St. Anthony Mary Claret

ASCETICAL LETTER

Carta ascética

From the Spanish of the first edition (Barcelona, 1862)

English translation

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

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About this translation

Translated from the *Carta ascética que el Excmo. e Ilmo. Sr. Arzobispo Claret escribió al presidente de uno de los coros de la Academia de San Miguel* (Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, 1862). The translation is complete.

The notes give the references to Claret's sources and the notes he printed himself; the modern editors' commentary and the translator's own remarks are not reproduced.

Ascetical Letter

The Letter

Ascetical Letter which the Most Excellent and Most Illustrious Archbishop Claret wrote to the President of one of the Choirs of the Academy of St. Michael. With the approval of the Ordinary. Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, printing house of Pablo Riera, 1862.

My dear Sir, with all my regard and esteem: I have just received your esteemed letter, and although I have no time to answer each of the questions you put to me, I shall reply to the most important ones.[1]

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[1] Aguilar, F., *Vida...* p. 290. *The Value of Time and How to Use It Well*.

The Letter

1. The Holy Fear of God

In the first place, I must tell you that it is most fitting that we walk in a holy fear of God, remembering that a great part of the angels fell,[1] that our first parents Adam and Eve fell,[2] that Samson,[3] David[4] and Solomon[5] fell, that St. Peter,[6] Tertullian,[7] Origen[8] and many others fell, through having relied on their own strength; and that we too can fall, and without doubt shall fall, if we lean on ourselves. But if, knowing our inconstancy, frailty and wretchedness, we distrust ourselves, lean on God and put our confidence in God, we shall be sure of not falling and of being able to do all things in him and with him.[9]

For this very reason, then, you must always walk in this holy fear; and so I tell you and charge you never, ever to do anything at all, however slight, that you know to be an offence against God or contrary to his holy law, to the evangelical counsels, and to the interior inspirations by which he makes known to you his most holy will. Once you know this will of God, you ought to fulfil it with the greatest possible perfection, even if there were no heaven to hope for; nor should you fail to fulfil it, even if there were no hell to fear. Since you call God Father, and so he is, behave like a good son: fear to give him the least displeasure, and take pains to please him in all things, as Jesus Christ has taught us.[10]

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[1] Cf. Rev 12,7–9.

[2] Cf. Gen 3,1–19.

[3] Judg 16,4–31.

[4] Cf. 2 Sam ch. 11–12.

[5] Cf. 1 Kgs 11,1–13.

[6] Cf. Mt 26,69–75; Mk 14,66–72; Lk 22,54–62; Jn 18,15–27.

[7] Quasten, J., *Patrología* \[BAC, Madrid 3rd ed. 1978\] vol. 1 p. 546.

[8] On Origen (born in Alexandria about the year 185 and died in Tyre in 253), cf. ibid., pp. 351–410.

[9] Cf. Phil 4,13.

[10] Cf. Jn 8,29.

2. The Love of God

In the second place, love God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind.[1]

God is loved with the whole heart when nothing is loved that is an offence against God, and nothing is said or done that God has forbidden. God is loved with the whole heart when he is loved with all one's affection, without the mixture of any other love; or, if something else is loved too, it is solely for God's sake, either because he himself commands it, or because that thing is a means that leads us and helps us to love God.

God is loved with the whole soul when a man uses his soul to love him more. For since the soul has three powers, memory, understanding and will, with the memory it recalls the temporal and eternal evils from which God has freed or preserved it; it recalls besides the goods that God has bestowed on it, bodily and spiritual goods, temporal goods and the eternal ones it hopes for. Therefore, filled with gratitude, it cannot but love its Benefactor. With the understanding it meditates on who God is and who man is, what benefits it has received and what it still hopes to receive; and in this meditation the fire of the love of God is kindled, as the royal prophet says.[2]

When the understanding meditates and contemplates, and the memory recalls and presents the picture of the benefits received from God, the will, enlightened by this knowledge, cannot but love God with all its affection.

The will, once moved to love God, commands as mistress all its inner and outer powers to busy themselves in loving and serving God, so that it directs all the bodily senses and the well-ordered passions to the love of God; so much so that if the eyes look or close, it is for love of God; if the tongue speaks or keeps silent, it is for love of God; if the feet walk or stay still and recollected, it is for love of God; yes, all that it does or refrains from doing is all and solely for love of God. And not only this: since love is so ingenious, it is not content to love and serve God with what it knows; rather the understanding (as the precept says: *You shall love God with your mind*[3]) reasons out and invents ways of loving and serving God, as we see also in the lovers of the world, who are always working out ways and inventing means to make money, to obtain honours and to enjoy pleasures. Yes, whoever truly loves God is day and night working out ways and inventing means so that God may not be offended, but known, loved and served by all creatures; and on this he is continually reflecting.

This is precisely the will of God made known by Moses to his people and to each individual in particular. "These words of the love of God," he says to them, "which I have commanded you this day, you shall always keep fixed in your heart, and you shall repeat them and teach them to your children, and you shall meditate on them when you sit in your house and when you go on a journey; you shall do the same when you rise in the morning and when you go to bed at night; and so that you may never forget them, you shall keep them bound as a sign on your hand; and so that you may always have them before you, you shall wear them hanging over your forehead, so that they move continually between your eyes; and I wish you to write them on the thresholds and doors of your house."[4]

Not only must you remember this precept of the love of God, but you must also accustom yourself to walk always in his divine presence. Happily, all things help us to this; yes, all things, even the smallest, are proclaiming to us the power of God, his wisdom, his goodness and his other attributes. On contemplating all these wonders and works of God, you will not be able to keep from exclaiming with St. Augustine: "Lord, heaven, earth and all things tell me to love you, my God!..."[5]

By loving God truly and walking continually in his divine presence, you will direct to his greater honour and glory all that you do and say; you will turn to God with all confidence, as to a friend, and, as a faithful servant, you will do everything in his service. I do not advise you to increase the number of things you are already doing for God: you cannot do everything, nor does God ask the impossible. What God wants of you is that you do well the very things you are doing, with inner peace, with silence, without complaints or laments about your neighbours or about things, but that you do everything with constancy and gentleness, growing each day in purity and rightness of intention on the part of the heart. On these two feet you must always walk toward perfection in the presence of God, thinking that God is watching you continually and is pleased with all that you are doing, saying and thinking.[6]

In the third place, love your neighbour as yourself; love him not for your own use and profit, but in God and for God and for the good of your neighbour himself. To love is to wish well; wish him well, then, and procure for him every possible good. Love or charity is patient,[7] and so you must bear with patience his annoyances and impertinences.

To love those who favour, serve and console us is an easy thing and requires no virtue at all; but to love, serve and show tenderness to those who offend us and are a nuisance, with no other motive than to be pleasing to God, is a truly supernatural love: this is to love them in God and only for God, says St. Francis de Sales.

It is a great virtue, said the same saint,[8] to bear with sweetness and modesty the importunities of our neighbour, his moods, his rusticity, his discourtesies, and above all his importunities when he makes us spend time on things apparently trivial and idle, which we cannot cut short without great rudeness to him or distress on his part. The patient man suffers, keeps silent or speaks gently, and offers it all to God, in

imitation of Jesus, who thus bore with his disciples and the crowds; but the man without virtue excuses himself by saying it is so as not to waste time. And it is not so, but from lack of patience, for seldom does that same man spend his time on things that are worth, in God's sight, anything like as much as bearing with our neighbour.

The signs of goodwill and affection shown to persons for whom we feel aversion and antipathy are very pleasing to God, because the soul exercises them according to its higher part, against the aversion that resides in the lower portion of the same soul.

One of the greatest acts of charity toward our neighbour is to love and bear with those who are troublesome, capricious, stubborn, ignorant, vain, proud, etc. This is the touchstone of true charity, said St. Francis de Sales.

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[1] Cf. Mt 22,37–39; Mk 12,29–31; Lk 10,27.

[2] Cf. Ps 39,4 (Vulgate numbering; Ps 39,3 in the Hebrew: "in my meditation a fire shall flame out").

[3] Cf. Mt 22,37; Mk 12,30; Lk 10,27.

[4] Deut 6,6–9.

[5] St. Augustine, *Confessions* bk. 10 ch. 6 n. 8: *Confesiones de San Agustín*, transl. Fr. Eugenio Zeballos (LR, Barcelona 1868) vol. 2 p. 227.

[6] Cf. *Aut.* n. 197–199. Cf. *Aut.* n. 545–549.

[7] Cf. 1 Cor 13,4.

[8] Cf. St. Francis de Sales, *Directorio de religiosas* p. 16: *Obras* (Madrid 1771) vol. 1 p. 312.

3. Correction

When you have to correct anyone, you will have recourse to gentleness, which is very effective for this. Gentleness is the great handmaid of charity and its inseparable companion. Reproof, considered in its nature, is bitter; but candied with gentleness and cooked in the fire of charity, it becomes cordial, lovable and delicious. Let us not forget the proverb that says: "More flies are caught with a drop of honey than with a barrel of vinegar."[1]

To this gentleness, which is so necessary to you, you will climb by four steps:

1. You will take great care not to show displeasure outwardly in actions, words or looks, even though deep within you feel pain.

2. You will try at once to stifle the inner pain you feel. You will not let your thoughts dwell on that resentment, but rather cast it off at once as a bad and harmful thing. And in its place you will think that it is a gift Jesus Christ is giving you, holding out to you, by the hand of that so-and-so, the cup of his passion.

3. You will rejoice to see that Jesus provides you with work in your trade, which is patience, so as to gain treasures for heaven, thinking and saying: What would a craftsman gain from knowing his trade well, if no one gave him work? So, then, what would you gain from possessing the virtue of patience well, if no one gave you anything on which to exercise it?

4. Each day you must desire to have occasions of exercising that virtue, and you must rejoice when an occasion is given you of putting it into practice. A good craftsman who loves work never complains of the many who give him work; on the contrary, he is glad and shows a cheerful face to his customers. You must do the same with those who give you something to suffer, since they give you much to gain and merit for heaven.

Finally, with regard to your neighbour, I want to give you four general instructions:

1. You must never speak ill of your neighbour, however much he may have offended you; nor listen with pleasure when anyone speaks ill of him; rather show displeasure and change the conversation if possible. For Jesus Christ says that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks;[2] and whoever has an evil tongue has an evil heart, and does not love his neighbour as himself.[3]

2. Never do harm to your neighbour, since evil deeds reveal an evil heart. The same Jesus Christ says that from the evil heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries and other foul deeds, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, and all the evil things that are done against God and against our neighbour.[4]

3. Do and procure for your neighbour every possible good, spiritual and bodily, temporal and eternal; and when it is not possible for you to procure it for him, at least wish it for him, commend him to God and have compassion on him. Perhaps he will not thank you; no matter, God will thank you for it; nor were or are the favours and benefits Jesus Christ has bestowed on us repaid with gratitude. Perhaps you will be despised, persecuted and ill-treated by the very ones to whom you do good; no matter: think that they are delirious sick people who do not know what they are doing; pray to God for them and say like Jesus from the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."[5] Just as one does not abandon a delirious sick man, neither should you abandon that unhappy man.

4. Bear with his weaknesses and annoyances. In nothing will you make known so well the good heart you have toward your neighbour as by patience in sufferings. Why do you think a mother puts up so much with the annoyances and impertinences of her children? Because she loves them. Love your neighbours, then, and you will have patience with them, you will exercise meekness, and you will even treat them with gentleness.

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[1] Cf. ibid., p. 39.

[2] Mt 12,34.

[3] Cf. Mt 22,39; Mk 12,31; Lk 10,27.

[4] Cf. Mt 15,19.

[5] Lk 23,34.

4. Selfishness or Self-Love

Charity has an enemy that it is indispensable to know well, however it may disguise itself; for if we are careless, it will destroy charity and spoil everything, because it is the moth, the woodworm, the cancer, the plague that does away with it. Charity is the queen of the virtues; it is like the sun among the stars, like gold among the metals; it is what gives life to all the virtues; but if charity is lacking, everything is lacking, nothing is of any use, as the Apostle says.[1]

The enemy of charity, then, is selfishness, or disordered self-love, which consists in a certain pride, ambition and envy. This enemy of charity gets into the proud heart, which then covets and desires everything for itself, riches, honours, etc.; and from there it passes to envy, which is a kind of sadness and pain at seeing that someone possesses riches, honours, etc., and which tries to sink him by words and deeds. Just as in a pair of scales one pan rises in proportion as the other goes down, so the proud and ambitious man speaks ill of his neighbour, believing that by lowering his neighbour he himself will rise.

Therefore you will always speak well of your neighbour or keep silent. There is nothing that so kindles charity and preserves it as each one's knowing that the other thinks and speaks well of him. Seneca was so convinced of this truth that he said: *Si vis amari, ama,* "If you wish to be loved, love";[2] and in truth there is no more effective means of making oneself loved than to love first, because love cannot be repaid except with another love.[3]

To preserve and increase this love or charity you must look on each of our neighbours as Jesus Christ himself, so that, when something is to be done for us to do, we must remember those words that Jesus Christ

will say to us: *Truly I tell you, what you did to the least of your brethren, you did to me.*[4]

Let us do things, then, as those who serve Jesus Christ and not men, and in that way we shall do them well, with good manners and good grace. And when our neighbour does us some service, we must also see Jesus Christ in him, like St. Peter when he saw Jesus Christ at his feet to wash them, who, astonished, said: *Domine, tu mihi lavas pedes?*, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"[5]

In this way humility will be preserved, on the one hand, in both the one and the other: for the one will not disdain to serve his brother, seeing him as Jesus Christ, and the other will not grow conceited because everyone serves him; rather he will be the more confounded and humbled by it, considering that the service they render him is not for his own sake, but because he represents Jesus Christ; and meanwhile he will say deep within: *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo da gloriam*, "Not to me, Lord, but to you be this service, this homage given."[6] And on the other hand, charity of one toward another will be preserved and increased for the same reason.[7]

When your neighbour asks you some favour, some service or some alms, etc., you will do it graciously, with joy and promptness; and if you cannot do it, you will say to him: "Indeed I should be very glad to do it if I could; but I cannot, and I am very sorry not to be able to oblige you." We must not imitate those who do not know how to do a favour or give an alms without pulling a sour face and grumbling a great deal, putting their neighbour to shame. In this way they lose a great deal before God and men, by their bad temper and worse charity. You will not do so, but will remember what the Holy Spirit says: "Son, do not join reproach to the kindness you do, nor accompany your gifts with the harshness of bitter words. Is it not true that the dew tempers the heat? So too good words are worth more than the gift. Do you not know that a kind word is worth more than the gift? Yet a man will accompany the one with the other. The fool bursts out harshly with insults, and the gift of an ill-bred and hard man grieves and draws tears from the eyes."[8]

Therefore, if at some time, through your temperament or little patience, you should fail in this heavenly teaching, you will repent and ask pardon of God and of your neighbour, saying to him: *Ignosce, frater, et ora pro me*, "Forgive me, brother, and pray to God for me."[9]

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[1] Cf. 1 Cor 13,2.

[2] Seneca, *Epistle IX to Lucilius* (cf. Rodríguez, A., o.c., p. 168).

[3] Rodríguez, A., o.c., ibid.

[4] Mt 25,40.

[5] Jn 13,6.

[6] Ps 115,1 (so the source; Ps 113,9 in the Vulgate numbering).

[7] Cf. Rodríguez, A., o.c., p. 180.

[8] Sir 18,15–18.

[9] Cf. Rodríguez, A., o.c., p. 181.

5. Patience with Oneself

So far I have told you of the patience with which you must bear with your neighbour; but now I tell you that you have still greater need of patience to bear with your own daily defects than to bear with those of others, as happens to those who truly wish to love and serve God. Therefore, when you have the frailty to commit some defect or fault, in spite of the firm resolutions you have made in prayer and the care with which you go about, you must not on that account lose heart or lose your peace, nor torment your heart with useless reflections; rather you will humble yourself before God, repent sincerely, make a good confession in due time, and walk on with confidence.

Not only must you have patience in bearing your defects, but also bodily pains and dryness of spirit. Although St. Peter wished to stay on Tabor[1] and fled from Calvary,[2] that mount is not for that reason any less useful and profitable than the other. It is better, said St. Francis de Sales, to eat bread without sugar than sugar without bread.

The true servant of God seldom complains of what he suffers, and still less does he wish others to pity him and lament over his trials. All his sufferings vanish when he compares them with those of Jesus, just as the stars vanish at the sight of the sun.

Patience in pains and illnesses must be not only courageous, but also loving and humble, like fine balsam, which by its weight sinks to the bottom of the water.

Humility consists chiefly in loving humiliations, desiring them and practising them: receiving with joy those that come to us without our intending them (and these, so received, are the best), or seeking them so as to exercise oneself in them.

St. Francis de Sales greatly esteemed a lowly humility, without calculation. He wished that nothing be done from the ridiculous motive of vanity, but that good works not be omitted for fear of praise. To blame oneself and to praise oneself, he said, may spring from one and the same root of vanity. And humble words, when they do not have their origin in an inward contempt of oneself, are the finest flower of pride.

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[1] Cf. Mt 17,4; Mk 9,6; Lk 9,33.

[2] Cf. Mt 26,56.

6. Mortification

As to what you ask me about mortification, I shall only tell you that mortification without prayer is a body without a soul, and prayer without mortification is a soul without a body. These two things must always go together. The roses of prayer grow only among the thorns of mortification. Moreover, I must tell you that exterior mortification, animated by interior mortification, is a very effective means of obtaining the favours of heaven; but it must be with discretion, because indiscreet austerities are usually the reef on which those who practise them run aground, and with them beginners on the way of perfection ruin their health and strength, making themselves useless for everything as a result. For this reason I must tell you that interior mortifications are incomparably more precious than exterior ones, and those that come by God's disposition or permission, embraced gladly, are much more useful. This truth is not understood by those who, by their own whim, give themselves indiscreetly to fasts, disciplines, hair shirts and other austerities, and at the least word that wounds their reputation, even only in imagination, become disquieted and upset and let themselves be carried into scandalous excesses.

7. Silence and Retirement

I also want to say a word to you about silence and retirement, since you ask me about this. I tell you, then, that there is a time to keep silent and a time to speak;[1] and for that very reason silence is a virtue only when it suits the circumstances of time, moderation and prudence. St. Francis de Sales said that there are some who keep silent through temperament, through stupidity, through ignorance or through pride.

The same I tell you about retirement, for some seek peace in it in vain.

True peace of heart is not found in retirement or withdrawal from the occupations in which God wishes to employ his servants.

They are indeed to be pitied who complain when they are employed in offices that, to their mind, distract them. When occupations come through the channel of obedience or of duty, there is no reason to fear: they

themselves lead us to God. How many men and women I know who, in the midst of the bustle of streets and squares, know how to find deep in their heart, where God speaks to them, a solitude that would hardly be found equalled in the Thebaid! The Spirit of the Lord breathes where he wills,[2] when he wills and on whom he wills. What matters is to know the will of God and to do it well on our part, for he will take good care to give us the helps and graces we need.

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[1] Eccl 3,7.

[2] Jn 3,8.

8. Communion

To practise these and the other virtues you need to receive Holy Communion frequently, since it is for this that the Lord has remained in the Most Blessed Sacrament of the altar.[1] These are his express words: *Behold, I am with you to the end of the ages.*[2] *Come to me, all you who labour in the exercise of the virtues and carry the burden of sufferings, and I will refresh you.*[3] *I am the way, the truth and the life.*[4] He is the way by the good example he has given us and continually gives us, going before us in the practice of the virtues, doing and teaching;[5] and we, if we are truly Christians, cannot but follow and imitate him. He is truth itself, and teaches it to us in his holy Gospel. Finally, he is life, who makes us live in the life of grace if we observe his doctrine, because the words he has spoken are for us spirit and life;[6] and besides, if we receive the holy sacraments, especially the Eucharist, in which is the bread of life.

Jesus Christ himself has said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live for ever, and the bread that I shall give is my own flesh, which I shall give for the life or salvation of the world. Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you will not have life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is truly food and my blood is truly drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the Father who sent me lives, and I live by the Father, so whoever eats me will also live by me and by my own life."[7] I shall explain this heavenly teaching a little.

Man, physically considered, is a compound of soul and body. The body subsists only through its union with the soul; the soul is the vivifying principle that holds together the various parts of our organism and imparts to them the movements necessary for their preservation. Since this union of the two substances that form our nature was loosened by sin, there resulted in our material substance a principle of dissolution, which shows itself first in the unceasing loss of our organic molecules, then in illness, and finally in death.

The soul, warned of the body's plight by the voice of need, hastens to repair the losses of the organism by nourishment. It chooses, among the bodies that surround it, those most suited to sustaining life, that is, vegetable and animal substances, taking them into the body, where, by an admirable mechanism to which the soul itself gives the impulse without understanding its secret, these foreign bodies are assimilated to its own and strengthen it for a few hours, no more; and therefore this same operation must be repeated at least once every day.

Just as the body has its food, the soul too has its own, which is the Eucharist, called the bread of angels[8] because the angels are spirits like our souls and have the same food.

The life of created spirits, like the life of the uncreated Spirit whose image they are, consists wholly in knowledge and love. The life of God is sovereign, because the perfect comprehension of his infinite being gives him the full enjoyment of himself; it fills all his desires; it leaves, so to speak, no void in his intelligence and love.

The present life of our spirit is necessarily incomplete, since we are deprived of the sight of the only being capable of filling our faculties of knowing and loving.

In this state of obscurity, necessary for our probation, creatures are permitted to dispute with God the dominion of our soul.

These creatures are of two kinds: spirits and bodies.

The proud spirits who, in imitation of Satan, wish to be their own light, strive to subjugate our spirit and to substitute their false and deceitful word for the word of God. They keep repeating to us in a thousand ways the language Lucifer used with Eve: "Despise the law of God and listen to us; we will teach you the art of being great and happy."[9]

If, like Eve, we commit the folly of preferring their word to the divine teaching, we fall into heresy, which is spiritual idolatry, the adoration of the created spirit. Our soul, no longer enlightened and set on fire by the life-giving word of faith that comes from the mouth of God,[10] goes down from darkness to darkness along the road of error, until, denying all truth and denying itself, it believes in nothing but matter.

Bodies, with the gleam of beauty that shines in them and with the pleasant sensations they give the senses, are another source of perdition.

The soul that does not rise by meditation on the wings of faith to the Creator of these things, who is more beautiful than all of them, as we read in the sacred book of Wisdom;[11] the soul to which prayer has never given (because it has never prayed) the foretaste of the infinite delights of heaven, is defenceless against the attractions of earthly beauties; passing from one idol to another, it ends by worshipping everything except God.

The cult of the flesh, when it is not the beginning of the aberrations of the understanding, is always their consequence, as is shown by the experience of all ages and as we read in the histories. To free our souls both from the lying mouths that give them death[12] and from the carnal delights that lower them to the level of the brutes, what has Jesus Christ done? To the dark inventions of the spirit of error he has opposed the sun of the Catholic faith, the Most Blessed Sacrament, which is called by antonomasia the mystery of faith, in which Jesus Christ is really and truly present, the true light that enlightens every man[13] of good will, so that he may rise higher than the vain ideas of the world and make progress in the knowledge and love of the supreme Good.

To the degrading intoxication of the pleasures of flesh and blood he has opposed the delicious banquet of his flesh and blood in the Most Blessed Sacrament, which raises us to the very source of divine life.

True life, the life that has no end, is found only in God, who is the living being par excellence. This life, which the Word received from the Father in its fullness by eternal generation, he communicated without measure to the soul and body which he united to himself in the womb of the Virgin. And by giving us in Communion his humanity, indissolubly united to his divinity, he impregnates our whole being with his divine life and leaves in it the seed and pledge of blessed eternity. This principle of perfect life, it is true, remains latent and unperceived in our body during the time of probation and the sleep of the tomb, like wheat sown in the earth; but it will unfold all its power on the day of the resurrection: *Et resuscitabo eum in novissimo die*.[14] Then there will appear a prodigious difference between the bodies of those who ate the fruits of the earth, and even the manna,[15] without rising by faith to the true bread of life, of which the manna was only a figure, and the bodies of those who, by their sharing in the most sacred flesh of the Word, have become living members of him; for we shall all rise, says St. Paul, but we shall not all be changed.[16] The bodies that have assimilated nothing but earthly and corruptible elements will remain subject to corruption, but the bodies given life by the flesh and blood of Jesus Christ will be spiritualized and will live an entirely heavenly life.

It is clearly seen, then, that Jesus Christ in the Most Blessed Sacrament is our moral and physical life. Moral life, which consists in knowing and loving; and the object and food of the understanding is truth, and Jesus

Christ is essential truth itself; and the object and food of the will is goodness, and Jesus Christ is goodness and charity by essence.

Physical life, which consists in the union of soul and body; and, as I have said, Jesus Christ is not only the life of the soul, but also of the body; for though it is true that the body must die, because it must pay the tribute for sin,[17] yet Jesus Christ will restore it, will raise it up. From this follows the necessity of receiving Communion, and of receiving it frequently. From what we see in the body we can know what we must do for the soul: the body must eat each day if it wants to have life and health; the soul must do the same. In desire or in reality, it must receive Communion frequently. When Jesus Christ taught us to pray, he charged us to ask for our daily bread, bodily and spiritual,[18] the one together with the other; so the first Christians understood it and practised it, who each day gave body and soul their proper refreshment, that is, each day they received Communion and ate.

The body that is healthy and robust eats often and well; the sick one eats little, and the dead one eats nothing. So the Christian who is spiritually healthy and robust receives Communion often and well, that is, with fervour and devotion; the one who is spiritually sick receives Communion seldom, with reluctance and lukewarmness; and the one who is habitually in mortal sin, or dead to the life of grace, does not receive Communion.

The chapel of the Most Blessed Sacrament, or the communion rail of each parish, is the most exact thermometer for knowing the degrees of charity, or the warmth of love and devotion, of the people of the town. When, for instance, the thermometer stands one degree above zero, the weather is cold; when it is at twelve degrees, it is already spring; and when it is at twenty-four, thirty, etc., it is hot. So when people receive Communion only once a year, there is great coldness; when they receive twelve times a year, things are going well, it is a spring that flowers in virtue and gives hope of producing ripe fruits; but when they receive twice a month, every week or most days, then there is great heat, and that fire is already burning which Jesus Christ brought down from heaven to earth, and which it is his will should burn.[19]

When Satan tempted our first parents Adam and Eve, he said to them: *Eat, and you will be like gods.*[20] It was a deceit of the father of lies: they did not become gods, but slaves of Satan and guilty of hell.

But Jesus Christ has made use of the very means to do us good that Satan employed to do evil: he has instituted the august sacrament under the species of food, and he says to us in truth: Eat, and you will be like gods. You will be like me, who am God and man. Indeed, to one who receives Communion well there happens what happens to the iron bar put into the forge, where it is turned into fire; yes, in the same way the soul that receives Communion well is made godlike. Fire takes from iron its dross, its natural coldness, its hardness, and makes it so soft that it comes to melt it and it takes whatever shape the craftsman pleases. The fire of divine love does the same in the forge of Communion to the soul that receives Communion well and frequently: it takes from her the dross of imperfections, her natural coldness, the hardness of her self-love, and makes her so tender and soft that she conforms completely to the will of God in all and through all, and so says, like Jesus to the eternal Father: "Your will be done, not mine."[21]

To those who approach Holy Communion Jesus says: Take and eat; this is my body, broken for you. Take and drink; this is my blood, shed for you.[22] Take and eat, and learn from me to empty yourselves for the glory of God and for the love of your brethren, as I emptied myself.[23] Take and eat, and learn from me, who was obedient unto death,[24] and beyond the death of the cross; for each day I obey with the greatest promptness and joy the words of consecration, and I shall obey until the end of the ages. Take and eat, and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart;[25] see how I am humbled in the sacrament. I am a hidden God:[26] I have hidden my divinity, my humanity..., so as to teach you that so necessary virtue. Imitate my meekness; see how I suffer for love of you irreverences, sacrileges, profanations, contempt and insults.

Take and eat, and learn from me to love one another as I have loved you.[27] I have done much for you, I have suffered infinitely, and I have given myself up, so that I could do no more: imitate me. These are the words heard by those who approach Holy Communion with fervour and devotion. This is how the world was converted; indeed, the world was converted by the preaching of Jesus crucified and by the frequent reception of Holy Communion. The pagans, seeing the fervent Christians, said among themselves: "See how they love one another!"[28] What peace! What serenity! What gentleness! What chastity! What charity! What an array of virtues! And this spectacle moved them exceedingly to embrace the religion of the Crucified.[29]

When we receive Communion, we all receive the same Lord Jesus Christ, but not all of us receive the same graces, nor does he produce the same effects in all. This comes from our greater or lesser disposition. To explain this phenomenon I shall use a natural comparison, the way of grafting trees. We know by experience that a wild tree hardly bears fruit, and the little it bears is bad; yet if a scion of good quality is grafted onto this wild tree, it bears much good fruit. In some way, so it happens with a slack and careless Christian, who hardly bears the fruit of good works, and the few good works he does are riddled with imperfections. But if that Christian receives Communion well, there will happen to him what happens to the tree grafted with a good scion, which bears admirable fruits. That is why St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi said that one Communion well made is capable of making a great saint.[30]

Following out the comparison, I shall explain the manner. Those who deal with trees say that, for the graft to take well, there must be a kinship between the scion and the tree that is grafted, and that the more alike they are, the better. So, then, the more likeness there is in humility, meekness, charity and the other virtues between Jesus Christ and the one who receives Communion, the greater will be the results that Holy Communion will yield. Trees for grafting are divided into oily, gummy and watery, and the scions must be of the same family, so that a scion of an oily tree does not take on a gummy or watery tree, nor the other way round. Thus it can be understood why Jesus, who is an oily shoot, whose name is like oil poured out,[31] why Communion, which is the precious scion, does not take in those Christians who by their greed are like gummy trees, nor in those others who through lust are like watery trees. Therefore it is indispensable that they be oily by meekness, mercy, charity and the other virtues.

But just as it is not enough that there be kinship between the scion and the tree that is grafted, but besides there are required the care and other conditions on the part of the grafter, so too I say that it is not enough that one who receives Communion habitually have the necessary dispositions for receiving; it is also indispensable, if Holy Communion is to produce in him those great graces, that each time he approaches the holy table he present himself with more attention and care, with more humility, with livelier desires, like a thirsty deer,[32] with more hunger and more thirst, with more love. Happy the soul that receives Communion frequently and each time with a new disposition! Ah, she will be like a tree planted near running waters, which will bear its fruit in due season.[33] She will be able to say with the Apostle: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."[34] Like the grafted tree, which, if it could speak, would tell us: "I live, because in the trunk I am what I was before; but now it is no longer I, but the graft lives in me, the scion that has been put into me; and it lives in me, and the fruit I bear is not according to the old tree, but according to the new." So, then, the Christian who receives Communion well and frequently can say: "I live, because I am a man as before; but now I am no longer what I was before; now I am according to the new man who has been grafted into me by Communion; I am what is in me." As Jesus says: "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me and I in him. As the living Father has sent me, and I live by the Father, so he too who eats me will live by me."[35] Therefore he who receives Communion well and frequently can say with the Apostle that no one and nothing will be able to separate him from the charity of Jesus Christ,[36] and that he can do all things in him who strengthens him.[37]

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[1] Cf. *Aut.* n. 694.

[2] Mt 28,20.

[3] Mt 11,28.

[4] Jn 14,6.

[5] Cf. Acts 1,1.

[6] Cf. Jn 6,63.

[7] Jn 6,48–58.

[8] Cf. Ps 77,25 (Vulgate; Ps 78,25).

[9] Cf. Gen 3,5.

[10] Cf. Mt 4,4.

[11] Cf. Wis 13,3–5.

[12] Cf. Wis 1,11.

[13] Cf. Jn 1,9.

[14] Jn 6,40.

[15] Cf. Jn 6,58.

[16] 1 Cor 15,51.

[17] Cf. Rom 6,23.

[18] Cf. Mt 6,11; Lk 11,3.

[19] Cf. Lk 12,49.

[20] Gen 3,5.

[21] Mt 26,39; Mk 14,36; Lk 22,42.

[22] Mt 26,26–28; Mk 14,22–24; Lk 22,19–20; 1 Cor 11,24–25.

[23] Cf. Phil 2,7.

[24] Phil 2,8.

[25] Mt 11,29.

[26] Cf. Is 45,15.

[27] Cf. Jn 13,34.

[28] Tertullian, *Apologeticum* XXXIX 7: PL 1,534; *Tertulliani opera* (Turnholti 1954) vol. 1 p. 151.

[29] Cf. Acts 4,32–33.

[30] Cf. Puccini, V., *La vita di Santa Maria Maddalena de' Pazzi, vergine e nobile fiorentina* (Venice 1739) p. 248.

[31] Cf. Song 1,3.

[32] Cf. Ps 41,2 (Vulgate; Ps 42,2).

[33] Cf. Ps 1,3.

[34] Gal 2,20.

[35] Jn 6,53.57.

[36] Cf. Rom 8,38–39.

[37] Cf. Phil 4,13.

9. Holy Mass

Our first parents Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command; they rebelled, deceived by Satan, who said to them: "Take and eat, and you will be like gods."[1]

Man, when he sins, rebels against God and says by his works: *Non serviam*, "Go your way, I will not serve you."[2] He despises God, who is his Lord and his Father. Of this contempt that good Father complains most feelingly, saying by a prophet: *I have reared children and brought them up, and they have despised me.*[3]

Man, out of pride and vanity, makes himself superior to what opposes and resists him, like water, which strikes and leaps over whatever stands in the way of its current; for man is compared to water: *tamquam aquae dilabimur*.[4] And we are inclined to evil from the beginning.[5]

By sin, or rebellion, the human race, or man, deserves the penalty of death, according to the threat of God himself, who said: *In whatever day you eat of it (that is, sin), you shall infallibly die*;[6] and since man is a compound of soul and body, he dies in both: the soul dies the instant it sins, and the body, as soon as it begins to live, begins to die.

The body, sooner or later, will die, but afterwards it will rise through Christ, who will restore all things.[7] The soul of one who sins mortally suffers two deaths: the first is the privation of grace, and the second the privation of the glory of heaven, that is, condemnation to the punishment and eternal burial of hell. From the first death one can rise again by the merits of Jesus Christ, but not from the second, because *in inferno nulla est redemptio*.

Since God is so good, he does not wish the death of the sinner, but that he rise from the first death;[8] for this, then, and so that he may not fall into the second,[9] he has appointed sacrifice.

He who offers sacrifice places his sins upon the victim, and the victim must die or be destroyed for them; and afterwards the offerer must eat of the victim so as to share in its merits. Here is why there is the Mass and Communion. And the Council of Trent desires that at every Mass the faithful who are present should receive Communion at it.[10]

Sin is of an infinite malice by reason of the object offended, who is God; and therefore only a God made man could give condign satisfaction to divine justice.[11]

This condign satisfaction Jesus Christ gave once on Calvary, dying on a cross for all in common; but afterwards this application must be made in particular, as is done in Holy Mass, according to what Jesus Christ commanded, saying: *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*, "Do this in memory of me."[12] And as peoples will go on succeeding one another and continuing until the end of the ages, so too this sacrifice will continue until the end of the ages, as the same Jesus Christ promised in these express words: *Behold, I am with you all days, until the end of the ages.*[13]

From what has been said so far, you already know the need there is that this holy sacrifice of the Mass continue until the end of the world, and the obligation Christians have of attending it in order to share in its particular application. But since for some time past I have observed that some Christians readily excuse themselves from attending, in spite of the express precept of the Church our Mother, I feel impelled to give you the reason, and it is that the Protestant virus has crept into their heart.[14] You must know, then, that at the beginning of the sixteenth century Dr. Martin Luther said that the Mass must be abolished; and in proof of it he cited the testimony of Satan, who, in a nocturnal conference, he says, had demonstrated this to him with unanswerable arguments.

Carlstadt, who boasted of having been Luther's master because he had conferred on him the doctor's tassel, also abolished the Mass.

The Swiss Zwingli likewise teaches that the Mass must be omitted, and says he learned this from a phantom that appeared to him in dreams. Calvin taught the same, and so did all the leaders of Protestantism.

And truly this is not to be wondered at, because Protestantism was not, and is not at present, anything but a violent explosion of all the rancorous passions against the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church; and as the mysteries of love cannot be associated with systems invented by hatred, just as the carnal man cannot perceive or understand spiritual things,[15] here is the reason why Protestants have no Mass and carnal philosophers care nothing for it; and finally, why some Christians no longer attend Holy Mass: it is because they are carnal Christians and infected with the Protestant contagion.

Ah! If one of those early Christians raised his head from the tomb and saw what goes on among the Christians of our days, he would say: *Video christianos, christianorum mores non video*, "I see Christians, but I do not see the ways of Christians. In our time all Christians attended Holy Mass devoutly every day,

and all received Communion at it with great fervour. And now?... Alas! What do I see!... I go back and hide under the gravestone so as not to see what goes on among Christians. I fear it may be said to you that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to peoples who will yield the fruits of good works."[16]

Let us, then, attend the holy sacrifice of the Mass not only on Sundays, feasts and days of obligation, as is a duty, but also on other days out of devotion.[17] We must offer this holy sacrifice to God not only to make satisfaction for our faults, sins and offences, but also in acknowledgment of the supreme dominion he has over us, and in testimony of the benefits and graces he has bestowed on us and continually bestows, so that whatever we have we have received from him; and in thanksgiving for so many favours we must offer him this holy sacrifice; or rather, we must assist at this sacrifice which Jesus Christ himself offers to the eternal Father for us. He is the principal offerer and the victim offered. Jesus Christ is the advocate we have in heaven with God the Father, who intercedes for us, as St. John says.[18] And besides, we have him on the altar, where he always intercedes for us, as St. Paul assures us.[19]

Certainly, to fulfil our duty as good Christians it is not enough that we attend Holy Mass and receive Communion at it so as to become greater sharers in the merits of Jesus Christ; it is also indispensable that we be priests, or offerers of sacrifice, not only at Mass, together with Jesus Christ, the invisible offerer, and the priest, the visible offerer, but that we also offer ourselves as victims for the glory of God and in satisfaction for our faults and sins. The wicked are not counted by God as priests, nor can their sacrifice be acceptable and pleasing to him, since it is not a sacrifice of justice, which is the only one he accepts.

That sacrifice which the good make of themselves is very pleasing in God's sight and makes great satisfaction for their faults and those of the whole nation, as we read in holy Scripture.[20]

One of those Maccabean martyrs said: "I give up my body and my life to death. Upon me and my brothers the just indignation of the Almighty, who is angered against our nation, will be calmed."[21] And so indeed it was: by the sacrifice of these martyrs, wrath was changed into mercy: *Ira enim Domini in misericordiam conversa est*.[22]

On those words of the Apostle to the Colossians, "I who now rejoice in what I suffer for you, and am filling up in my flesh what is lacking of the sufferings of Christ in his members, suffering trials on behalf of his mystical body, which is the Church,"[23] the commentators say that the merits of Jesus Christ are of infinite value in themselves and more than sufficient to redeem thousands of worlds; but the eternal Father accepted them only on the condition that adults should take their part in this passion in order to enjoy its fruit; that is, we must cooperate, whether by hearing Holy Mass, by receiving Holy Communion, by praying, by bearing slanders, pains and trials with meekness and patience, or by mortifying the passions and senses, which we must sacrifice and offer to God.

But especially in public calamities, in which the innocent suffer as well as the guilty, and perhaps more, the condition and will of the heavenly Father is thus fulfilled. The guilty suffer as culprits, and if after this punishment they are not converted, it is for them a cause of greater ruin and condemnation. But the good, suffering with patience and resignation, are purified more and more of their imperfections and advance in virtue, so that they become more pleasing in God's sight; and by their sufferings well borne they fulfil what by divine decree was lacking to the passion of Jesus Christ, as I have said. This is how divine justice is appeased and the divine mercies are obtained. In proof of this truth one need only read the holy Scriptures and ecclesiastical history. How many times have whole nations been pardoned through the penance, patience and prayer of the good! What blessings, what graces and what conversions did not the sufferings and blood of the martyrs obtain!

Truly, would it not be against reason that the innocent one, the holy one par excellence, should suffer and die to save sinners, and that the mass of sinners should suffer nothing and contribute nothing on their part?... Of this mass of sinners, some are wicked, lost and obstinate, and others are justified sinners, or sinners who are

to be purified. The suffering of the wicked does not serve to appease and satisfy divine justice; rather they provoke it more and more with the curses and blasphemies they vomit forth and with the sins of every kind they commit. But justified sinners, since they are united with God by grace, have their sufferings and merits united with those of Jesus Christ. That is why all the good are called to sufferings and pains, as St. Paul says: that all who wish to live devoutly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution,[24] more or less according to their progress in perfection. Hence Cornelius a Lapide, speaking of the sufferings of Most Holy Mary at the foot of the cross, says that the holier a soul is and the closer she is to Christ, the more Jesus Christ holds out to her the cup of his passion.

But it must greatly encourage us to think that, if we suffer with Christ on earth, we shall reign with him in heaven;[25] and of great consolation to us must be those words that the archangel St. Raphael said to Tobias: "Because you were acceptable in the sight of God, it was necessary that temptation should prove you."[26] Let us rejoice, then, in the midst of sufferings, seeing that we are worthy to suffer something for his love,[27] for our defects, so as to lay up merits for heaven and to make satisfaction for the faults, sins and offences of our brethren, and so be able to obtain for them mercy, grace and glory. This is the sacrifice of ourselves that we must offer to the eternal Father, together with the merits of Jesus Christ, of Most Holy Mary, of the saints of heaven and the just on earth.

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[1] Gen 3,3.

[2] Jer 2,20.

[3] Is 1,2.

[4] "We slip away like water" (2 Sam 14,14).

[5] Cf. Gen 8,21.

[6] Gen 3,3.

[7] Cf. Eph 1,10.

[8] Cf. Ezek 33,11.

[9] Cf. Rev 2,11.

[10] Council of Trent, Session 22, ch. 6.

[11] Cf. St. Anselm, *Cur Deus homo?* bk. 1 ch. 5: *Obras completas* (BAC, Madrid 1952) vol. 1 pp. 753–755.

[12] Lk 22,19; cf. 1 Cor 11,25.

[13] Mt 28,20.

[14] Cf. *Aut.* n. 717–728.

[15] Cf. 1 Cor 2,14.

[16] Mt 21,43.

[17] *Aut.* n. 36.

[18] Cf. 1 Jn 2,1.

[19] Cf. Heb 7,25.

[20] 2 Macc 12,43–44.

[21] 2 Macc 7,37–38.

[22] 2 Macc 8,5.

[23] Col 1,24.

[24] Cf. 2 Tim 3,12.

[25] Cf. Rom 6,5.

[26] Tob 12,13.

[27] Cf. Acts 5,41.

10. Devotion to Most Holy Mary

Devotion to Most Holy Mary is another of our chief obligations. She is the Mother of God and the Mother of men: on these two cardinal points the whole devotion turns. As Mother of God, she can do all things; as

Mother of men, she will protect us and grant us every grace. Luther said that what irritated him most was to see people honour the Most Blessed Sacrament and Mary.[1] No one will be surprised, then, that Protestants become furious when they speak of these objects, which are the delight of good Catholics.

Let us, then, honour Most Holy Mary, our most tender Mother; let us imitate her virtues, continually pay her our homage, frequently receive the holy sacraments in her honour; and let us not forget that the rosary is one of the devotions she likes best, since she herself was the one who taught it to our fellow countryman St. Dominic;[2] and just as the Saint by means of this devotion converted heretics and other sinners and put a stop to the blasphemies the Albigensians uttered against God and the saints, so too we shall obtain the same if, like St. Dominic, we pray it every day and teach others to pray it with devotion and fervour.[3]

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[1] Cf. Raulica, V., o.c., p. 162.

[2] Cf. Possadas, F., *Vida del glorioso padre y patriarca Santo Domingo de Guzmán* (Madrid 1721) pp. 113–114.

[3] Cf. *Aut.* n. 266. *Resolutions* of 1869: *Escritos autobiográficos* \[BAC, Madrid 1981\] p. 584.

11. Devout Reading

The most devout reading we can have is that of the holy Gospel. Precisely by our rule we must read a chapter every day.[1] We must meditate on it and conform our conduct to the rule of morality that Jesus Christ gives us in it; there is the truth, clean of all error. We must also read the *Kempis*, which is the best thing men have written; there are other very good writings that we must read and spread, for this is precisely our chief mission. It is always of great usefulness and profit to put useful and profitable books into circulation, but nowadays it is a great necessity.[2] It seems that we find ourselves in those unhappy days the Apostle foresaw when, writing to his beloved disciple Timothy, he said to him: "The time will come when men will not endure sound doctrine, but, having an extreme itch to hear doctrines that flatter their passions, will turn to a crowd of teachers suited to satisfy their disordered desires, and will close their ears to the truth and turn them to fables."[3]

How long are the children of darkness to be more prudent, zealous and active than the children of light?[4] For if Protestants and the ungodly never tire of selling bad books, loose sheets and every kind of pernicious writing and obscene prints, why shall we not do as much in the good sense?

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[1] *Plan de la Academia de San Miguel* \[LR, Barcelona 1859\] p. 28.

[2] Cf. *Aut.* n. 42.

[3] 2 Tim 4,3–4.

[4] Cf. Lk 16,8.

12. The Necessity of the Doctrine of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ and his doctrine are the only means of curing the evils society suffers, because only Jesus Christ and his doctrine can remedy and cure the intellectual aberrations, the moral weaknesses and the social ruins of our age.

When Jesus Christ and his doctrine are despised, life is despised in the order of intelligence, of morals and of society. The principle of intellectual life for a people consists in having beliefs, and the first condition for having beliefs is to have a creed; and one does not have a creed without Jesus Christ; and without Jesus Christ minds do not affirm: they doubt, they deny; and by doubt and denial minds lose life, they are dead. Losing Jesus Christ, who is the truth and the life,[1] they come upon Satan, who is the father of lies and the author of death.[2]

Jesus Christ is moral life. The principle of moral life is to have a code of conduct that is intelligible and unchangeable. From the moment the law of conduct becomes obscure, uncertain or unknown, the moral order breaks down and all the virtues receive a death blow. When learned philosophers and lawgivers have dictated laws apart from Jesus Christ, and perhaps against Jesus Christ, they have achieved nothing, as is shown by experience and recorded in history. Let there be no illusion: there is no other true code, there is no other law properly so called for men, than the law of God. This same God who gave all the bodies of the universe the law of gravity, by which they are preserved and without which they would be destroyed, has likewise given all the men of the world his holy law, which he wrote naturally in each man[3] and which on Sinai he wrote on tablets of stone.[4] This law, so simple and so great, is the law that Jesus Christ came not to abolish but to perfect[5] by his example, by his counsels and by the grace he gives us to fulfil it perfectly. All other laws, if they do not rest on this one, neither deserve the name of law nor are anything but tyrannical, despotic edicts, subversive of the order established by the Author of nature.

Vice is the death of social life, and by observance of the code of God's law life is given to it. Outside the code of God's law there is no certain, intelligible and unchangeable code for the human race. Some affirm what others deny; these say and command one thing which those despise and forbid. Read the codes of the Chinese, Indians, Persians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans..., and after reading all that the Lycurguses, Confuciuses and other lawgivers have said, taught and written, you will see clearly that only the law of God is the simple, certain, sure, clear and unchangeable code, the one proper to human nature, and that this law is as proper to it as the law of gravity is to bodies, as we have said.

Just as intellectual life is founded on a creed, and moral life on a code, social life must be founded on authority; and to this authority are owed respect, honour, obedience, fidelity, service and taxes. Jesus Christ taught this by his example and doctrine. He said: *Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.*[6] He himself paid the tax[7] and respected and submitted to the authorities; to Pilate he said: "You would have no authority over me if it had not been given you from above."[8] When this authority is not regarded as a divine authorization, according to the doctrine and example of Jesus Christ, then subjects do not regard themselves as subjects, but as equals. What happens then? Just as in a house of many brothers without a father's authority, or in a school of a great many unruly and mischievous boys without the authority of the master, so it goes in a nation that has no respect or obedience for authority: everything in it is confusion, everything anarchy; and this is the death of society.

Observe and look well how Satan has poured out his last poison upon society: that is why we see the individual and the whole of society being lost through lack of light and of virtues; and we are under obligation to apply the effective and only remedy, which is Jesus Christ, his doctrine, his sacraments and his sacrifice, which is the Mass; since Jesus is the light that enlightens every man who comes into this world, as St. John says;[9] and to the lack of virtues and the corruption of morals we must oppose true devotion to Most Holy Mary.

I think I have answered the principal questions you have put to me, and so I bring the present letter to an end, and conclude by repeating myself once more your most affectionate servant, who kisses your hand,

A. C.

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[1] Cf. Jn 14,6.

[2] Cf. Jn 8,44.

[3] Cf. Jer 31,33; Heb 10,16.

[4] Cf. Ex 34,28.

[5] Cf. Mt 5,17.

[6] Mt 22,21; Mk 12,17; Lk 20,25.

[7] Cf. Mt 17,24–27.

[8] Jn 19,11.
[9] Jn 1,9.