, obedience to a superior, charity among themselves; to pray, study, and give themselves to all the works of zeal that concern the parochial service."

The Father liked to say that this kind of life had been realized in the first times of the Church, then restored by St Cajetan of Thiene in Italy and by the pious Canon Holzhauser in Germany.

He went into society only from necessity, for a reason of charity or propriety, as seldom as possible, and never from pleasure or mere personal satisfaction: I would even say always against the grain. He felt ill at ease there, did not like frivolous, useless conversations, veritable pastimes from which the soul draws no profit, when it does not leave its piety or interior recollection there. He did not like idle appointments, nor drawing-room visits and did not know how to flatter. He did not accept invitations to great dinners.

"We are poor," he said, "we must do as the poor and live like them; we have not the time to go to those worldly gatherings; we must work and earn our bread and that of our children. Moreover, ordinarily, when the world invites you, and with rare exceptions, it is to spy on you, surprise your weaknesses, flatter your tastes, in a word, diminish you; you lower yourself to its level, putting in relief your defects and your little passions. One would say the world seeks to excuse, to cover its habits of comfort by sometimes making us fare well with it.

"In short, by dint of going into the world, one talks like it, does like it, appreciates and thinks like it. Ah! a very great virtue is needed to go with impunity into the world without losing something of the priestly spirit. That is what too worldly associations come to: making us resemble the world, making us take the tastes of the world. What a misfortune for a priest! And to think there are priests who let themselves be caught by it and who believe themselves obliged, because of their dignity and for their dignity, to have luxury, comfort, fine apartments. How unfortunate and regrettable! As if the priestly dignity depended on a well-served table, a fine white cloth, fine cutlery, furniture of first choice, fine clothes; how worldly all that is! Little by little one attaches oneself to it, one creates servitudes for oneself, one is a slave of all these things, one can no longer do without them; how much time lost! how many resources wasted! what subjection! how many cares and preoccupations that entails! Let us leave all these trinkets to the world and to its slaves; for ourselves let us clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ. It is Jesus Christ that we must resemble; that is our daily work: to study Jesus Christ and conform our life to His divine teachings and examples. Our union with Jesus Christ must be so intimate, so visible, that men may say on

seeing us: 'There is another Jesus Christ!'

"Today, when luxury is at its height, when everybody seeks well-being, convenience, comfort, the priest must on the contrary seek poverty and suffering, that he may be an example in the midst of the world. Let the world think what it will, I care little; let it regard me as a fool, I care little! I am Jesus Christ's, I walk in His footsteps."

So he did not seek the esteem or approbation of the world. "If you conduct yourselves by human reasoning," he said, "if you consult the world, your ideas, your passions, you will never listen to the word of Our Lord and never put it into practice, for, as He says: My word comes from above, and your reasonings come from below. [Cf. John viii, 23.] We are here to enlighten the world and to oppose its maxims and its usages."

He would have wished to see the priest always ready to speak of the good God, of Our Lord, always ready to instruct the faithful. He would have desired to see the priest give himself to all by charity, in conformity with this motto: *The priest is another Jesus Christ*; that is, the priest is a man stripped by his poverty, crucified by his penance, eaten by his love and devotedness for souls. He liked this word of Brother James [Fr. *frère Jacques*—not otherwise identified], coming to fetch him to perform an act of the ministry: "Christian for oneself, priest for others." He did not want the faithful to be able to go away from the priest without carrying off something: an alms, if poor; a good word or an object of piety, if rich. He recommended never to have a discussion over material interests to the prejudice of the spiritual.

"When one enters the priest's house," he added, "it must not be said: he is well lodged, he is not badly off, he is at his ease, or something like that; it must be possible to say: He suffers, he is poor, he has not what he needs."

He said: "I ask the good God to make arise a nucleus of poor priests, who have no other desires than to consecrate themselves to the salvation of souls for the greater glory of God, living in poverty, sacrifice and devotedness, demanding nothing, asking nothing for the exercise of the holy ministry, content with what the faithful would give spontaneously, abandoning themselves to the care of divine Providence."

The Father had as a principle that a good Master always pays His workmen. "So, if we do the work of God," he said, "that is, if we teach our catechism well and all that concerns the holy ministry, God will take care of us."

He returned often, in his instructions to his priests and to the children of the clerical school, of whom I was one, to the causes of the diminution of faith in the world: "Twelve apostles converted the world," he said to us sometimes; "and behold, in France, where there are forty thousand priests, faith is being lost." And he concluded: "The priest must be another Jesus Christ in two ways: by the powers and by the virtues. The powers of Jesus Christ every priest has: he received them on the day of his ordination. To do good in our age it is not enough to have the powers; one must have also the virtues of Jesus Christ. It is not enough to be a good priest, one must be a very good priest. One must astonish the world." I remember that one day he commented to us in this sense the word of St Paul: *Spectaculum facti estis mundo.* [We are made a spectacle to the world. 1 Cor. iv, 9.]

Father Chevrier blamed no one; he did not wish to impose his way of seeing on anyone; he was too humble and too charitable for that. I do not remember ever having heard him criticize a single priest. He took care to remind us that there are for the priest as for the faithful two ways to go to God: the way of the precepts and the way of the counsels, and that the way of the precepts suffices for salvation. But he also said that the way of the counsels is infinitely more perfect, more useful to souls, more agreeable to God. He added that he had chosen this way because God had granted him choice graces which demanded of his part a more faithful correspondence, and that his desire was to see us enter on this same way. He explains himself clearly on it in his *True Disciple*.

Many and many a time the Servant of God strove to make penetrate into us, whether in his conferences or in private, this wholly apostolic manner of considering and practising the parochial ministry. It must have been

a regret to him not to be able to realize in his lifetime this pious project which lay so close to his heart. But at least he laid foundations on which those of his children who try, so far as prudence permits, this manner of living inspired by the spirit of poverty, are glad to rest.

Father Chevrier put his plan of life into practice during the few years that he was parish priest at Moulin-à-Vent. It was the subject of great edification and the cause of great good.

Ordinarily he did not speak to his Latin students of his plans for poor parishes and free ministry. He contented himself with preparing them for it from afar, by forming them to poverty and zeal. Nevertheless, when he judged them capable of understanding this doctrine, because they were sufficiently advanced, he did not hesitate to set them face to face with this difficult programme.

During the retreat he gave us at Limonest, in May 1878, towards the end of our Rhetoric class, he opened himself to us on it, and I shall never forget the typical description he gave us on this occasion of the future entrance of a priest of his Work into a poor parish. He goes first to the church to greet the Master, then to the carpenter's to fetch two planks for the bed and as many for the table. A bundle of straw bought from a neighbour would make up the whole cost of the straw mattress. "A Christ, a pallet [Fr. *grabal*, i.e. *grabat*], a Gospel and a table."

Having himself exercised the parochial ministry, he had kept the conviction that an immense good could be done in it, with a view to the glory of God and the salvation of souls, and he was persuaded that if priests full of the spirit of Jesus Christ consented to submit to a rule and to live in community in the holy ministry, the worst parishes would be incapable of resisting them. The Father often made us understand that he desired for his work the poorest, most ignorant, worst working-class parishes, those where his priests could establish works of zeal for children, for youth, for men and mothers of families; those where there would be many miseries to relieve, sinners to convert, ignorant to instruct.

"When we deserve that Monseigneur entrust poor parishes to us," he said, "catechism will have to be taught every day, without fail, and on Sunday we shall go and teach it in the different quarters of the parishes entrusted to us; since the unhappy ignorant flee the priest, the priest, as a true disciple of Jesus Christ, must run after them, to make known to them the divine Master who alone can make them happy."

Pradosian Formation of His Pupils Whom He Destined for the Ministry of the Poor

Father Chevrier, among all his works, cherished the clerical school specially. He occupied himself with it with quite particular care, in spite of his innumerable labours. "Even if I saw only four or five good pupils out of a hundred arrive at the priesthood, I should not think I had lost my time," he said, when some defection occurred. When an intake had been made, he examined his children for some months to see whether they had real dispositions for the priesthood, whether on the side of knowledge or on the side of virtue. He kept only those whom he believed capable of receiving the Spirit of God and becoming good priests. That is, besides, in so many words in the rule. He directed his attention specially to humility, judgment, frankness, taste for the things of God and for study.

From the first day the priesthood was spoken of. I still remember the tone of his voice and the impression it made on me, when he said to us, shortly after my entry to the Prado: "It is not to be lawyers, doctors or professors that you are here; it is to be priests." He did not understand a priest-professor who limits himself to being a professor and does not seek to fulfil his mission as priest even in his teaching. I heard him say: "The priest is not a priest to teach *qui, quæ, quod*" [the Latin relative pronoun—i.e. grammar]. For him the role of the priest was to devote himself to souls to convert them or form Christ in them.

When a child presented or seemed to present the required guarantees, he admitted him to the number of the little clerics. These had the privilege of wearing the cassock and surplice at the offices, and were considered as belonging to the house, which furnished them with what was necessary. They received the cord of St Francis of Assisi. The reception took place solemnly on 10 December.

Every Sunday he held a little meeting for us. It was there that he opened his heart to us to make known to us little by little what he expected of us. He held so much to this meeting for forming his children that he charged one of them specially to fetch him and warn him when the hour had come, and, once warned, he left everything to come among us. I remember having been charged with this function. The place where I resigned myself to going to fetch him last of all was his mother's; for after having watched her son a whole morning to make him take some food, she scolded, of course, when he was disturbed. Moreover, she endeavoured to prevent his knowing that he was asked for, but I took the precaution of raising my voice, saying: "Is the Father there?" and the Father, hearing me, answered: "Good, my little one, I am coming," and he was not long in being in our midst, and we were truly happy to have him for a few moments: his words did so much good; he was loved by his little clerics beyond what can be said.

It was in this meeting of clerics that one day, after having spoken to us much of poverty, renunciation, zeal, the priesthood, he said to us with a smile which softened the crudity of the expression: "Do you see, if I knew that you would one day become bourgeois priests, I would break all your necks." [Fr. *je vous casserais le cou*—a mock-threat.] He called by the name of bourgeois those who, attentive only to their interests, friends of comfort, seek their ease and think only of making themselves a quiet position. When one thinks of the conditions in which one is at the Prado, where we come generally from poor families and where we live on charity, one understands how out of place this type would be. Father Chevrier had the talent to convince us of it; for that he invoked all sorts of reasons, above all those drawn from the consideration of graces received: choice grace, special vocation, quite particular cares of Providence, spiritual and temporal.

He wished to be a poor priest and to form poor priests, inspired by the Crib, Calvary, the Tabernacle. Priest: a man stripped, crucified, eaten—such must be the true disciple of Jesus Christ. These ideas, meditated through study, excited admiration, gave minds a true formation; they took hold of the soul, impregnated it with an ideal and a divine love which exalted us. Hence another conception of life in the priesthood, which becomes the apostolate of the poor. One conceives things otherwise, one wills them, does them otherwise, always in function of poverty. He often said to us: "My children, you must be the priests of the poor; the rich always have enough."

"This feast of Christmas which we celebrated yesterday," he said one day, "recalls to us the beautiful virtues of poverty and humility of which I liked to speak to you and which are the foundation of the Christian life and above all of the priestly life, for it is indeed the aim of our life: simplicity, poverty, to imitate Our Lord, being poor Himself and working to evangelize the poor."

He would have liked to inculcate in all his own this holy passion for poverty. Here is what he wrote to me on this subject, on the occasion of my first tonsure:

> *"Remember that you separate yourself from the world and that you leave the superfluous and all the vanities of the world, which this hair represents to us, which often demands exaggerated care, the vanities one must leave in order to attach oneself to the divine Master, because he who doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple, He tells us in His Gospel. [Luke xiv, 33.] Renunciation of the things of earth, of the vanities of the world, is the first act to make in order to belong really to Jesus Christ. Be generous, dear child, on this occasion and renounce everything to give yourself to Jesus Christ. The less one keeps for oneself, the more one is Jesus', and since you must be wholly His, you must keep nothing for yourself."*

"We must," he said, "represent the Crib and Calvary; let us leave to others the care of representing the glorious mysteries. For ourselves, let us be content with littleness and poverty; it is our lot, our vocation, and we must not go out of it."

In his letters the Servant of God returns to this recommendation, which was familiar to him: “Remember from time to time what I told you on poverty, because this virtue is the basis of our life and it is by it that Our Lord began His life on earth.” He writes to his seminarians on 26 December 1876:

> *“Ask well for this littleness, this humility, this poverty which are the characters of the little Child Jesus. You shall know Him by this sign, said the angels; you shall find an infant laid in a manger. [Luke ii, 12.] It is poverty that is the distinctive character of the Master; let it also be our distinctive character, and as long as we remain in poverty, simplicity and humility we shall be the children and disciples of Jesus Christ.”*

To Father Jaricot, who was with the Capuchins of Carcassonne, he writes in 1868: “Draw from the source of these good Fathers the spirit of poverty and charity, so that you may teach it to us on your return. You know well that our life must be copied on that of the Franciscan Fathers, apart from the service of the ministry, which is peculiar to us. Retain well the little usages which may be useful to us all, and which may be adapted to our way of life and make us grow in humility, charity and holy Poverty.”

Before Father Jaricot’s return from Rome, where he had accompanied the four deacons of the Prado, a great grace was to be granted them. They were presented to His Holiness Pius IX, who questioned them on the reasons for their presence at Rome and on Father Chevrier’s intentions. It was then that the Pope pronounced that word which was for Father Chevrier the subject of a great joy: *Benedictio pauperibus*. A blessing to the poor. Here is how he profited by this blessing granted to his work, to imprint more strongly in the soul of his children the love of the poor and of poverty:

> *November 1876. Dear children,*
>
> *“I am very happy to learn that you had the happiness of seeing Our Holy Father Pope Pius IX, and that he blessed you, and that he blessed in you the poor, the poor whom you must evangelize, instruct; and that we have all been blessed by him in you. Benedictio pauperibus. How well the word of the Vicar of Jesus Christ agrees with that of the Master: Blessed are the poor. Yes, let us be always the good God’s poor, let us remain always poor, let us work upon the poor. May poverty and simplicity be always the distinctive character of our life, and we shall have the blessing of God and of our Father. How good it is to work upon the poor! One feels that they are the friends of God and that one does not work in vain upon their souls. Love then the poor, the little, well; do not work at growing and raising yourselves, but work at making yourselves little and diminishing yourselves so much that you are equal to the poor, to be with them, live with them, die with them; and let us not fear the reproaches the Jews addressed to Our Lord: Your Master is always with the poor, the publicans, and people of evil life. That is a reproach which should honour us instead of abasing us. Our Lord came to seek the poor. Evangelizare pauperibus misit me. [He hath sent me to preach the gospel to the poor. Luke iv, 18.] Learn then to love the poor well, and let this blessing of Pius IX, our visible Head and the representative of Jesus Christ, be a good omen for you and make you love the poor and remain always in holy poverty.*
>
> *“As to the different degrees of which you speak to me, that seems to me a little difficult because of the time one would have to stay at Rome; nevertheless, if one of you wished to sacrifice himself to obtain the title of doctor, I would permit it, provided he always remained very small and used it only for the little and the poor. How many souls to save and to instruct! Apply yourselves well to prayer and to establishing your beautiful vocation of catechizing the poor, for it is the most beautiful of all and the most worthy of envy.”*

Father Chevrier felt his strength failing and foresaw that his institution would be compromised if, after him, it were not left in the hands of his children and if he had not the time to give them a formation wholly in conformity with his views. At the price of great sacrifices he had been able to take to the major seminary five of his children from his clerical school. Wishing to prepare these young men more directly for the works of the Prado and for the poor way of life they were called to lead, he judged insufficient the resource of correspondence, even assiduous, between the Father and his children, and, in the holidays, a mere cohabitation of three months, during which one must not count on imparting a new impulse toward a more mortified state. Mgr Caverot granted him permission to spend three months at Rome with his deacons.

“They await me with impatience,” he wrote, “and are desirous of having me with them to complete their instruction, not theological but religious for the Prado, and I desire it myself very keenly too. I hope therefore

to be able to accomplish my intentions and see my hopes realized, since the good God grants me what I had asked."

How much true joy and gratitude to God there is in the last letter he writes to his children before setting out:

> *"My dear children, pray with all your heart that I may accomplish in everything the holy will of the good Master and that I may give you the spirit of God; everything is there. Pray that I may find it myself and make a provision of it during these few days of graces and lights, in order to give you what you need to become true disciples of Jesus Christ; that is all my desire. I have withdrawn during these days to pray and work a little and acquire so many graces which are necessary to me. When I see how admirable Providence is and how she leads all things with wisdom, I can only admire her goodness and believe that our work is agreeable to her and that our poor Prado is a blessed place on which God casts a look of goodness and love. Let us respond well, dear children, to the designs of divine Providence upon us and strive to enter into her views and become priests according to her heart and conformed to the rules which she herself dictated to us in her holy Gospel. May you understand it well and work with all your heart to follow this good Master, not from afar, but closely, as He desires, so that you may bear fruit, and abundant fruit.*
>
> *"Till soon; we shall study Jesus Christ our Master and our Model and we shall all strive to walk in the so beautiful paths He has shown us."*

The formation of his deacons in the evangelical life: such was Father Chevrier's occupation at Rome during these three months. He explained the *True Disciple* and all that relates to it; he applied himself to making loved the poor life, all of devotedness, of the Prado, without entering into the detail of all his views on the future. He laid foundations, being well persuaded that the rest would rise little by little when the good God willed.

Father Chevrier was admitted to a private audience of His Holiness Pius IX. It was during the retreat of the ordinands. Mgr Dubuis, Bishop of Galveston, presented him to the Holy Father and made a short exposition of the works of the Prado. The Pope, in his reply, expressed his satisfaction and added: "That is indeed the work of the day; I hope your zeal will not stop at the city of Lyon alone, but that you will establish your houses in so many cities which would have need of them."

The ordination took place on 26 May 1877, feast of St Philip Neri. Father Chevrier's joy was great, as one of his letters bears witness; he rejoiced at having done a work agreeable to God by favouring the vocation of his new priests, at having collaborators who would continue his work for the poor, children who would pray for him after his death. He had only two years to initiate his new priests into his different works. It was a very short delay. Providence sent the great trial of sickness and suffering to its servant, who was able to see at work, for nine months, the successor he had chosen, with the assent of the diocesan authority.

Thoughts:

> *"The priest must be the consoler, the friend of the poor; but for the poor to be able to approach him without fear, he must make himself poor like them. If you wish to succeed, always put a little straw and a little wood in, you understand me: a little straw from the crib, a little wood from the cross."*

Chapter XII. Chastity

Chapter XII. Chastity

Constant modesty. — Vigilance over himself and reserve with persons of the world, with the Sisters and with the children. — Renunciation of his heart. — Means of preserving purity in himself and in the House.

Constant Modesty

Father Chevrier's innocence was protected, from his childhood, by the rigorous watchfulness of his mother. She surrounded him with great vigilance so that no one might lead him astray, and she had the happiness of succeeding. She never let him go near bad companions, and he never remained amusing himself in the streets. He knew only the road to church and that to school. As soon as he came home he was set to work. In his spiritual testament, Father Chevrier thanks God for having given him good parents who watched over his childhood to keep him from following bad company and bad examples.

The modesty and candour that shone on his face marked him out early to the attention of pious souls, and it is the conviction of all who knew him from his childhood that he died with his baptismal innocence. At Saint-François he was called the Angel, so much did his physiognomy have something pure and candid. At the seminary the Servant of God was remarked for his fidelity to the rule and the delicacy of a soul transparent as crystal, which let all its sentiments be seen but had only noble ones. He received with joy the order of the subdiaconate, which separated him for ever from creatures, and was faithful in renewing each year his vow of chastity.

When he was curate at Saint-André, the parishioners were not long in distinguishing his seraphic virtues, that sweet serenity which seemed to render him inaccessible to the storms of the passions and superior to the life of the senses. They designated him quite habitually by the name of Angel, as had been done at Saint-François. Until the end of his life there was always in him something so pure, so peaceful, so suave that it could not be characterized otherwise than by the qualification "angelic". The general persuasion around him was that he committed no fault, however light, so irreprehensible did one find him in everything. One sometimes wondered what he could possibly say in confession.

Never was there heard from his mouth any word the least improper or even merely vulgar. He was of a perfect modesty in all his exterior. One saw in him nothing natural [i.e. nothing merely of nature], but everything in his person led to God, and one felt inclined to open one's soul to him. The Father seemed to partake as much of the angel as of the saint: his expression had more of heaven than of earth. He smiled when one approached him, but he never lost a certain gravity and dignity which were natural to him.

His gait was simple; in walking he held himself a little bent forward and the head inclined to one side; but this bearing was an effect of his humility and modesty, which were thus revealed, and of his goodness, which led him to bend to listen and answer. He recommended not to hold oneself stiffly, so as not to have an imposing and proud air. He was serious though gentle and amiable. When seated, the Father held himself in a simple and easy manner, never leaning back, nor with legs crossed. When he was before a table, as during catechisms and meetings, he ordinarily rested his left arm and bent his head a little. He made no gestures, neither in preaching nor in speaking. He always appeared at ease, but avoided free-and-easiness. He gave the idea of mortification without constraint or affectation.

I never heard him joke in a vulgar way; nevertheless he sometimes had a little word to enliven, but delicate and even distinguished, accompanied by a smile full of grandeur and holiness. One approached the Servant of God only with respect. One experienced a religious seizure of timidity in his presence. When an ill-sounding word reached his ear, his soul was profoundly saddened. His sight led to purity. It was said of

him, as of Our Lord: *A virtue went out from Him.* [Luke vi, 19.] According to one of his most frequent recommendations, he truly spread about him "the good odour of Jesus Christ". [2 Cor. ii, 15.] Mgr Dubuis said this word: "When I came away from him, it seemed to me that I was coming out of a bed of violets, so much did I feel transformed and, so to say, wholly impregnated with the perfume of his virtues. It seemed to me that I carried away something of him."

> *"The priest must live and behave in all things as if he inhabited a house of glass, and never lose sight of the fact that he lives under the gaze of God, and that everything in him must edify and lead to virtue."*

Such were his recommendations, and he put them into practice.

Vigilance Over Himself and Reserve With Persons of the World, With the Sisters and With the Children

The Servant of God exercised a particular vigilance over himself, over his senses; he watched himself in the smallest details of his conduct, in order to keep far from himself even the lightest appearances of sin and all that could give the least suspicion of it. "It would be necessary," he said, "that we could in some way deserve that the word of Our Lord be applicable to us: *Which of you shall convince me of sin?*" [John viii, 46.]

Without anything affected, he avoided fixing his gaze on the persons who spoke to him. As much as his goodness, so benevolent and so paternal, opened souls to confidence, so much did his modesty, his reserve and his dignity inspire respect. He received women only in the confessional, the parlour and the sacristy; the doors of the parlour and of the sacristy were glazed; never did he receive them in his room, even when he was kept there by fatigue and illness. Several persons, in these circumstances, having asked leave to see him in his room, he always refused, saying that it was not permitted, and begging them to wait until he could go to the parlour or the sacristy. There he welcomed them with kindness, but always with a reserve full of dignity. To keep this attitude more surely and to prevent any temptation to talk more than necessary, he submitted to the fatigue of always remaining standing in these circumstances.

In journeys or encounters the Servant of God observed the same prudence. When his health obliged him to use the carriage of his house at Limonest, he allowed only his mother to take a place with him. His rule was to make no visit without necessity, especially to women; he went to them only when the duties of his ministry or of his charge obliged him. He was accustomed to say: "We cannot take too many precautions on this subject, in the evil and corrupt times in which we live. We must not give others occasion to speak ill of us; they say enough without our giving them the motive."

When Father Chevrier had decided on his last journey to Rome, a person devoted to the works of the Prado offered to be useful to him during his stay in the Eternal City; he accepted with gratitude these services of which he had need, but he took good care beforehand to lay down his conditions: "In going to Rome you will be able to do us service for the linen and the cooking, and also for the writing, but our life will be entirely separate from yours: we shall have only the relations truly necessary." He likewise settled the conditions of the journey: "When I have fixed my departure," he said, "I shall write to you; only, you will see to leaving before or after, so that prudence and wisdom may be kept in all things."

A person made him one day in writing the following question: "Must one, to practise modesty, deprive oneself in the streets of looking at everything and keep one's eyes always lowered? It is very difficult to manage that but one can aim at it." Father Chevrier answered her: "One must accustom oneself to do like St Francis de Sales: to see without amusing oneself looking."

Among the measures of prudence, the Servant of God had provided that his priests would have in their service, in the parishes, as far as possible, some young man of tried morals and piety. He insisted on this point so that the reputation of his priests should be exempt from the criticisms and censures to which the presence of women in the presbytery gives rise in many circumstances. It is only in case of grave illness that

his priests are authorized to receive the care of an elderly Sister, or of another person likewise elderly.

The Father went to the Sisters only from necessity, to do his duty as superior, preside at meetings, give his catechism. When he went there, he always rang although the door was sometimes open. Never did he use his key. When he had to enter the interior of the house, he had himself accompanied. With them he constantly had that air of paternal and priestly goodness which never degenerated into familiarity. I never saw him sit down at the Sisters', except for meetings and catechisms; habitually he stopped only just the time to say or do what was necessary. He remained standing and held no conversation. At a glance he took account whether each was at her task. When everyone was at work and silence was well kept, he said: "The good God is here; one feels the good God." He did not pass us a look, a word, a bearing the least contrary to religious modesty. In passing, when he saw something reprehensible, he made a little observation. One did not hear him walk and he never raised his voice, so that when he was at the Sisters' only those who saw him knew that he was in the house.

The Father had much reserve, even with the children. In spite of his gentleness and goodness he always spoke to them with great dignity. I never saw him caress them; he contented himself with making the sign of the cross on their forehead or blessing them; sometimes a little affectionate tap on the cheek of the little boys, but he never permitted himself to touch a little girl. With them the Father was very simple and very good; I saw him even invent games for them, on holidays, that they might not be bored; but I never saw him lose in the least his dignity nor allow them anything too familiar. One day, as he passed among them, one of them permitted herself to touch the Father's cassock; no one noticed it but he; he said, not before the child but to the mistress of the class: "Keep watch on this child, she is passionate [i.e. of ardent temperament], she will not remain good."

This proved true; she later behaved badly.

The Father made the priestly character respected in himself, permitted nothing in his presence that showed free-and-easiness and levity. Yet one must not think that the children feared the Father. Oh! no; they went to him with ease, joy and confidence; when he appeared they surrounded him, but with respect, and dared speak only when questioned.

He commented with great force on the word of Our Lord to St Magdalen: *Noli me tangere*, Touch me not. [John xx, 17.] "Our Lord," he said, "wished to show that one must know how to deprive oneself of all these exterior marks of affection, when one is seriously God's, in order to lead a truly spiritual life." He asked that overly affectionate caresses be avoided with little children. He wished one to be, not scrupulous but prudent: "We are so prone to evil," he said, "that we find, even in children sometimes, an occasion to awaken concupiscence, especially when they have natural qualities; affection often springs from these qualities and it leads us to caresses which revolt the senses; not that every testimony of affection and tenderness must be avoided, since we see Our Lord Himself embrace little children [Mark x, 16]; but it must be done with an honest aim, to attract them and bring them to God, and not to satisfy oneself."

The Father was very severe as regards modesty in exterior relations. He wanted his Sisters to be simple but of very great reserve, even with the priests of the house, speaking to them only from necessity or propriety, but as little as possible, and always with a dignified exterior.

Renunciation of His Heart

The Servant of God wished that one watch attentively over one's affections, and among the indispensable conditions which he asked for being a true disciple of Our Lord, he insisted on renunciation of one's heart. He gave on this the wisest advice. "The heart," he said, "has need to love, but it must be made to renounce every affection that is not according to the law of God." He warned against the dangers of natural love when it is not guided by true charity. "It is no use saying, natural love tends to a more sensible love, and this love

then has sad effects." And he concluded by saying: "We must hate ourselves and hate in others all that is not for God; renounce the satisfactions one receives from creatures, in order to have a great freedom of mind and heart to be wholly God's; love all creatures in relation to God, in God, for God and with God." — "One must take heed to oneself," he said, "in relations with women, and when one perceives that a woman loves you ever so little, one must keep her away from one, so as not to give her occasion to love you more."

A pious person had seemed to have for the Servant of God an affection that was perhaps not supernatural enough. He said to her one day: "Do you do all your actions well for the good God?" As this person, for a moment nonplussed, admitted to him that she did some to please him, he answered her: "Poor child! it is not I, however, who shall reward you!" And he tried to raise this soul, which was capable of it, to a higher perfection.

He writes to a person of the world:

> *"I like nothing less than these insipidities and matters of sentiment in spiritual direction. Experience shows us every day how harmful these ways of acting are to souls. If ever I were too kind to you and natural sentiment dominated in our relations, leave me at once. Jesus Christ before all. He alone is worthy of our love and we must see only Him in everything. Live on sacrifices, and when there is some sacrifice of the heart to be made, do not hesitate to make it at once for love of Jesus Christ, our only Master."*

He had a particular gift for making souls see Jesus Christ; it was thus that he turned mind and heart away from creatures.

[A priest's deposition:] The day and hour of my entry to the Prado had been fixed by the Father. I went therefore to the parlour where I waited for him. He received me with his saint's smile, then said these words to me, which astonished me a little but gave me great lights on the religious life: "Now, my child, you have only one Father, who is in heaven." And showing me the little children of the First Communion who were amusing themselves in the courtyard: "There are your brothers." That is how the Father spoke. Nature remained quite taken aback on hearing him; but the heart was raised, the soul grew and saw only the supernatural. He made one understand many things in a single word!

In a retreat he said to us: "If you need creatures, go back to the world." He said to us again: "After the example of the Blessed Virgin, be virgins in mind, in heart and in body. Let Jesus Christ be the study of your mind, the passion of your heart, the occupation of your life."

Here are a few lines extracted from a sermon in which he speaks of detachment of the heart:

> *"The sacrifice of the heart is the first that God asks; before God, therefore, our dearest affections must be broken. Now see whether you make this sacrifice of the heart well to God, whether you do not feel more attraction, more love for creatures than for God Himself. The heart is not made for creatures, it is made for God. To give all one's affections to a creature is to snatch from God His work, it is to despise God, it is to outrage Him."*

One day a person put an indiscreet question to him on this subject. He confined himself to answering: "Oh! my heart has long been taken!"

In spite of the care he took to live holily and never to give pretext for criticism, the Servant of God was nevertheless calumniated, defamed. He had no trouble in clearing himself, but the humiliation of having had to do so was very keenly felt by him, above all in this matter. He said, in fact, one day, when someone, seeing him overwhelmed with sadness, asked what was the matter: "I am insulted every day, when I pass through the courtyard, by an infernal tongue that I cannot avoid, since it is at home, in the house opposite. Ah! let people say of me whatever they like, but there are things that I ask the good God to spare me!"

[A priest's deposition:] Some years after the Father's death, says one of his priests, I saw this person again, who had since left the neighbourhood; she came to pray at his tomb and, she told me, to make amends to his memory for all she had done to him and to render homage to his virtue. Besides, no one of his house or of

those who lived with him ever gave credence to his calumnies. One saw in them a means willed by God to bring out the humility of His Servant and increase his merits.

It is to be remarked that the devil, who several times, by the mouth of various possessed persons, addressed insults to him, speaking of his pride, his impatiences, his affected poverty, the sacrileges of his children of the First Communion, the failings of his clerical school, never reproached him with any fault of this kind.

Means of Preserving Purity, in Himself and in the House

I constantly saw the Servant of God faithful in employing all the means that the saints recommend to preserve purity, such as prayer, vigilance, humility, mortification, continual work, flight from the world and from all occasions of sin. He had in particular a very great devotion to the Blessed Virgin, all of whose feasts he celebrated with lively piety. One of his principal devotions was the Rosary, which he recited every day, entire or in part, according to the time he could dispose of. Several times a day he recited or had recited in his house the *Memorare* ["Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary"] with the following prayer: "By your most holy Virginity and your Immaculate Conception, O most pure Virgin, Queen of Angels, obtain, if it please you, that our hearts and our souls be purified from all sin." In making the Way of the Cross and in meditating the sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary he could find in his heart accents which inspired a profound horror of all sins of the body. He greatly recommended the regular frequenting of the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist, to arrive at stripping oneself of bad habits and natural imperfections and clothing oneself with Jesus Christ.

The Servant of God watched with very great care that the holy virtue should reign in the house. Not only by his instructions, his counsels, his examples did he apply himself to inspiring his children with a great love of this beautiful virtue, but he was very careful to banish from around him, in conversations, jokes, manners, all that could in the least wound this virtue. He, so good, so indulgent for every fault, was very severe from this point of view. No fault wounded him more at heart nor provoked from him so prompt and energetic a repression; when it was a question of a grave and above all scandalous fault, he was pitiless in driving the culprits at once from the house.

Two pupils, sent away from the house whose conduct they had ill edified, came back some time after to the chapel and the parlour to boast of their exploits. The Servant of God learned it at the moment when he was about to sing Vespers; he had the offenders come to the sacristy and addressed very strong words to them on their conduct. The witnesses admitted that on hearing him one would have said the Sovereign Judge at the last judgment.

The Servant of God showed, during his last illness, a great modesty. He chose to nurse him a Sister already elderly and of tried virtue. But he never wished her to watch by him during the night. It was the priests and the seminarians who fulfilled that office. Up to the last moment he observed the most perfect decency. As long as he could get up he dressed himself; one had only his cassock to put on him. All those who had to nurse him and watch by him admired how faithful he was in observing, without exaggeration, all the rules of the most exact modesty.

Thoughts:

> *"Humility purifies our mind. Poverty and detachment from creatures purify our heart. Obedience to God purifies our will. Mortification and penance purify our body. As fire purifies bodies, so we must be purified by God; the Holy Spirit, who is the divine fire, must consume all that is foreign in us."*

Table of Contents of the 1926 Edition, and Publisher's List

Table of Contents of the 1926 Edition, and Publisher's List

[Translator's note: the following is the book's own Table of Contents, translated in full. The page numbers are those of the 1926 Vitte edition (Roman numerals for the front matter) and do not correspond to this English text.]

Table of Contents

	Page
Letter of His Eminence Cardinal Maurin	v
Preface	vii

CHAPTER I. FAITH — 1 The importance the Venerable gave to this virtue. Exterior marks of his faith, p. 2. — The Most Holy Trinity, 6. — The Holy Spirit, 7. — Jesus Christ, 12. — The Incarnation, 19. — The Eucharist, 22. — The holy Mass, 28. — The Passion, 35. — The Blessed Virgin, 40. — The Angels, 45. — The Saints, 47. — Propagation of the Faith. Catechism, 52. — Preaching, 62. — The Holy Books. The Gospel, 69. — The holy place, 75. — The ceremonies of worship, 79. — The Breviary, 82. — The holy Church, 85. — The Pope, 87. — The Bishops, 89. — The Priests, 93. — The Commandments of God and of the Church, 100. — Indulgences, 102. — Confession, 103.

CHAPTER II. HOPE — 104 Confidence in his eternal salvation, p. 105. — Exhortations to confidence, 105. — Contempt of the things of the world, 114. — Confidence in God and recourse to prayer, 116. — Hope solely in Providence, 123. — All for God and souls, 130. — Joy in suffering and in fulfilling his ministry, 131. — Consolation at the thought of death, 138. — Hope rewarded by graces and extraordinary helps, 140.

CHAPTER III. CHARITY TOWARD GOD — 149 Care to avoid sin and to correct his imperfections, p. 150. — A mind constantly occupied with God: manner of speaking of Him and praying to Him, 155. — Horror of blasphemy, 161. — Cares employed to inspire love of God around him, 163.

CHAPTER IV. CHARITY TOWARD THE NEIGHBOUR — 171 *Spiritual aid.* — Love of the neighbour. Conversion of sinners, p. 172. — Labours undertaken for the salvation of souls, 179. — Compassion for afflicted souls, 186. — Fervour and efficacy of the holy ministry, 188. — His goodness, 191. — Souls in Purgatory, 193. — Conduct toward persecutors, 194. — Care to avoid discords, 196. — His mercy, 200. — Having at heart the good reputation of the neighbour, 201. *Temporal aid.* — To love and help the poor, p. 204. — Care of the sick, 211. — Charity for prisoners, 215. — Thoughts on Charity, 216.

CHAPTER V. PRUDENCE — 218 All his actions were done to obtain his salvation, p. 219. — Practice of the evangelical counsels, 221. — Flight from occasions of sin. Love of work. Relations with the neighbour, 225. — Prayer, study of the Gospel, love of recollection and retreat, 228. — Struggle against his defects and imperfections. Love of simplicity, frankness and uprightness, 232. — He asked counsel, he acted with calm, with a wise slowness and a great practical sense. He fled human prudence, 235. — In the exercise of the holy ministry, great good sense, broad direction, gentleness and firmness, 242. — Direction of scrupulous souls. Moderation, reasonable care of health. Before all, to put the spirit of God into souls, 251.

CHAPTER VI. JUSTICE — 257 The spirit of justice animated all his actions, p. 258. — Respect for the Sovereign Pontiff, the Bishops, parish priests, priests, the civil Authority, 259. — Fidelity to the divine Office, 262. — Duties of a Superior, spiritual and temporal care for the persons entrusted to him, 263. — Duties of justice. Workmen and suppliers, 267. — Gratitude toward God, his parents, his collaborators and his benefactors, 269.

CHAPTER VII. FORTITUDE AND PATIENCE — 280 In his childhood, his studies, his ministry, his foundations, p. 281. — His life at the Prado. His Writings, 285. — Forced rest. Condemnation of laziness,

288. — Perseverance in his designs, in his direction, 291. — Patience in sufferings, persecutions, injuries; in contradictions, oppositions, lack of consideration, 294.

CHAPTER VIII. TEMPERANCE — 299 Mortification in food. He was content with the necessary. He avoided gluttony, luxury, refinement, p. 300. — Mortification of the senses. Correction of defects, 307. — Bearing sufferings. Practice of penance, 314.

CHAPTER IX. HUMILITY — 319 Father Chevrier never spoke of himself, bore no allusion to his holiness and regarded himself as unworthy of consideration, p. 320. — He attributed to God alone the success of his Work and regarded himself as a sinner, 325. — He accused himself publicly of his faults and humbly bore contempt and reproaches, 328. — He refused everything that could make him noticed, effaced himself as much as possible, even in his house, and went begging at the door of La Charité, 333. — He formed with care to the practice of humility the souls entrusted to him, 339.

CHAPTER X. OBEDIENCE — 350 Father Chevrier renounced his own will all his life, p. 351. — He sought only the will of God, 357. — He made great account of obedience in his instructions, his counsels, his direction, 358.

CHAPTER XI. POVERTY — 368 His predilection for poverty, p. 369. — Motives for the choice of this virtue. Teaching and examples of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of the Saints, 369. — The present necessity for the priest to bear this distinctive character, 374. — How the Venerable Father Chevrier realized this ideal of poverty. At Saint-André, 379. — At the Cité de l'Enfant-Jésus, 381. — Foundation of the Prado, house of poverty. Poverty in lodging, 384. — Poverty in clothing, 394. — Poverty in food, 396. — Poverty in goods, 400. — Poverty in work, 415. — Poverty in service, 419. — The priestly work: his ideal of the poor priest, 425. — Realization of his priestly ideal, 428. — Pradosian formation of the pupils whom he destined for the ministry of the poor, 437.

CHAPTER XII. CHASTITY — 445 Constant modesty, p. 446. — Vigilance over himself and reserve with persons of the world, the Sisters, and the children, 448. — Renunciation of his heart, 452. — Means of preserving purity, in himself and in the House, 455. — Thoughts, 456.

Various Works (publisher's list printed after the Table of Contents)

[The prices, in francs, are as printed; the list is the publisher's, Vitte of Lyon, and is not part of Father Chevrier's text or Canon Chambost's.]

The Priest According to the Gospel, or The True Disciple of Jesus Christ, by the Venerable Antoine Chevrier, founder of the Providence of the Prado. 8vo, xvi + 580 pages, adorned with a heliogravure portrait. Lyon, Vitte. 12 fr.

New Life of the Venerable Father Chevrier, founder of the Providence of the Prado, from his writings and his Process of Beatification, by Canon C. Chambost. 5th edition. One 8vo volume of 620 pages with several engravings. Lyon, Vitte, 1925. 12 fr.

Life of the Venerable Father Chevrier, founder of the Providence of the Prado at Lyon, by J.-M. Villefranche. 24th edition. One 8vo volume of 400 pages, with several engravings. Lyon, Vitte, 1919. Out of print.

Vita del Venerabile Antonio Chevrier, sacerdote, fondatore della Provvidenza del Prado a Lione, by J.-M. Villefranche. Italian version by the priest Alfonso Codaghengo [*sic*]. 2nd edition. Turin, Marietti. 4.50 fr.

IN PREPARATION: English translation.

Life of Father Chevrier. Short illustrated notice. Paillart edition, 32 pp., 75th thousand [Fr. *75e édition* as printed]. 0.25 fr.

Father Chevrier. Extracts from his Writings, preceded by a notice. One 12mo volume, 360 pp. Lyon, Vitte. Out of print.

Life of Father Chevrier, by A. Delaserre. Lyon, H. Lardanchet, 10 Rue Président-Carnot, 1892. One illustrated 12mo volume, 200 pp. 4 fr.

The Mysteries of the Rosary, by the Ven. Father Chevrier. One 18mo volume, 64 pp., bound in boards, with engravings. Lyon, Michel. 2 fr.

The Priestly Ministry in the Present Times. How the Worst Parishes May Be Regenerated. Extracts from the Writings and the Life of the Abbé Chevrier. Lille, Maison Saint-Joseph. Grammont (Belgium), Work of St Charles Borromeo. One 18mo volume, 200 [pp.]. 3 fr.

To the Parochial Clergy. Why Our Ministry Is Sterile or Little Fruitful. (From the Writings and the Life of the Abbé Chevrier.) 2nd edition. Lille and Grammont. One 18mo volume, 210 pp. 3 fr.

Collection of Prayers, Canticles and Liturgical Chants, for the use of the Providence of the Prado. 1 vol. 18mo, 500 pp., bound in boards. 4 fr.

The Abbé Camille Rambaud, of Lyon, His Life and Social Works, by Joseph Buche. Lyon, Cumin et Masson. One 8vo volume, 332 pp. 4 fr.

Various pictures of the Ven. Father Chevrier. Large picture and picture-card of his priestly ideal. A. Michel, Place Bellecour, 30 bis, Lyon.