St. Anthony Mary Claret

THE CATECHISM OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, EXPLAINED

Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado

From the Spanish of the eighteenth edition (Barcelona, 1867)

English translation

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

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this translation · 4
Front Matter · 4
Prologue · 4
Notice · 6
First Catechism, to Be Taught to Children as Soon as They Begin to Speak · 7
Catechism of Christian Doctrine · 10
Preamble. The End of Man · 11
Preliminary Lesson. The Sign of the Christian · 12

Part One. The Doctrine of Faith

Lesson 1. The Symbol or Creed · 17
Part One. The Doctrine of Faith · 17
Lesson 2. Explanation of the Plate, and of the First Part of the Creed: “I believe in God the Father” · 20
Lesson 3. The Most Holy Trinity · 23
Lesson 4. Explanation of the Plate, and Continuation of the First Part of the Creed: “Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth” · 25
Lesson 5. Original Sin · 29
Lesson 6. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Second Part of the Creed: “And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord” · 37
Lesson 7. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Third Part of the Creed: “Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the holy Virgin Mary” · 40
Lesson 8. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Fourth Part of the Creed: “Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried” · 43
Lesson 9. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Fifth Part of the Creed: “He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead” · 45
Lesson 10. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Sixth Part of the Creed: “He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty” · 48
Lesson 11. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Seventh Part of the Creed: “From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead” · 50
Lesson 12. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Eighth Part of the Creed: “I believe in the Holy Ghost” · 53
Lesson 13. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Ninth Part of the Creed: “The holy Catholic Church” · 56
Lesson 14. Explanation of the Plate, and Continuation of the Same Part of the Creed · 62
Lesson 15. Explanation of the Plate, Continuation of the Same Part of the Creed (“The communion of Saints”), and Explanation of the Tenth Part (“The forgiveness of sins”) · 65
Lesson 16. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Eleventh Part of the Creed: “The resurrection of the flesh” · 69
Lesson 17. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Twelfth and Last Part of the Creed: “Life everlasting. Amen.” · 72

Part Two. The Doctrine of Hope

Lesson 1. The Prayer of the Our Father · 80
Lesson 2. The Prayer of the Hail Mary · 85
Lesson 3. The Prayer of the Salve Regina · 89

Part Three. The Doctrine of Charity

Lesson 1. The Commandments of the Law of God · 94
Lesson 2. The Commandments of Holy Church · 112

Part Four. The Doctrine of Works

Lesson 1. The Vices, or Capital Sins · 118
Section One. Evil Works · 118
Lesson 2. The Sins against the Holy Ghost · 124
Lesson 3. The Sins That Cry to God for Vengeance · 127
Lesson 4. The Sins of Which Many Become Guilty without Committing Them · 129

Lesson 5. The Sacraments in General, and Baptism in Particular · 131
Section Two. Good Works · 132
Lesson 6. The Sacrament of Confirmation · 139
Lesson 7. The Sacrament of the Eucharist · 142
Lesson 8. The Sacrament of Penance · 149
Lesson 9. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction · 157
Lesson 10. The Sacrament of Orders · 159
Lesson 11. The Sacrament of Matrimony · 164
Lesson 12. The Theological Virtues · 168
Lesson 13. The Cardinal Virtues · 172
Lesson 14. The Fruits of the Holy Ghost · 174
Lesson 15. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost · 178
Lesson 16. The Beatitudes · 181
Lesson 17. The Corporal Works of Mercy · 186
Lesson 18. The Spiritual Works of Mercy · 190
Lesson 19. The Last Things, or Four Last Ends of Man · 195
Lesson 20. The Evangelical Counsels · 200
Lesson 21 and Last. A Summary of the Mysteries Explained in the Catechism, and the Days on Which the Holy Catholic Church Celebrates Them · 203
Feasts of Most Holy Mary · 204
Plan of the Catechism · 206
Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity · 206
Practice · 206
Morning Exercise · 207
Evening Exercise · 207

About this translation

Translated from the eighteenth edition of the *Catecismo de la doctrina cristiana explicado y adaptado a la capacidad de los niños y niñas, y adornado con muchas estampas* (Barcelona: Librería Religiosa, 1867), first published in 1848, with the printing of 1870 consulted where the copy used was damaged. The translation is complete. Where Claret refers to a page of the Spanish edition the reference points to the right place in this one.

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.

Front Matter

> *Qui didicerint ista, invenient quid respondeant \[They that have learned these things shall find what to answer\] (Wis. 6:11).*[1]

This Catechism is not only for children, but also for adults, and even for spiritual people, according to the counsel of St. Teresa, who says: “In the book of the Catechism, which contains Christian doctrine, I want my daughters always to read, meditating day and night on the law of the Lord.” (*Works of St. Teresa*, Rivadeneyra edition, Madrid 1861, p. 578, no. 30, counsel VI.)

Various Prelates of Spain have granted 2,480 days of indulgence to all the faithful for each lesson of this Catechism that they read or hear read.[2]

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[1] The words (*qui didicerint ista invenient quid respondeant*) are Wis. 6:11 in the Douay-Rheims.

[2] *Indulgentiarum doctrina*, 1967.

Prologue

My dear children and brothers in Jesus Christ, innocent little ones: I do not know whether it is the wish to imitate my divine Master, who so often caressed those of tender age, or your simplicity, or perhaps both, that makes my heart burn with the great love I have for you. That is why I have always tried to engrave on your hearts the holy fear and love of God, and at the same time to inspire in you horror and hatred of sin, by showing you its great ugliness and fatal effects. For I am convinced that boys and girls sin from ignorance rather than malice. I have no doubt at all that if they knew what they were doing and saying when they commit certain wicked acts or speak badly, they would correct themselves at once.

Still, the old saying is true: *Del pecado de ignorancia el infierno saca ganancia* \[“From the sin of ignorance, hell makes its profit”\]. That is exactly what happens. And woe to you if you do not learn! You will grow used to evil from your tenderest age. And what will happen then? Even when you are older and perhaps realize that the thing is worse than you thought before, you will not bother to amend it. The current of those vices will already have cut a deep channel in your nature, and it will be extremely hard to give it another direction afterwards. Besides, since you will have grown used to vice from infancy, it will make very little impression on you. You will look on it with the greatest indifference and coolness, as happens with natural things that we pay no attention to because we have always seen them. The following example will show you this.

Suppose God suddenly created a man with all the maturity and knowledge we usually have at the age of thirty. Suppose he placed him on a hill overlooking a vast and magnificent countryside, on a fine spring day, at sunrise. What an impression it would make on his spirit! How pleasantly he would be surprised by the sight of so beautiful a sky, so dazzling a sun, an earth so full of trees and plants and dotted with flowers! How enraptured he would be to watch the rivers winding over the plains, to see the multitude of animals grazing,

and to hear the melodious song of the little birds filling the air with their trills! And if he were then shown the awe-inspiring sight of the highest mountains, or the sea in one of those raging storms that make one's hair stand on end, he would be dumbfounded, and even his breath would fail him. And if the eighteen hours until nightfall passed in an instant, what a series of different impressions would strike his spirit! On the one hand, he would be sweetly enraptured contemplating the immensity of the heavens and the multitude, brightness and movement of the stars. On the other, the paleness of the moon and the darkness and silence of the night would fill him with deep sadness. "Where has the sun gone?" he would ask himself. "Where is the beauty and magnificence of the morning?" But because we grow used to seeing all these things from childhood, they make no impression on us, and we look on the night with the same indifference as the day, and on the moon as on the sun.

Much the same happens in the moral order. Those who grow used to evil as children look on the filthy night of vice with the same indifference as on the beautiful day of virtue. They take the holy name of God on their lips to blaspheme it as calmly as to invoke it. So, as Job says, they *drink iniquity like water* (Job 15:16), and their end is eternal damnation.

See, then, dear children, how much it matters to you to grow used from infancy to practicing virtue and fleeing vice. So I say to you with the royal Prophet: *Come, children, hearken to me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord* (Ps. 33:12). For this I use this book, which I dedicate to you. Knowing that you like pictures, I have adorned it with them. And since, as the saying goes, what is eaten with relish is what nourishes, I have composed this explanation of Christian doctrine so that it will be pleasant to you, for I want to nourish your souls with it.

I have not put in these pictures only for children, but also for grown-ups, and especially for you, fathers and mothers of families. I have had in mind what Joshua did. When the people of Israel crossed the river Jordan, he ordered twelve men, one from each tribe, to pick up as many stones from the place where the feet of the priests carrying the ark had stood, while the people crossed on dry ground. They were to carry them to the camp at Galgal. Raising a monument with them, he said to the assembled Israelites: *When your children shall ask you tomorrow, saying: What meaneth these stones? You shall answer them: The waters of the Jordan ran off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, when it passed over the same: therefore were these stones set for a monument of the children of Israel for ever* (Jos. 4:6–7). Following the example of this leader of God's people, then, I put in these pictures with their explanation, brief as it is. So when your children ask you, "What do those figures mean?", you can answer by explaining to them through the pictures the Christian religion, which you are obliged to teach them and they to learn.

I also put in these pictures to fulfil what the holy Council of Trent commands. It says: *Let the Bishops diligently teach that by means of the histories of the mysteries of our redemption, expressed in paintings or other representations, the people is instructed and confirmed in remembering and continually reflecting on the articles of faith. Moreover, great fruit is drawn from all sacred images, not only because they remind the people of the benefits and gifts Christ has bestowed on them, but also because the salutary examples of the Saints and the miracles God has worked through them are set before the eyes of the faithful, so that they may give thanks to God for them, order their life and conduct after the example of the Saints, and be stirred to adore and love God and to practice piety* (Council of Trent, Session XXV).[1]

And so that you may also learn the actual questions and answers, dear children, I have put after this the Dialogue, which I ask you to learn by heart word for word. And you, fathers and mothers, I beg you by the heart of Jesus Christ to see that your children and household learn it so. In this way, besides fulfilling a duty, you will be able to gain the many graces or indulgences granted by various Prelates of the Church, and finally the eternal glory that I wish for all. So be it.

[1] Council of Trent, Session XXV (1563), *Decree on the Invocation, Veneration and Relics of Saints, and on Sacred Images*.

Notice

"It is well known to all that our forefathers wisely judged that a constant and common rule should be observed in teaching and learning Christian doctrine, which would bring the greatest benefit to the sound instruction of the Christian people, and especially of children. For what could be thought more fitting than such uniformity, or what could be more useful? Indeed, by means of it all who have been called to the unity of faith, being of one mind and saying the same thing, will more easily *be perfect in the same mind, and in the same judgment* (1 Cor. 1:10).

"The Supreme Pontiffs, for their part, by virtue of their pastoral care for all the churches, have many times exhorted and most earnestly recommended that all should observe one and the same way of proposing and teaching Christian doctrine… Just as the faith is one,[1] so the form and method of proposing the same faith and instructing the people should be one and common." So spoke His Eminence Cardinal Caprara on 30 March 1806.

We considered these words of so wise a Cardinal. We considered too the very grave harm that follows from the multitude and variety of catechisms by which Christian doctrine is taught to children, and the very great benefit that would follow if this teaching were made uniform. So we undertook to carry out so great and useful a project. To do it well, we wrote to the Chancery Secretaries of all the dioceses of the kingdom, asking them to tell us which catechisms were used to teach Christian doctrine to children in their dioceses. All honored us with a reply, sending us the booklets or catechisms as well. In truth, we were astonished to see the multitude and variety of catechisms.

We read them carefully. From all of them we chose six and sent them to Rome, begging the Holy Father to have them examined and to designate whichever was found best and most suitable, so that it might be the one catechism by which Christian doctrine would be taught to the children of the whole kingdom.

The Holy Father received the six catechisms kindly and had them examined. The examiner laid down the foundations or conditions a good catechism must have, namely: (1) It must lack nothing necessary. (2) It must contain nothing superfluous, so as not to burden the memory uselessly. (3) It must be clear and easy, so as not to cause confusion. (4) It must be exact in doctrine and expression, so as not to teach error. Then, applying these conditions to each of the catechisms in particular, he found that none was acceptable, and sent us his examination in writing, with the defects each contained.

In view of this judgment, which we humbly accepted, we took the six catechisms and recast them into one, using the good they contained and discarding the defects that had been noted. Such is the present Catechism.

But wishing to give this Catechism all possible weight, we had the inestimable happiness, while in Rome, of placing it in the hands of our most holy father Pius IX on 25 November 1865. We humbly begged him to order it examined, so that we might have the assurance and satisfaction that the doctrine it contains is entirely in accord with the doctrine of the Church. His Holiness kindly granted our request and had it examined. In the examination some observations were made, which were sent to us in writing by order of the Holy Father himself, and we have applied them in the present reprint. Finally, the Catechism being thus completed, we dedicate it to Most Holy Mary for the good of all Spaniards, who are her beloved children.

For greater convenience, we have selected the first things to be taught to children as soon as they begin to speak, and also to country people who do not know what is necessary for salvation. These are contained in the first catechism. When this is known, one moves on to the second.

May all be for the greater glory of God and the good of souls.

Anthony Mary, Archbishop of Trajanopolis.

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[1] *Unus Dominus, una fides, unum baptisma* \[One Lord, one faith, one baptism\] (Eph. 4:5).

First Catechism, to Be Taught to Children as Soon as They Begin to Speak

Father. How many gods are there?

Child. Only one true God.

Q. Who is God?

A. God is the Lord infinitely good, wise and powerful; a most pure and most perfect spirit; immense, eternal, the beginning and end of all things. He rewards the good with the glory of heaven and punishes the wicked with the eternal pains of hell.

Q. Where is God?

A. In heaven, on earth and in every place.

Q. Who is the Most Holy Trinity?

A. God himself, one in essence and three in persons.

Q. How many are the persons of the Most Holy Trinity?

A. Three: Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Q. Is the Father God?

A. Yes.[1]

Q. Is the Son God?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the Holy Ghost God?

A. Yes.

Q. Are they three gods?

A. No. Although there are three persons, distinct from each other, they have only one divine nature.

Q. Which of the three divine Persons became incarnate, or was made man?

A. The second, who is the Son.

Q. What did the Son of God do to become man?

A. By the work of the Holy Ghost he took a human body and soul, such as we have, in the most pure and virginal womb of Most Holy Mary.

Q. What is the Son of God made man called?

A. Jesus, which means Savior, and Christ, which means anointed.

Q. Who suffered passion and death for us?

A. Jesus Christ, on the holy tree of the cross.

Q. What were the chief torments Jesus Christ suffered in his most holy passion?

A. He was scourged, crowned with thorns and nailed to a cross, and he died on it.

Q. Why did he suffer those torments?

A. To save and redeem us sinners.

Q. What does “save us” mean?

A. To give us his friendship and grace in this life, and eternal glory in the next.

Q. What does “redeem us” mean?

A. To bring us out of slavery to the devil and to sin.

Q. Where is Christ?

A. As God, in every place. As God and man, in heaven and in the most holy Sacrament of the altar.

Q. Who are the good whom God rewards with the glory of heaven?

A. Those who live and die in the grace of God.

Q. What is the glory of heaven?

A. It is a most perfect place or state, in which the just see and enjoy God and possess every good and happiness, without any admixture of evil and for all eternity.

Q. Who are the wicked whom God punishes with hell?

A. All who die in mortal sin.

Q. What is hell?

A. It is the most terrible and dreadful prison, full of fire and occupied by devils. There those who die in mortal sin are tormented according to their guilt.

Q. Who is Most Holy Mary?

A. She is a great Lady, conceived without original sin, full of grace and virtues, Virgin and Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, and advocate of sinners.

Q. Where is Most Holy Mary, the Mother of God?

A. In heaven, body and soul.[2]

Q. Then what is it that is in the church and in other places?

A. It is her image, which represents to us the one who is in heaven.

Q. How many Mothers of God are there?

A. One, no more.

Q. Then why do we say “Mother of God” or “Virgin” of Carmel, of the Rosary, of Sorrows, and so on?

A. Because of the many titles and mysteries under which she is honored. But the Mother of God is only one: just as there is only one God, so there is only one Mother of God.

Q. Is it good to be devoted to Most Holy Mary?

A. It is a very good thing and a sign of predestination.

Q. In what does true devotion to Most Holy Mary consist?

A. In abstaining from all sin; imitating her virtues; paying her some homage; frequenting the holy Sacraments; and saying her prayers and doing the other things of her service well, gladly and perseveringly.

Q. Say the Creed.

A. I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary; suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead. He ascended

into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting. Amen.

Q. Say the Our Father.

A. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.[3]

Q. Say the Hail Mary.

A. Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus. Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

Q. Say the Salve.

A. Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, our life, our sweetness and our hope, hail! To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve; to thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Turn then, most gracious advocate, thine eyes of mercy toward us; and after this our exile show unto us Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb. O clement, O loving, O sweet, ever Virgin Mary! Pray for us, holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Q. How many are the Commandments of the law of God?

A. Ten. The first three concern the honor of God, and the other seven the good of our neighbor. The first, to adore and love one only God above all things. The second, not to take the name of God in vain. The third, to keep holy the feast days. The fourth, to honor father and mother. The fifth, not to kill. The sixth, not to commit fornication. The seventh, not to steal. The eighth, not to bear false witness. The ninth, not to desire thy neighbor's wife. The tenth, not to covet thy neighbor's goods. These ten commandments are summed up in two: to serve and love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

Q. How many are the Commandments of the Church?

A. Five. The first, to hear Mass entire on all Sundays and holy days of obligation. The second, to confess at least once a year, or sooner if there is danger of death or if one is to receive Communion. The third, to receive Communion at Easter. The fourth, to fast when holy Mother Church commands it. The fifth, to pay tithes and first fruits, or whatever has been duly substituted for them.

Q. How many are the Sacraments of the Church?

A. Seven. The first, Baptism. The second, Confirmation. The third, the Eucharist.[4] The fourth, Penance. The fifth, Extreme Unction. The sixth, Holy Orders. The seventh, Matrimony.

Q. Say the general Confession.

A. I, a sinner, confess to almighty God, to blessed Mary ever Virgin, to blessed Michael the archangel, to blessed John the Baptist, to the holy apostles Peter and Paul, to all the Saints, and to you, Father, that I have sinned grievously in thought, word and deed, through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault. Therefore I beseech blessed Mary ever Virgin, blessed Michael the archangel, blessed John the Baptist, the holy apostles Peter and Paul, all the Saints, and you, Father, to pray for me to the Lord our God. Amen.

Q. Say the Act of Contrition.

A. My Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, my Creator and Redeemer, whom I love above all things: I am sorry with all my heart for having offended you, because you are who you are, infinite goodness. I am sorry too because you can punish me with the eternal pains of hell. I firmly resolve never to sin again, to keep

away from all occasions of offending you, to confess, and to fulfil the penance that is given me. I offer you, Lord, my life, works and labors in satisfaction for all my sins. And as I beg it of you, so I trust in your infinite goodness and mercy that you will forgive them through the merits of your most precious blood, passion and death, and will give me grace to amend and persevere in your holy service until the end of my life. Amen.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto. Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper, et in saecula saeculorum. Amen. \[Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.\]

Ave Maria purísima. — Sin pecado concebida. \[Hail Mary most pure. — Conceived without sin.\]

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[1] \[Claret's note:\] "Yes" alone (*Sí*) is too curt an expression; so one may say: "Yes, Father; yes, sir; or yes, madam."

[2] *Munificentissimus Deus*, 1950.

[3] *deudas… deudores*.

[4] \[Claret's note:\] The Eucharist is placed before Penance because this is the order followed by the holy Council of Trent, St. Thomas and other theologians.

Catechism of Christian Doctrine

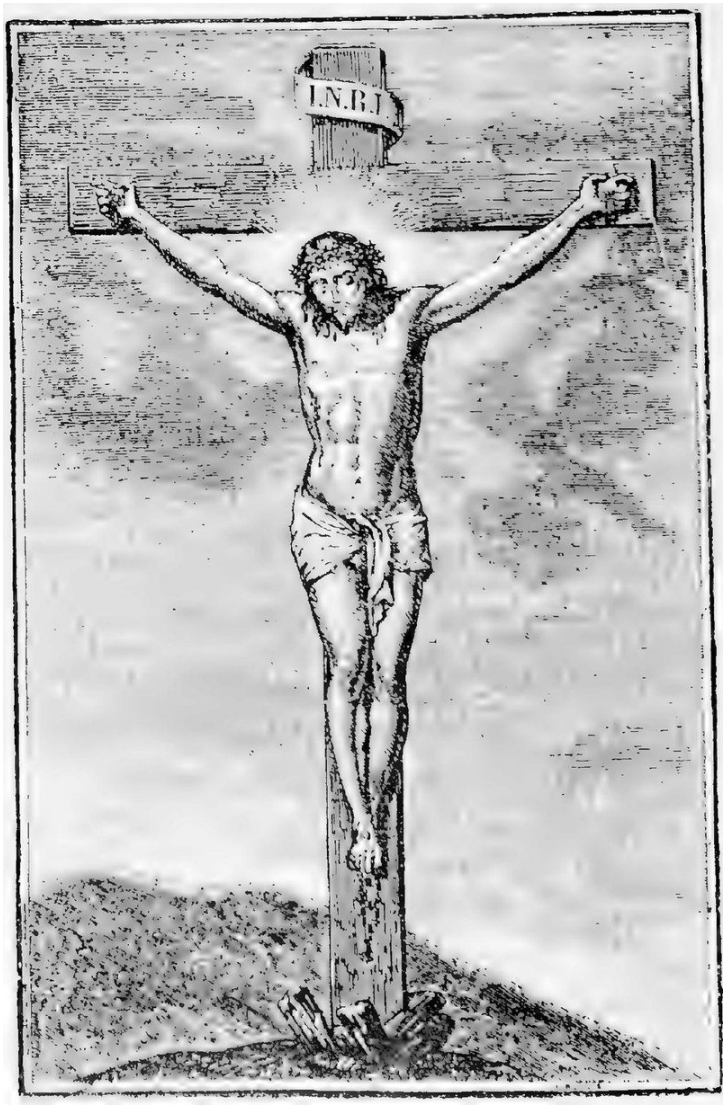

Plate I. Jesus Christ, teacher of Christian doctrine.

Preamble. The End of Man

My son,[1] I am going to begin the explanation of Christian doctrine, which is to be the rule of your conduct all your life. Remembering that some books carry a portrait of their author at the beginning, I thought it very fitting to put here the image of Jesus our divine Master, who is the author of this heavenly doctrine; that is why it is called *Christian*. And since such portraits or images are usually shown in the most heroic act of the person's life, to make a livelier impression on those who look at them, I decided to show you our lovable Redeemer on the cross. There he sealed with his most precious blood the doctrine he had taught, for this is the most heroic act of his life and an unmistakable proof of the tender love he had for us. You must therefore be very grateful, my son, for so great a benefit, and engrave on your memory the end for which he redeemed you at such cost, which was certainly nothing else than your eternal salvation. But see: to be saved you must love and serve him, since he created you for this end. Otherwise you would lose the immense riches and happiness he keeps in heaven for those who love and serve him here on earth.

To love him you must know him. And to know him at least a little, stop and consider his works: the heavens, which proclaim his glory \[Ps. 18:2\]; this earth you tread on, with its variety of plants, trees and animals; the depth of the seas; and, in short, the pleasant face of all nature. Then, by considering the greatness and magnificence of all these things, you will be able to come to know how great is the greatness and majesty of their Creator. Consider that he made all these things for your enjoyment and service. Consider yourself too: that he created you, preserves you and redeemed you, and wants nothing but the salvation of your soul. Can you help loving him? Yes, my son, love God, since he loves you so much. Love him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength \[Mark 12:30\].

It is very just, too, that you serve him. Since he is the supreme Lord of all, all homage, all veneration and all honor are due to him in justice. Finally, the sailor longs to reach port, the soldier fights to win victory, and the traveler always sighs to reach the end of his journey. In the same way you must spare no means to attain the beatitude of glory. There you will see God face to face and enjoy goods and happiness that human understanding could never grasp. This is the end for which you were created. All created things, animate and inanimate alike, fulfil the end for which the Creator formed them. With greater reason, then, man, the noblest creature and the one that has received the greatest benefits from his supreme Maker, must walk toward the end for which he was created.

And do you know the means that lead to this end? Once you have entered the bosom of the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church through the one door of Baptism, they consist in knowing and practicing exactly the doctrine our divine Master Jesus Christ taught us. That is, you must know what you are to believe, what you are to hope for, what you are to receive and what you are to practice. And understand that it is not enough to know these things: it is also necessary to put them into practice. In this way you can steer safely to the port of your salvation. You will respond to the grace God gave you in calling you to his flock. You will rightly bear the name of *Christian*, which means disciple and imitator of Christ. And at last you will obtain happiness in this life and glory in the next, which is what I wish you.

Father. Who created you?

Child. God our Lord, creator of all things.

Q. For what end did God create you?

A. To know him, love him and serve him here on earth, and afterwards to see him and enjoy him for all eternity in heaven.

Q. Are you a Christian?

A. Yes, by the grace of God and the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. Who is a Christian?

A. One who is baptized and professes the faith and law of Jesus Christ.

Preliminary Lesson. The Sign of the Christian



Plate II. The sign of the Christian. The holy cross. 1. A child signing himself. 2. A child blessing himself. 3. Moses in the desert. 4. Constantine. 5. Hell.

My son, do you see the cross in the middle of this plate? You must know that the holy cross is the outward sign of the Christian. It is like the badge and emblem of our great King Jesus Christ, by which we Christians are distinguished from all unbelievers and other enemies of the Catholic faith. The Roman emperors had an eagle as their sign or emblem, the kings of France the fleur-de-lis, and our kings lions and castles; and by this badge Spanish armies and ships are distinguished from foreign ones. We Christians must do the same with the holy cross, the badge or sign of Jesus Christ: we must adorn ourselves with it, to be distinguished from those who are strangers to our holy faith.

The cross is the sign of the Christian because on it Jesus Christ our Lord redeemed us. The kings and great ones of the world usually take as their emblem or arms the things with which they did some great deed, or that signify it; so the shield or coat of arms is a hieroglyph of a great work. And since Jesus Christ triumphed over hell and death by means of the holy cross, and redeemed us from slavery to the devil and to sin, it is very reasonable that the cross should be the shield or arms of Christ and of every Christian.

The holy cross also serves to make us known as Christians and to distinguish us from those who are not. In making it over ourselves we confess the chief mysteries of our holy Religion: the holy and undivided Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Redemption of the human race. In signing oneself one makes three crosses, or one cross three times: one on the forehead, another on the mouth, and another on the breast. So that you may learn to make them well, I have marked them on that child (no. 1) in the plate, in the places where you must make them. And in the child of no. 2 you have a model of how you must bless yourself.

When we bless ourselves we confess the chief mysteries of the Catholic faith. When we say “in the name”, we confess that there is only one God; and when we say “of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost”, we acknowledge that there are three persons in God. And by the actions we make and the words we say we signify the mystery of the Incarnation. Putting our hand to the forehead, we say “in the name of the Father”; and lowering the hand to the waist we say “and of the Son”. By this we confess that the Son came down from the bosom of the eternal Father into the womb of the Virgin Mary. And adding then “and of the Holy Ghost”, we confess too that this mystery was worked by the grace of the Holy Ghost. And the very cross we form signifies Jesus Christ crucified, our Savior and Redeemer, for on it he suffered and died to save and redeem us. It must therefore be made with great respect and due deliberation, forming the crosses and saying the words at the proper time, so as not to contradict by our careless manner what so holy a thing signifies.

But the sign of the cross does not only serve the Christian as a public profession of the chief mysteries of Religion. It is also for him a kind of summary of morals and the rule of his conduct and actions. To understand this, my son, you must know that Jesus Christ, our divine Master, wishing to give us in a few words an idea of his doctrine, which consists in following him, said these words to us: *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me* (Luke 9:23). And in St. Matthew he adds: *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Matt. 11:12). That violence is the force done to the passions by practicing the Christian virtues, and those who do themselves violence in this way carry the kingdom off. The cross he wants us to carry every day is the sum of all the pains, labors, persecutions and so on that every Christian meets in the world on his way to heaven. The violence he must do is the effort by which he must overcome the obstacles set against him, and subdue disordered passions and vices. *They that are Christ’s*, says the Apostle, *have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences* (Gal. 5:24). And so the cross presents the Christian with a summary of the morals of the Gospel.

Nor is this all. The holy cross also shows the Christian the rule of his actions, prescribing that he must do all things in the name of God and for his glory. *Whether you eat or drink*, says the apostle St. Paul, *or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God* (1 Cor. 10:31). For this reason, whenever we undertake anything, we should first make the sign of the cross, sealing it, so to speak, with it, so that it may be acknowledged by God and pleasing in his divine eyes. To know, then, whether our actions are good or bad, whether such contracts, such steps or such plans can be pleasing to God and for the glory of his name, we have only to see whether they conform to reason and to the law of God, and whether they can be preceded or followed by the sign of the holy cross. The cross not only shows us our duties; it also obtains for us the means of fulfilling them, by the blessing of heaven it draws down on us. For when we make it, we do not make a mere sign: we present to God a very effective petition, together with the sincere declaration that we believe all the mysteries of our redemption.

Finally, the holy cross is a shield that defends us from the darts of all our enemies, and an offensive weapon with which we rout all hell, as St. Ephrem affirms. That is why the Church uses it to exorcise devils. So, my son, when we sign ourselves we ask God to deliver us from our enemies. All who try to harm us, whether men, animals or devils, are our enemies; and God will deliver us from them all by means of the holy cross, as he has done so many times, if we make it over ourselves with lively faith and firm confidence.

To confirm all this, I am going to tell you some examples. The first is from the Old Testament, where we find that the holy cross, in figure, delivered the Israelites from the plague of fiery serpents. Look, son, at no. 3 of the plate. Do you see those serpents and those men lying dead on the ground? The Israelites had murmured, and God punished them by sending fiery serpents that killed all whom they bit. God commanded Moses to make a bronze serpent and raise it up on high, and all who looked at it were healed at once \[Num. 21:6–9; cf. John 3:14\]. Look at the cross, respect it greatly and bless yourself often. You will be healed not only of the ills of the body, but also of those that sin causes in your soul.

In no. 4 you have the second example. It is the cross that Constantine, the first emperor to profess Christianity publicly, saw in the sky, and he heard a voice saying to him: "In this sign you will conquer." He did take the cross as his badge. He had the imperial standard made of it, which was called the Labarum; and with his troops led by it he conquered Licinius and peacefully established the reign of Jesus Christ in the world, placing the holy cross even on the imperial diadem.

We read in the life of St. John Chrysostom that in his time a fierce lion had grown so bold that it came near the town, did great damage in the fields and killed many people. Seeing this, the Saint had a cross set up there; and, wonder of wonders, the next day they found the lion dead beside it. So they knew that God our Lord had delivered them from so terrible an enemy by the holy cross.

We read likewise in the life of St. Francis Xavier that, with no other weapon than the holy cross, he put to flight in terror a crowd of barbarians who were coming to seize him.

And finally we read of St. Constantine, martyr, that when a wicked woman tried to lead him into the sin of impurity, by the holy cross which he made at once the temptress was left as if dead, and the Saint was freed from the temptation. Blessed Joseph Oriol healed countless people with the mere sign of the cross in the Blessed Sacrament chapel of the parish of Our Lady of the Pine in Barcelona.

But in a special way God delivers us from our enemies the devils by means of the holy cross. That is why St. Anthony particularly urged his disciples to make the sign of the cross often, because with it they had nothing to fear from the enemies of their salvation, the devils. "The sign of the cross," he told them, "and a living faith in Jesus Christ are for the servants of God invincible weapons and a wall of bronze against all the efforts of hell." But woe to those who do not bless themselves! We read in the life of St. Gregory the Pope that once, when he was exorcising a young woman possessed by the devil, the Saint commanded the evil spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to tell him why he had entered that young woman. He answered: because she had not blessed herself.

You see, then, son, how useful it is to bless yourself devoutly every day: on getting out of bed, on going to bed, on leaving the house, on entering and leaving the church, and on beginning any bodily or spiritual work. In this way you will honor Jesus Christ, drive away the devil, and do your work well. I would like fathers of families to do this and teach it to their children, for this is the way to make them practice it later. St. Louis, King of France, used to bless himself on beginning any work and say: "That is how my mother taught me."

I would also like mothers to teach their little ones to bless themselves, and when they are too small to do it by themselves, to do it for them. In this way they will surely spare them many bodily and spiritual ills. Fr. Bartholomew Spina[1] tells that a devil tried more than fifty times to kill a child and could not succeed, because his mother had blessed him when she put him to bed.

If you want, then, my son, to be delivered from your enemies, take care to bless yourself well every day. I say *well*, because if you do it badly, instead of driving away the devil you will make him laugh, as has sometimes happened, according to Ramírez. If you saw a man aiming a well-loaded gun at you, you would certainly be frightened. But if the gun had no barrel, far from frightening you, it would make you laugh. Now apply the comparison, and you will see that if the cross the Christian makes in blessing himself is well made,

it frightens the devil more than a well-loaded gun would frighten you. But if it is badly made, it is worth less than a gun without a barrel, and so the devil laughs at it. So, dear son, bless yourself every day and form the crosses well. That is why I put the two children in the plate, so that you might learn from them to make the crosses well. In this way you will be delivered from all evil, spiritual and bodily, temporal and eternal, represented in those frightful figures of no. 5; and in the end we shall see each other together in heaven. Amen.

Q. What is the sign of the Christian?

A. The holy cross.

Q. Why?

A. Because on it Christ redeemed us.

Q. In how many ways do we use the sign of the holy cross?

A. In two: signing ourselves and blessing ourselves.[2]

Q. What is signing oneself?

A. Making three crosses with the thumb of the right hand, one on the forehead, another on the mouth and another on the breast, saying: "By the sign ✠ of the holy cross, from our ✠ enemies deliver us, Lord ✠ our God."

Q. Why do we sign ourselves on the forehead?

A. That God may deliver us from evil thoughts.

Q. Why do we sign ourselves on the mouth?

A. That God may deliver us from evil words.

Q. Why do we sign ourselves on the breast?

A. That God may deliver us from evil deeds and desires.

Q. What is blessing oneself?

A. Making a cross with the right hand open, from the forehead to the breast and from the left shoulder to the right, saying: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son ✠, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

Q. What do the words and action of blessing oneself signify?

A. They signify the mysteries of the Most Holy Trinity, the Incarnation and the Redemption.

Q. Tell me how.

A. The expression "in the name" signifies the unity of God; and saying "of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" signifies the trinity of persons.

Q. How does it signify the mystery of the Incarnation?

A. By the action of lowering the hand from the forehead to the breast.

Q. How does it signify the mystery of the Redemption?

A. By the cross that is made, because on it Christ redeemed us.

Q. How should we sign and bless ourselves?

A. Slowly, attentively and devoutly.

Q. Is it good to do it often?

A. Yes: to honor Jesus Christ, to defend ourselves from our enemies, and to do our work well.

Q. On what occasions is it good to sign and bless ourselves?

A. On getting up and going to bed; on leaving the house; on entering and leaving the church; before eating; on beginning any task or occupation; and when some temptation troubles us.

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[3] \[Claret's note:\] Since it is supposed here that a father is speaking to his son, it has been put this way. But the schoolmaster instructing his pupils will speak to them in the plural, and instead of "son" will say "children" or "gentlemen". The schoolmistress will do the same with her girls. See the notice on p. 138.

[1] Bartolomeo Spina OP (c. 1475–1546), author of a treatise on witchcraft (*Quaestio de strigibus*).

[2] Spanish distinguishes *signarse* (the three small crosses on forehead, lips and breast) from *santiguarse* (the large sign of the cross).

Part One. The Doctrine of Faith

Lesson 1. The Symbol or Creed

Part One. The Doctrine of Faith

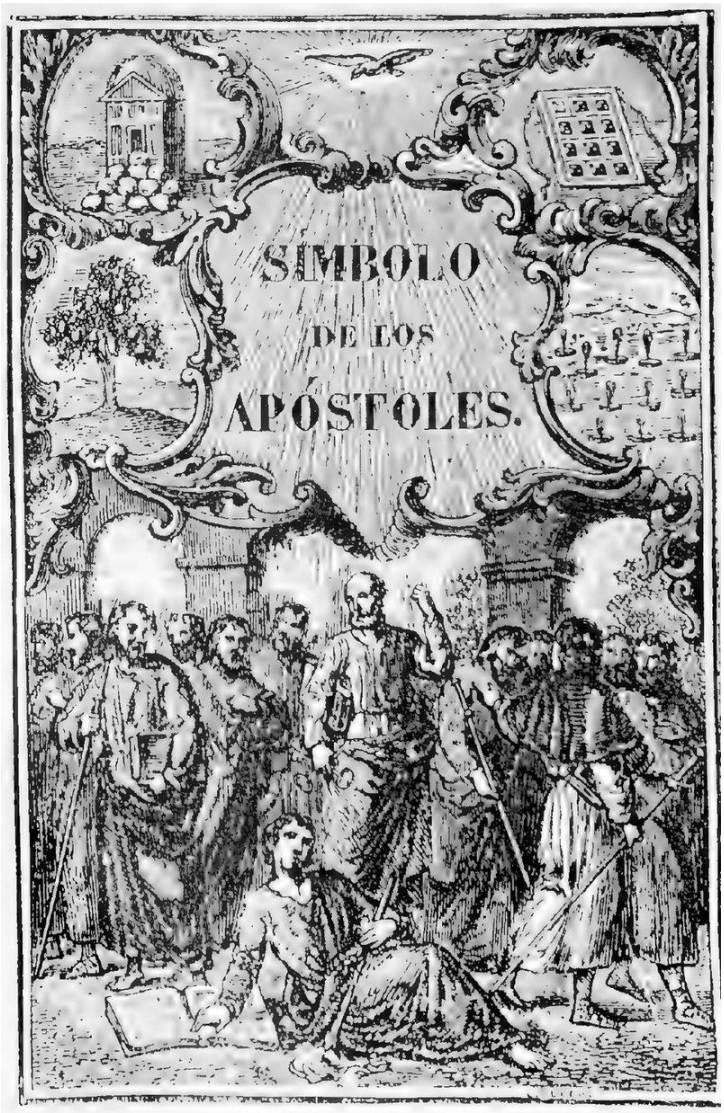

Plate III. The Creed of the Apostles. The twelve stones of the Jordan. The tree of twelve fruits. The rational of the old law. The twelve fountains. The twelve Apostles.

Do you see, my son, those twelve men ready to set out on a journey? They are the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. Do you notice that in the middle of them there is one holding keys in his right hand? It is St. Peter, to whom our God and Redeemer gave full powers to establish and govern his Church throughout the world; those powers are represented by the keys \[Matt. 16:19\]. With the index finger of his left hand he points to the dove above, a figure of the Holy Ghost. This shows that, after receiving from the divine Spirit the gifts and graces they needed, they fulfilled what their divine master Jesus Christ had charged them with when he said: *Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature* (Mark 16:15), *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. 28:19). *He that believeth* with a living faith, quickened by good works, *shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned* (Mark 16:16). But before going out to evangelize the whole world, they composed or arranged the Creed. It has twelve parts, and these twelve parts embrace the chief mysteries of our faith: the existence of God, his unity, and the

trinity of persons in one essence. The first part teaches us what we must believe and confess about the Father; the following six, what we must believe about the Son; and the remaining five, about the Holy Ghost.

See how they all have the pilgrim's staff in hand and are about to set out, each on his road. And that man lying there, who holds a lighted torch turned toward the ground in one hand and a big book in the other, signifies that the Apostles, by the heavenly doctrine they preached, curbed and fought the passions and vices, represented by the torch, and confounded the worldly wisdom of the pagan philosophers, represented by the book.

Before separating to go and evangelize the part of the world that had fallen to each in the distribution (St. Leo, *Sermon 4 on the holy Apostles Peter and Paul*), they thought it fitting to form the Creed, so that all might teach the same doctrine. They also wanted the faithful to have in it a sign or password to tell their beliefs apart from those of unbelievers and heretics. In an army, so as not to be surprised at night, the officers give the sentries a certain password, and those who do not give it exactly are taken for enemies. The Apostles, leaders of the Church militant, did the same. They gave this password, with the express order that those who did not conform to it should be reckoned not as friends or children of the Church of Jesus Christ, but as enemies, *as the heathen and publican* \[Matt. 18:17\], as all heretics in fact are.

Those other things you see in the plate are figures of the twelve Apostles. The highest on the left represents the twelve stones Joshua ordered taken out of the river Jordan when the people of God crossed it on dry ground to enter the promised land. For the Apostles by their heavenly doctrine have taught the true people of God to cross the rushing torrent of the passions of this world and enter heaven, the true promised land. They cross without wetting their feet, thanks to the spiritual footwear, which is the firm resolution to give ourselves wholly to God and to bear witness to *the gospel of peace* (Eph. 6:15), at least by our exemplary life.

The tree below it is the one St. John saw bearing twelve fruits \[Apoc. 22:2\]. Just as fruit serves people for food, so we must feed on these twelve fruits, which are the doctrine of the Apostles, if we want to live in grace in this world and afterwards eternally in heaven. The highest figure on the right represents an ornament of the vestment of the high priest of the old law, called the rational. On it the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, after their patriarchs, were written on twelve precious stones \[Exod. 28:15–21\], a figure of the twelve Apostles. The one below it represents the twelve fountains the children of Israel found at their second halt in the desert, at the place called Elim, where they rested beside the waters (Exod. 15:27). This is to show us that the Apostles are these twelve fountains, from which we who wish to reach heaven, the true promised land, must drink, and beside which we must rest.

Try, then, my son, to believe and practice what the holy Apostles taught us, and you will be saved. If not, you would be damned and would have to burn in hell for all eternity.

I must point out that the Creed, as the great Father St. Augustine says, is the rule and standard of our holy Catholic faith. It teaches us the divine mysteries and infallible truths we must know and believe. Nor is it enough to know them vaguely: we must understand them according to each person's capacity. The more they are understood, the more the will is kindled to attain and enjoy those heavenly delights. It is different with one who knows them only vaguely: since he does not notice the glory they hold out and offer us, he does not value them as a good Christian should. For this reason Pope Gregory XI condemned those who wrongly asserted that the "faith of the charcoal-burner" was enough for salvation, that is, knowing and believing vaguely and in general what holy Mother Church commands, without trying to understand explicitly each and every one of the truths the Creed teaches us. So I am going to explain them to you, though briefly.

Q. What is Christian Doctrine?

A. It is the Doctrine Christ taught us.

Q. How many parts has it?

A. Four.

Q. What is taught in them?

A. What the Christian must believe, ask for, do and receive in order to be saved.

Q. To which virtues do these things chiefly belong?

A. To faith, hope and charity.

Q. Where are we taught what we must believe?

A. In the Creed and the Articles of faith.

Q. Where, what we must ask for?

A. In the Our Father and other prayers.

Q. Where, what we must do?

A. In the Commandments.

Q. Where, what we must receive?

A. In the Sacraments.

Q. Are we obliged to know and understand Christian Doctrine?

A. Yes, because we cannot fulfil it without knowing and understanding it.

Q. Who are obliged to teach Christian Doctrine?

A. Parents with regard to their children, and parish priests with regard to their parishioners.

Q. Who else?

A. Teachers with regard to their pupils, and masters with regard to their servants.

Q. Do such people sin if they do not teach the doctrine?

A. Yes; and those under them also sin if they do not apply themselves to learning it.

Q. What is faith in general?

A. Believing what is not seen.

Q. In how many ways is there faith?

A. In two: divine and human.

Q. What is human faith?

A. Believing what we do not see because men say it, who can be deceived and deceive us.

Q. What is divine faith?

A. It is a supernatural virtue, infused by God into the soul, by which we believe all that God has said and revealed, and that the Church proposes to us as a matter of faith.

Q. Can what is of divine faith fail?

A. No, because it rests on the infallible testimony of God.

Q. Say the Creed.

A. I believe in God, etc. (see the First Catechism above).[1]

Q. Who arranged the Creed?

A. The twelve Apostles.

Q. Why did they arrange it?

A. So that all might teach the same doctrine throughout the world.

Q. And we, why do we say the Creed?

A. To confess the faith and to be more confirmed in it.

Q. What are the articles of the Creed?

A. They are the chief mysteries of all that we must believe.

Q. How many are the articles of the Creed?

A. Twelve, just as the Apostles who arranged it were twelve.

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[1] \[Claret's note:\] This answer, and the others whose content is in the text on the page cited, are to be recited in full in their proper place.

Lesson 2. Explanation of the Plate, and of the First Part of the Creed: "I believe in God the Father"



Plate IV. I believe in God the Father. 1. The eternal Father. 2. The prophet Isaias. 3. The apostle St. Peter. 4. A philosopher. 5. An ungodly man. 6. The Son of God.

Look, son. Do you see in this other plate the one seated on that throne of majesty (no. 1)? It is the image of God. That there is a God is taught us by faith and by natural reason, as the other figures below represent. Do you see the one kneeling (no. 2)? It is the prophet Isaias. Our Lord let himself be seen by him on a very lofty throne, and he heard the Seraphim singing that hymn of praise: *Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts* (Isa. 6:3). And he is exclaiming: *Thou, O Lord, art our father* (Isa. 63:16). The next (no. 3) is St. Peter, prince of the Apostles, on whom Jesus Christ promised to found and build his Church as soon as Peter acknowledged him and said: *Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God* (Matt. 16:16). That man (no. 4), who has a globe or sphere and his hand on a book, represents a wise and judicious philosopher. By contemplating created things he comes to know the Creator, because he knows there can be no effect without a cause. Observing all natural things, their order and motion, he infers that there must necessarily exist a Creator and intelligent first mover.

And you yourself will know it, even if you have not studied philosophy, for natural reason alone is enough. Tell me: if, on seeing a great palace, magnificently decorated and furnished, someone claimed that it was all the work of chance, that everything had made itself, without any architect or craftsman building the edifice and working and arranging the ornaments, would you not take the man who said so for a raving madman? Now apply it. The world is this immense and magnificent palace, which the sun lights by day and the moon

by night. The sky is peopled with stars; the earth with men, animals and plants; the sea and rivers with fish; and the air with birds. Spring, summer, autumn and winter follow one another in admirable order. In the bowels of the earth there are gold, silver, precious stones and countless metals. And a world of such wealth and beauty, did no one create it? Yes: God created it. All things say with a mute but powerful voice: *He made us, and not we ourselves* (Ps. 99:3). *The heavens shew forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of his hands* (Ps. 18:2).

Do you see that man (no. 5), with an unclean animal at his side and a plate and cups in front of him? He is one of those of whom St. Paul says that they are *enemies of the cross of Christ: whose God is their belly* (Phil. 3:18–19). They try only to please it with tasty morsels and choice drinks, with rich clothes and with shameful things in which they wallow like pigs in the mire, as St. Peter says (2 Pet. 2:22). Each of these *hath said in his heart: There is no God* (Ps. 13:1). He does not say it because he believes it, but because his heart, perverted and stained with vices, faults and sins, would like there to be none. But like it or not, his understanding knows the existence of that God who must punish him as his crimes deserve; and his conscience, which nothing can silence, cries this very thing to him: "You are not on the right road; you are going astray; you deserve punishment."

We, then, must believe that there is a God; that he has all perfections; that he is in all things; that he knows everything, sees everything, hears everything. Ah! If we would not dare to commit a slight fault in front of our father, our master or some other person, still less must we dare to commit it, or to speak evil, before God, who is everywhere. We can hide from men; but from God, what vain effort!

This God is Father. Within the Most Holy Trinity the first person is called Father because he begot and begets in his divine understanding his only-begotten Son, and so he is Father by nature. The plate shows this: in front of the image of the Father there is a mirror (no. 6), in which is his substantial image, which is the Son. Knowing himself from eternity, and seeing himself in his divine understanding as in a mirror, and being fruitful, he produces the Son, like himself, equal to himself and consubstantial with himself.

These mysteries are so far above human understanding that if God had not deigned to reveal to us the generation of his Son, we should not even know that it exists. More than that: we could not even speak of it if he himself did not open our mouths and purify them. This is what that Seraph signifies who with tongs takes a live coal from the altar before the Lord. This very thing appeared to the prophet Isaias in a vision, and his lips were purified with a live coal so that he might speak worthily of God (Isa. 6:6–7).

With regard to us and to all other created things, the three divine Persons bear the name of Father, because all three created all that exists, and created it for us. They are like a natural father who plants an estate for his son's benefit and hands it over to him. They are Father also because of the fatherly love God has for us and has shown by granting us his grace, by which he makes us his friends, adopted children and heirs of heaven. That is why he wants us to say to him with full voice: "Our Father, who art in heaven." Who, then, could be so ungrateful as not to love so good a Father? Let us love him, then, with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind and with all our strength. Let us never offend him: rather die than sin and offend God. So, my son, even if you see others offend him, do not do it yourself. If you saw others stabbing your father, you would certainly not imitate them; rather you would weep. Think, then, that when men sin they offend God and *crucify again* Jesus Christ (Heb. 6:6). So instead of imitating them you must weep to see them ill-treat God, your dear Father. If you saw others throw themselves into a well or into the fire, would you follow them? Think, then, that those who sin throw themselves into the pit and the fire of hell.

Q. What is the first article of the Creed?

A. I believe in God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Q. What does "I believe in God" mean?

A. That I believe and am certain that there is a God, and that there is only one true God.

Q. Why do you believe it?

A. Because God himself has revealed it; and besides, heaven and earth bear witness that there exists a God, creator and preserver of all things.

Q. What does “Father” mean?

A. That God is Father by nature of his only Son; he is also Father by grace of all good Christians; and finally he is Father by creation of all things.

Lesson 3. The Most Holy Trinity

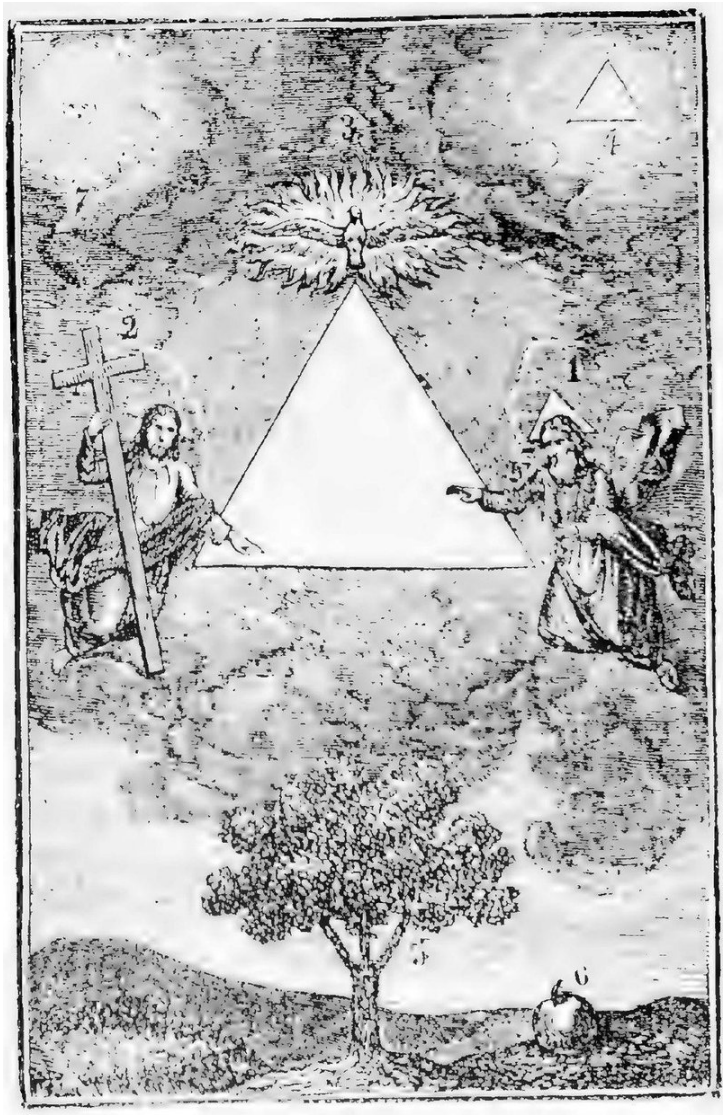

Plate V. The Most Holy Trinity. 1. The eternal Father. 2. The eternal Son. 3. The Holy Ghost. 4. The triangle. 5. A tree. 6. An apple. 7. The sun.

Do you see, my son, that beautiful plate? It represents to you, though very imperfectly, the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. It consists in believing one only God in three really distinct persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. No created tongue can speak worthily of this mystery, and no understanding, however penetrating, can comprehend it. We should not even have an idea of it if God himself had not deigned to reveal it to us. Faith teaches us what this mystery consists in; but to want to comprehend it would be as rash as it is useless. Since God is by nature incomprehensible, would it not be rashness and lost time to try to

understand how there is one God in three persons? It is told of St. Augustine that one day he was walking on the seashore, meditating on this mystery, about which he was writing some treatises. He saw a very beautiful child (doubtless an Angel in that form) busily carrying sea water in a little shell to a small hole he had dug there. “What are you doing, child?” the Saint asked him. “I want to put all the water of the sea into this little pit,” he answered. The Saint laughed at the simplicity and innocence of the little one and said to him: “What you are attempting is impossible, my son.” The boy replied: “It is easier for me to work this marvel than for you to understand the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity.” With that he disappeared, and the Saint was left amazed, and warned that all the mysteries, this one especially, must be believed with simple faith, even though we must try to know them well and meditate on them often, until the day comes when God deigns to show them all to us in heaven. Do not be, then, one of those who will believe only what they understand; for if we understood them, they would cease to be mysteries. Believe them with a most lively faith, as God teaches them to us through the Catholic Church our mother. It is according to her doctrine that I am going to explain this and the other mysteries to you.

If on the one hand reason teaches us that there cannot be many gods, faith assures us that there is only one. On the other hand faith adds that we are obliged to believe that in God there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The Father is not begotten and does not proceed from another. The Son is begotten, equal to the Father and of the same substance. The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and the Son. *There are three*, says St. John, *who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word* (so the Son is called), *and the Holy Ghost. And these three are one* (that is, one essence) (1 John 5:7).[1] At the baptism of Jesus Christ the Son was baptized, the voice of the Father rang out in the air, and the person of the Holy Ghost came down in the form of a dove (Matt. 3:16–17). And Jesus Christ himself taught this mystery. He commanded his Apostles to teach it, and to baptize all the nations of the world *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. 28:19). In these words the unity of nature or essence is seen in the expression “in the name”, and the trinity of persons when the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are named.

This is the faith of the Catholic Church: to believe one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity. One is the person of the Father, another that of the Son, another that of the Holy Ghost. One is the divinity of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, equal the glory, coeternal the majesty. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; yet they are not three Gods but one only God, because there is only one divine nature in each person and in the three together.[2] So that you may understand it better, I will give you some comparisons, as the Council of Nicaea wishes when it says: *Per similitudines, quamvis infirmiores, accipe bona documenta* \[Through comparisons, even weaker ones, receive good lessons\]. Look at the plate. Do you see, son, that tree (no. 5) which has three equal branches, and is only one tree because the three branches have one and the same trunk? So the three divine Persons are only one God, because the three have one and the same divine nature. Under the tree, too, you will see an apple (no. 6), which will also serve you as a comparison. The apple, while being one, has three things quite distinct from one another: smell, color and taste. The smell is not the taste, nor the taste the color, nor the color the smell; and yet it is one apple. See how the apple gives you some idea of the unity of the divine nature and of the trinity and distinction of persons.

You will also see in the plate a triangle (no. 4). This geometric figure has three angles. Each one by itself is a figure; but the three together are only one triangular figure.

We have only one soul, and this soul has understanding, memory and will. So the soul thinks, the soul remembers and the soul wills; and in spite of that it is only one soul.

You must also know that the Father is the principle of the Son, and Father and Son are the principle of the Holy Ghost; and yet one person is not before the other, and each is as eternal as the other. The Father, knowing himself, or beholding himself in his divine understanding, which is fruitful, begot from eternity his Son, equal to himself in essence and perfections. And from the mutual love of the Father and the Son, also

from eternity, proceeds the Holy Ghost, likewise equal to both in substance and attributes. Since these processions have always been, it cannot be said that one divine person is before another: Father, Son and Holy Ghost are eternal. Look there in the plate at the sun (no. 7), which is a figure of this ineffable mystery. From the sun come the rays of light and the brightness. Although the sun is the principle of the ray, and both are the principle of the brightness, each is as old as the other. So, if the sun were eternal, the ray and the brightness would be eternal too, as St. Augustine says. Something like this holds true, in due proportion, in this mystery.

Among these divine Persons there is neither greater nor less, because they are equal in all the absolute perfections of Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Eternity, Lordship, Greatness and Majesty.

Now I am going to explain to you why these divine Persons are called Father, Son and Holy Ghost. The first is called Father because he begot the Son: being an infinite good, he could not be without communicating himself infinitely within himself, and so he communicates his own divine nature to the Son whom he begot. This second Person, who is born of the knowledge of the first, is called Son because he is begotten; and here on earth the one begotten is called son, and the one who begets, father. The third Person is called Holy Ghost because, as the Father and the Son love each other, he proceeds as spirit, breathed forth by the impulse of this love.

My son, try to believe this and the other mysteries that God teaches you and the Catholic Church proposes to you, and live well and holily. If you do, the things you now know only by faith and *through a glass* (1 Cor. 13:12) you will afterwards see in heaven as they are in themselves. Meanwhile exercise your faith. Make the Lord this offering of your understanding, believing all Catholic truths even though you do not understand or comprehend them. Give him your heart, loving him with all your affection and practicing all the virtues. Love and venerate most holy Mary, who is Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son, and Spouse of God the Holy Ghost. Ask her for a most lively faith, a most firm hope and a most fervent charity, so that by practicing these theological virtues you may please God and be happy for all eternity.

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[1] The *Comma Johanneum*.

[2] *Quicumque vult.*

Lesson 4. Explanation of the Plate, and Continuation of the First Part of the Creed: “Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth”



Plate VI. God almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. 1. The Creator. 2. Adam and Eve. 3. St. John.

My son, do you see that figure in the middle (no. 1)? It represents God our Lord, who created heaven and earth and all that is in them. That is what these words of the Creed mean: “Creator of heaven and earth”. You must therefore believe that God is the Creator of all that exists, from the beautiful sun to the worm and the smallest gnat. How many reflections crowd into the mind at the sight of the wonders of creation, which show the infinite power of God! Consider for a moment, my son, that before creation nothing of this world existed. There was no heaven, no earth, no men, no animals, no plants, no air, no light; in a word, nothing. God alone existed, dwelling in himself and enjoying his glory and his eternal happiness. That happiness depends in nothing on his creatures, whom he created only to make them sharers in his goodness. At last the moment his wisdom had fixed arrived, and the universe was created. How great must the power of God be! For to create is to bring out of nothing: to make what did not exist before exist all at once. This requires an infinite power, which we call Omnipotence. This power is appropriated to the Father in this first article, when we say: “I believe in God, the Father almighty.” And notice that for so great a work he needs only to will: *He spoke, and they were made* (Ps. 148:5).

The works we make, we build at the cost of time and labor, and always with the materials they are made of already at hand. A carpenter, for example, does not make a table before he has the wood. A mason does not build a palace without first having lime, sand, stones and other materials and tools. But when nothing yet exists, to say “Be made!” and have it made supposes an infinite power. And that is exactly what God did, not with a few trifles but with the whole world.

In the beginning God created heaven, and earth (Gen. 1:1), and in six days all the rest that exists, both what we see and what we do not. He set on its foundations this great machine and admirable edifice of the universe. Holy Scripture teaches us that on the first of these six days God created light to brighten that dark mass. He divided it from the darkness, and from the darkness and the light, following one upon the other, the first day was made. What goodness in our heavenly Father! He did it so that we might rest in the darkness of night and work by the light of day.

On the second day he created the firmament, that is, the space that stretches from the earth to the fixed stars. He divided the waters under the firmament, which seem to be those upon the earth, from those above the firmament, which

seem to be the immense mass of water gathered as vapor and spread through the air. You cannot imagine how great that space is. If you go out into the country, especially at night, lift your eyes to the sky, wonder at its immensity, and praise the God who created it.

On the third day God gathered into one place the waters that still covered the earth, and formed the seas. Then he commanded the earth to bring forth *the green herb, and such as may seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind* (Gen. 1:11). The earth, which a moment before was bare and barren, was suddenly covered with every kind of tree and plant, with all the variety of flowers and fruits that exist in the universe. See how God prepares food for the many animals he is about to create, and covers the earth with a color so gentle and so pleasing to our eyes.

But let us leave the earth for a moment and lift our eyes to the sky, to witness the marvelous spectacle of the fourth day of creation. Do you see that sun, which rises so majestically every morning, hurries on to noon, and in the evening plunges into the west, to rise again the next day? How beautiful it is! How obedient to the orders of its Creator, who has marked out its course! Do you see that moon, which rules the night? Do you see that countless multitude of stars? All is the work of the omnipotence of the Lord, who by saying "Let it be made" made everything and created it for our good. Oh, my son, can we help exclaiming with a Prophet: *O Lord my God, thou art exceedingly great* (Ps. 103:1); blessed be thou for ever through all the expanse of the heavens? And that is not all. God also created another heaven, to be the place of delight of his chosen ones. If this heaven we see is so beautiful and so great, what must that invisible one be, where God displays his magnificence and generosity!

On the fifth day God commanded the waters to bring forth the fish and the birds. In a moment the air was peopled with every kind of bird, and the sea filled with fish of endless variety. Oh, if you saw those great whales, which because of their enormous size have sometimes been mistaken for islets in the sea! You would be terrified, and would not believe it was an animal unless you saw it with your own eyes. Some are a hundred and sixty spans long. So great is the power of God!

Having commanded the waters on the fifth day to bring forth fish and birds, on the sixth God commanded the earth to bring forth the animals we call land animals. The earth obeyed the word of its Creator, and suddenly there appeared oxen, destined to serve and feed man; horses, sheep, goats and all the other domestic animals; lions, tigers, elephants, serpents, and all that live in the woods and creep on the ground. And after all this he created man, Adam. He made all the animals appear before him so that he might give them names, which he did, giving each the one that suited its nature. On the same day Eve was formed from a rib of Adam, and the two were placed in the earthly paradise. As soon as God had created all things, he ceased from his works and rested on the seventh day.

The way God created man, as Holy Scripture teaches us, was this. After he had already created all things, he said: *Let us make man to our image and likeness* (Gen. 1:26). Taking a little clay, he formed the body of our first father, who is therefore called Adam, which means "made of clay". The name also means "red" or "beautiful", because he was formed from an earth that was reddish, or whose color resembled that of flesh.

At the very moment when the body of man was formed, like a most beautiful figure of wax, God created the soul and joined it to the body. In the same instant that creature's eyes opened, and his whole face came alive and brightened. Scripture expresses this wonderful manner in these words: *The Lord God… breathed into his face* (Adam's) *the breath of life* (Gen. 2:7). It does not mean that he really breathed, which is impossible, since God is pure spirit. It is to make us understand that we must regard man's soul as something distinct and very different from the body: not formed of any matter, but come directly from God by creation.

And what we say of Adam's soul must be understood of ours too. Since the soul is spiritual, it cannot be made of flesh and blood. It is created directly by God and joined to the body while the body is being formed and perfected in the mother's womb.

Man is like God. Besides God's own saying that he was making him to his image and likeness, we ourselves see him so if we consider it well. We know that God is one in essence and three in persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost; and our soul is likewise one in essence and threefold in powers, which are memory, understanding and will. God made man a sharer in his goodness, spirituality, eternity, wisdom, power, providence, free will or liberty, and other attributes. He made him also a kind of demigod, in the sense that he wants all things to be subject to him and him to be subject to God alone. Man is subject to God either directly, when God makes his commands known to him, or through the superiors God has given him, in whom God wants him to recognize God's own person. Man is also like God because he is like Christ, who is God, *by whom all things were made* (John 1:3). Besides, some authors, such as Prudentius, Eugubinus and Salvian, and before them, it seems, Tertullian, say that in creating Adam God took the form of a very beautiful man, which served as the model for forming the first man.

God also created the Angels in a state of grace and beauty. But a great part of them were ungrateful to God and grew proud. In just punishment of so great a wickedness he cast them out of heaven and hurled them into hell, and they are the ones we call devils. They are in hell, on the earth and in the air. Wherever they are, they suffer terrible pains in punishment of their pride. God allows them to tempt men, so that men may show the fidelity they keep toward God. He also keeps them as executioners or ministers of his justice, to carry out the sentences he pronounces against sinners. Look carefully at the plate, son. Do you see those two (no. 2)? They are Adam and Eve, our first parents. They are naked, because before they sinned the mantle of innocence covered them. The one in no. 3 is the apostle St. John, who, addressing God in the book of the Apocalypse, says to him: *Great and wonderful are thy works, O Lord God Almighty* (Apoc. 15:3). Do you see the earth peopled with trees, plants and animals, the sea full of fish, and the air full of birds? Do you see how the sun rises? Do you see the moon and the stars? Do you see too the good Angels serving the Creator? The bad ones, or devils, are hidden, because they cannot bear the presence of God.

Both the good Angels and the bad, or devils, are simple spirits, and so they have no body, though they are often painted with one. But you must know that if the good Angels are painted in the form of a child or a youth, it is to show their candor or innocence. It is also because they have sometimes appeared in the form of a graceful youth or a beautiful child, and to symbolize their immortality. They are painted with wings to express the readiness with which they serve God and the persons he has placed in their keeping. The devils are usually painted as some very ugly man, to show the ugliness of a spirit or soul that is not in God's grace but in sin. Or they are painted as a wild beast, to show their savagery against people. They are painted also as a serpent, because in that form the devil presented himself to Eve our mother, whom he led to sin, and through her Adam. This sin of our first parents is what brought sin into the world. And since the origin of our being was corrupted in Adam, all his children contract this fault by generation; that is why it is called *original*. By it Adam and Eve were deprived of the grace and original innocence in which God had created them, and deprived of the right to the glory of heaven. They became subject to all sicknesses and miseries, even to death itself; and not only they, but all their descendants, which is all of us. So what has happened to us through Adam's sin is what happens in a rich house: because the master or father squandered all his goods

on gambling and other vices, his children are left wretched and unhappy.

Lesson 5. Original Sin



Plate VII. Original sin, its consequences and remedies. 1. Adam and Eve in the state of grace. 2. Adam and Eve break God's command. 3. Adam and Eve driven out of paradise. 4. Fallen man, the clock and the weeping tree. 5. Two men fighting a duel. 6. A man in prison. 7. Sickness and death. 8. The flames of hell. 9. A man with the cross. 10. Another man with the cross. 11. Jesus and Mary.

Do you see, my son, that man and that woman in no. 1 of the plate? You know already that they are our parents Adam and Eve. They are adorned with every kind of knowledge, as shown by the rays coming to them from the triangle, figure of the Most Holy Trinity. They are clothed with original justice, as shown by the whiteness and purity of their hearts, all their affections directed to God, and they are placed in a garden of delights. What concord, what harmony reigns in them! How perfect they are while they keep the state of innocence! They have a body, but it is as if they had none, because it is entirely subject to their soul. The soul, for its part, is obedient to God in all things and sweetly busy loving him, as the white dots running from their heart to God signify; and it rules the body. The lower appetites are under the rule of reason, and the flesh is a faithful companion of the spirit, docile to its promptings. Their understanding, full of the light God gave it, knows all the secrets of nature and delights in contemplating it and in praising God, who created it as their dwelling. And their will, full too of uprightness and love, sees itself master of itself and of all its

movements; always even and calm, it enjoys a sweet inward peace and rest. This, while their innocence lasted, was the happy state of Adam and Eve. They loved God with all their heart, with all their soul, with all their mind and with all their strength. They knew God to be supremely lovable and loving, and they had no passion or evil inclination to hinder or even delay them in loving the supreme goodness, which is God.

But you must know, my son, that they were not only happy within themselves. They also enjoyed full peace and quiet outwardly. All the animals, even the fiercest and wildest, obeyed them and served them in their way. The trees delighted their eyes with their leafiness and green, and treated their appetite to the choicest fruits. The plants offered them wholesome and plentiful food for their sustenance. And the fruit of the tree of life preserved them from old age and death. Everything, in a word, contributed to their happiness, and nothing could disturb it. Heat, cold, thirst, hunger, sickness and death were evils that for them were as if they did not exist, because they were not subject to them. Every evil was incompatible with the state of original justice in which God had created them.

Great is the satisfaction and pleasure parents have in leaving their children heirs and peaceful possessors of their rich estates. And so, to crown their joy, our parents knew for certain that the happiness they possessed would pass entire to their descendants. For they did not possess it only as private persons but as heads of the great family that was to people the world, and as the stock from which all men were to be born and descend. God had made them kings, and the parents of those who were to reign over all the creatures of the universe.

Besides this temporal happiness, which left nothing to be desired, they had a clear road to eternal happiness. They had only to follow this holy road, keeping the one command God had given them and his most holy will. Then, when the Lord was satisfied with the obedience and fidelity with which they had acknowledged, served and loved him, he would carry them to the eternal joys he had prepared for them in heaven. For this they would not have to pass through the bitterness and anguish of death. It would be like moving from a small house to a great and splendid palace. Do you see how lightly and boldly the eagle rises from the earth and soars through the air? So our parents would have risen to heaven if they had not sinned. But they sinned, and by sin they were stripped of all supernatural gifts and graces and wounded in their natural gifts, as St. Thomas says; and unhappily we all know it by bitter experience.

I want to tell you, my son, the story of the sin and fall of our parents, which is the origin of all our misfortunes. You will remember what I told you in the last lesson: God had created the Angels. Some of them were faithful in serving and loving God and were confirmed in grace; these are the good Angels. Some were unfaithful. Instead of being grateful and loving toward the Lord from whom they had just received so many favors, they saw themselves so adorned with grace and beauty that they grew proud and rebelled against God, wanting to make themselves *like the most High* (Isa. 14:14). The Lord, angered at such ingratitude and rashness, pronounced against them the sentence their crime deserved. He withdrew from them all supernatural graces and gifts and left them in the state of their simple spiritual nature. He hurled them like thunderbolts from the height of heaven into the depths of the infernal abyss. And to humble them further he subjected them to the punishment of the eternal fire of hell, which the Gospel says is *prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. 25:41). Many of these bad angels roam through the air and over the earth, without ceasing on that account to suffer the pains of the damned. They busy themselves tempting and provoking men to sin and damnation, for two reasons. The first is the hatred they have for God, and so they persecute man, whom they know to be his image and whom he loves very much. The second is the envy they have of man, whom they know God has created and favored and wants to make a sharer in his heavenly joys. God allows them to do it. It is partly so that, against their will, they may serve the glory of God by exercising the good. It is also so that men may have the chance to merit and to give proof of their constancy, courage and fidelity.

The devil tried out and began this temptation in paradise with our parents (see the plate, no. 2), and to our misfortune it turned out as he wished: he managed to make them fall into the snare he had set for them. For

this he made use of the serpent, taking possession of that cunning reptile. Eve, idle and moved by curiosity, wandered away from her husband and began to go about paradise, admiring its beauties and delights. Walking alone, she came to the middle of paradise, where the tree of knowledge of good and evil stood. Here the infernal enemy was waiting to make her fall. Before her eyes he moved the organs of the serpent, which he had taken as the instrument of his wickedness, and forming human words he said to her: *Why hath God commanded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?* And she answered him: *Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat; and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die.* God had forbidden it to test their obedience, fidelity and love. *No,* said the serpent then, *you shall not die the death. For God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened: and you shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil. And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat… and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat* (Gen. 3:1–6). Ah, unspeakably fatal mouthful! Ah, unhappy moment! At that very instant their eyes were opened: not to know good and evil like gods, as the tempter had promised them, but to see the abyss of evils into which their disobedience had plunged them. From angelic men they suddenly became carnal men. They saw themselves naked and were ashamed.

They felt the rebellion of the flesh, and this rebellion covered them with embarrassment and confusion. Original justice, which kept nature in perfect order, served as a kind of veil hiding their nakedness. In punishment of their disobedience God withdrew this veil, and at once they found themselves naked and ashamed. Finding themselves in so shameful a state, they went to a fig tree, cut leaves, sewed them together and covered themselves with them.

Hardly had they covered themselves with these leaves when they heard the voice of God, and in terror they fled and hid in the thickest part of paradise. *Where art thou,* Adam? said the Lord. And Adam, all confused, answered: *I heard thy voice in paradise; and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself. And who hath told thee that thou wast naked,* said the Lord, *but that thou hast eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?* Adam answered: *The woman, whom thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat.* And to Eve he said: *Why hast thou done this? The serpent deceived me, and I did eat,* answered Eve. Then God said to the serpent: *Thou art cursed among all cattle, and beasts of the earth: upon thy breast shalt thou go, and earth shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed: she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel* (Gen. 3:9–15).[1] You will notice, my son, that this curse of God falls on the serpent as an animal and on the infernal serpent, which is the devil. The animal was cursed for having served as the devil's instrument in making our parents sin. That serpent and its descendants have borne this curse of God ever since: they crawl, and are objects of loathing, horror and fear. On this I must warn you that the enemy then made use of the serpent because he had no other man to tempt man with. But now that he has other men, he uses them to catch others, just as the hunter uses decoy birds to catch birds of their own kind. But woe to the one who serves as the devil's instrument for catching souls! *Woe to that man by whom the scandal cometh!* (Matt. 18:7). Keep away, my son, from the one who gives scandal as from the sight of the serpent.

The devil, chief agent of this fall, is cursed by God a second time. He is threatened with the confusion and defeats he will suffer, and with a woman, who will be Mary, crushing his proud and haughty head. And to his greater confusion and shame, God will use the same weapons to defeat him. He made use of a woman, and God will make use of one called Mary. Eve took the fruit of the tree and gave it to Adam and ruined him. Mary will take the blessed fruit of her womb, Jesus, from the tree of the cross and give him to us for our salvation; and *where sin abounded, grace did more abound* (Rom. 5:20).

After these curses God turned to those of our parents. Addressing the woman, he said to her: *I will multiply thy sorrows, and thy conceptions: in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be under thy husband's power, and he shall have dominion over thee.* And to Adam he said: *Cursed is the earth in thy*

work; with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life. Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken: for dust thou art (as to the body), *and into dust thou shalt return* (Gen. 3:16–19).

After the Lord had pronounced these terrible sentences, which have been fulfilled to the letter, he was moved by his love of modesty and decency. He made garments or coats of skins to cover the shameful nakedness of these offenders, as you will see in the plate at no. 3, and when they were covered with them he cast them out of paradise. So those who had been placed in that garden of delights like two Angels left it covered with skins like two beasts. See well, my son, what disobedience brings.

Fallen into sin and cast out of paradise, our parents found themselves more wretched than a fish out of water. They were deprived of the grace of God, of original justice, of innocence, of the virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost, and of all the graces they had received from heaven. They were slaves of the devil, for he had conquered and won them by sin. They were subject to all the troubles and sicknesses of the body, and even to death itself. Besides this they were covered with the darkness of ignorance and ruled by concupiscence. Concupiscence is the disordered love of ourselves, a love that draws us away from God our creator, and from which flow all the sins that lead to the eternal death of hell.

To help you understand better the evils and misfortunes this sin brought on our parents and on all human nature, look at no. 4 in the plate. There you will see a clock, a tree called the weeping tree, and a man falling from a tall column. Take the clock first. A very good clock, well regulated, does not stop, or run fast or slow, but always keeps good time, as the clockmaker designed it. But if this clock has a great fall, and has received so heavy a shock that the whole mechanism is put out of order and all the wheels and axles are disarranged, it hardly goes; and if it goes at all, it almost always runs wrong, fast or slow. This clock is a figure of the human race, arranged and ordered by the wisest of craftsmen, God himself. Its movements were always perfectly ordered according to God’s will. But as soon as it had the misfortune of this great fall, the dreadful blow put all nature out of order and overturned the wonderful order in which it had been formed. At the very moment when our parents sinned by disobeying God, everything rebelled against them and against the human race. The body refused the rule of the soul; the flesh rebelled against the spirit; the passions mutinied against reason; the appetites refused to obey the will. In short, the lower, carnal man rebelled against the higher, spiritual man. From then on began that inner struggle of which St. Paul complained so much (Rom. 7:23), and which all of us, unhappily, experience only too well. The animals too, and the other creatures, refused in the same way to obey those who had failed in obedience to their Creator.

To help you understand this very important matter well, I will explain the other emblem, the weeping tree. Compare this tree with a fruit tree. The fruit tree you will see leafy, cheerful and laden with fruit. It is true that the very weight of the fruit makes it bend its branches a little, as if to let man pick it. Yet it always stretches them upward, as if to praise its Creator and report to him how it does its duty as a faithful creature. But look at the weeping tree: it stands without fruit, sad and melancholy, with its branches drooping to the ground. Such is the human race fallen into sin,

without the fruit of good works, virtues and graces: sad, melancholy and exiled in this valley of tears. But let these tears at least not be only for the punishments it has deserved. Let them be chiefly for having sinned. Then God would grant it pardon and grace, as he granted them to our parents, who wept for their sin and did penance; and God forgave them and they were saved.

I think you are eager to know what this man falling from a column means. Let us come to it. This man represents the human race. But first of all I must tell you that theologians distinguish three states of the human race: that of pure nature, that of nature in its integrity, and that of nature fallen and corrupted. When God created man, he gave him the natural graces, and besides these, by a special favor, he adorned him with

supernatural graces, with original justice and the other gifts I have already explained to you. To help you understand it better, I have used the comparison of this man falling from a column. You have seen how a sculptor forms a statue in his workshop and then sets it on top of a tall column. So God created man with natural graces and set him on the tall column of supernatural graces. But the unhappy man grew dizzy, and that dizziness was his disobedience, the daughter of his pride. He fell, and by this fall he was stripped of supernatural graces and wounded in his natural ones, as St. Thomas says. Natural reason and experience make this truth, which we call the fall of our parents or original sin, so plain that even if faith did not teach it, no one could doubt it. For we see that in the whole universe there is no work more exquisite on the one hand, nor on the other more full of defects, than man. This creature, like the others, is the work of God's hands; and since all God's works are most perfect in their kind, where could the disorder we all feel in man come from, if not from this original fall, which faith teaches us and all the traditions of the human race attest? It is as with a particular man who has a fall, injures his legs and walks with a limp: walking belongs to his nature, but the limping is the result of the fall.

Stop a little, my son, and consider man, and you will see in him the most clashing, contradictory and monstrous things. You will find in him an understanding whose object is truth. It is keen, sharp, inventive, shrewd and ingenious. It catches and masters the animals of the earth, the fish of the waters and the birds of the air; it weighs the stars and calculates their distances and motions. But how strange and astonishing! In the midst of so much nobility, power and knowledge, it degrades itself so far that it entirely changes its object: it abandons truth and seeks falsehood, plunging willingly into a thousand falsehoods and errors. God complains of this through his Prophet in Psalm 4:3: *O ye sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart? why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?* Strange thing! It abandons God, who is truth by essence, and follows the devil, who is the father of lies (John 8:44); and though he is its greatest enemy, it venerates and worships him by vices or idolatry. What monstrousness!

I can tell you the same of the will. Its object is the good, and the Lord in creating it stamped on it this holy law of love: to love God above all things and one's neighbor as oneself. But see what monstrousness. In spite of this law of love, so natural to man, man despises God, offends him, and perhaps comes to hate him, preferring riches, honors and pleasures to God himself. As the reward for keeping this law God promises man the eternal joys of heaven, and he threatens transgressors with the eternal pains of hell; and unhappy man pays no heed to any of it. You will see this disorder marked in the plate. Do you see that man falling from the column? See how, on reaching the ground, he is upside down: head downward, feet toward heaven, head and hands toward the globe. The globe represents the earth or the world, where all there is is *the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life* (1 John 2:16), as St. John says. And so that you may understand well the disorder that has come from this fall, consider the will of man. Its object was God alone, who is goodness itself in essence, and only in God can it be satisfied. But see: the unhappy will abandons him and applies all its powers and senses to the things of the earth, where it seeks happiness. That is why the man is head and hands toward the earth. But since it seeks happiness where it is not, it never finds it.

I tell you the same of the second part of this love, which is to love one's neighbor as oneself. There is a proverb that says: "Every animal loves its like." But men are sometimes so far from this that they hate, persecute and kill one another with such slaughter as was never heard of even among the fiercest beasts. They glory in inventing ways to kill more people with little effort, or to inflict incurable wounds, as you will see in the plate at no. 5. And instead of honoring, assisting and helping one another and seeking every good for one another, they do the opposite. That man in the plate at no. 6 shows it. By slanders, injustices and oppressions they have dishonored him and stripped him of all he possessed; and since he finds no charity or justice among men, he lifts his hands to God to protect him.

In the same plate (no. 7) you will see four things: a sick man, a dead man, a skeleton and a heap of dust. This shows you that men are subject, as to the body, to calamities, miseries and sicknesses, to death and to dust, as God told our father. But on this I must tell you that, given what the human body is made of, every man is by nature mortal. But if man had not sinned, he would have enjoyed the immortality with which God had endowed him. As a result of original sin he lost immortality and *death came*, as the Apostle says (Rom. 5:12). *The sting of death is sin* (1 Cor. 15:56): personal sin is the goad that drives death on and hastens it. And at last the body becomes a skeleton, dust and ashes.

I have told you already that if men had kept original justice, they would have gone to heaven without passing through death. But now they are unworthy of such a grace. And if besides original sin they add personal sins, they will have to go to the fires of hell, which is what the bonfire of no. 8 signifies.

But let us give thanks to God, who, for the great love he had for us, sent us his most holy Son. Taking our human nature, he suffered the most terrible pains, giving his life for us on a cross. He redeemed us, as St. Peter says, *not with corruptible things as gold or silver*, but with the blood of his veins (1 Pet. 1:18–19). Ah, my son, stop a little and consider these three things: Who is the Redeemer? What did he do to redeem us? And what effects has his redemption produced? As to the first: the Redeemer is God the creator himself, so that our heart might not be divided, as St. Augustine says, but that we might love with our whole heart the God who has loved us so much. Considering this great condescension of God, holy Church our mother, carried away, sings in the *Exsultet* of Holy Saturday: *O felix culpa, quae talem ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem!* \[O happy fault, which merited to have so good and so great a Redeemer!\]. So the graces Jesus Christ's redemption has brought us are greater than the misfortunes the fall of our parents Adam and Eve had brought upon us. By the fall human nature was enslaved by the devil; but Jesus Christ not only redeemed it but also divinized it, uniting it to his divine person. This is the greatest honor he could do it and we could receive. And from *children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3) he made us children of God and his brothers. What goodness! What mercy!

But what is most wonderful in the redemption is the way he redeemed us: the pains and labors he suffered to redeem and save us. It is true that he could have used a thousand other means. But he chose this one because it was the most painful, and so the most suited to show us his great love. And he chose to do it with the full extent and intensity of suffering, to show us his most ardent love. A small pain would have been enough: being the pain and suffering of a God-Man, it was of infinite value, enough to redeem thousands of worlds. But as St. John Chrysostom says: *Quod sufficiebat redemptioni non sufficiebat amori* \[What was enough for redemption was not enough for love\]. For *greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends*, as Jesus Christ says in his holy Gospel (John 15:13).

But what shall I tell you, my son, of the effects this redemption has produced in the human race? From children of wrath it has made us children of God, and from slaves of the devil, heirs of heaven. It is true that, by a special design of his infinite wisdom, he did not choose to take away from us the punishment due to original sin: all the miseries and disorders we see in the nature of men. But he left them for great and most lofty ends, and for our greater merit. The man of no. 9 will show you this. As you see, he is bent toward the earth and leans on a cross, which he uses as a staff. See how he is climbing the holy mountain of Christian perfection, though he is troubled and inclined to evil by the weight of his passions and concupiscence. But he says to God with the Prophet: *Virga tua, et baculus tuus, ipsa me consolata sunt* \[Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me\] (Ps. 22:4). The *virga* or rod of the Lord means the most holy Virgin, the Mother of God, who is that *rod out of the root of Jesse*, says the prophet Isaias (Isa. 11:1); and the staff is the holy cross of Jesus Christ. On this rests all the merit of the redemption: the remedy of our ills, the strength for our weaknesses, the weapons with which we are to conquer all our enemies, and the grace by which we are succored and helped to begin, continue and complete our perfection. That is why holy Church, very fittingly, in the preface of the holy cross says, speaking to God: "Who didst establish the salvation of mankind on the

wood of the cross, that whence death arose, thence life might rise again; and that he who overcame by the tree might also by the tree be overcome; through Christ our Lord."

To understand better how the remedy fits the kind of sickness, remember what I told you of how the fall of the human race came about. Do you remember how the devil used a tree to bring death? Well, God uses the tree of the cross to give us life. The devil used Adam and Eve to infect the world; God uses Jesus and Mary to save and redeem it. The devil conquered and enslaved the human race by the tree; God conquers him by the tree of the cross. The devil poisoned the world by the fruit of the tree that Eve picked; God gives life to the world by the fruit of the holy cross, which most holy Mary receives in her arms when they take him down dead from the cross.

And this fruit is so effective and so nourishing that it not only gives life but also preserves it, and gives strength to overcome and master all our enemies. So we can say with the Apostle: *I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me* (Phil. 4:13); and with the Prophet: *If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident* (Ps. 26:3), and I shall come out of everything victorious.

I want you to know too, my son, that by the merits of Jesus Christ God could very well have taken away this disorder of the passions, the *fomes peccati* \[the tinder of sin\], that inclination we feel to sin, and bound all our enemies. But he chose to leave them so, that we might have the chance to merit more and more. It is like a general who has enemies to defeat: his enemies, once beaten, are the occasion of his greater merit. Yet this comparison does not explain the point quite properly. A general who has enemies may perhaps not win the victory over them, however much he wants it and whatever he does to gain it. But we shall never be tempted beyond the strength God will give us to conquer, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 10:13). So we shall always sing of victory, if on our part we do what we should and ask the Lord for what we cannot do by our own strength. And this is another reason our Lord Jesus Christ had for leaving these miseries, though the redemption he worked was most abundant. Weighed down by our sicknesses and weaknesses, we find ourselves needing to turn to the good God, whom we might otherwise forget, like a child who, frightened by some bogeyman or other danger, calls out and runs to his mother. He had yet another reason: that, experiencing so much misery in ourselves, we might be humble and not proud. For pride is the origin of all wickedness, and was the cause of our parents' fall.

You must know, my son, that Jesus Christ not only redeemed us. He also gave us the example of how to live, despising riches, honors and pleasures, the things most loved by men stained with original sin, as I showed you with the figure of that man falling from a tall column. He gave us this example and this lesson continually, in words and deeds, from the crib to the cross, loving poverty, dishonor and suffering and teaching us to love them, and summing it all up in the tree of the cross. Hence some have been such good and advanced disciples that they will glory in nothing *but in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. 6:14): a St. Paul, a St. John of the Cross, a St. Catherine of Siena, a St. Teresa of Jesus, and others. That is exactly what the other man in the plate at no. 10 teaches you. As you see, he is climbing the mountain of perfection with great joy and gladness, carrying the holy cross in his hand like a trophy. This is how the Saints and all good Christians climb and advance in perfection, *glorying in their infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in them*, as the Apostle says (2 Cor. 12:9). At last they reach the summit of perfection, signified by that Calvary at no. 11, where you will see Jesus crucified and most holy Mary at his feet. There, as the Apostle says, they are *made conformable to the image of the Son of God* (Rom. 8:29). And so we come to be what we were before, and much more: children of God and co-heirs of heavenly glory with Christ, having crucified these vices and concupiscences, which were the consequences of original sin. Jesus Christ, though he had no concupiscence or sins, chose to be crucified to redeem us and to teach us, who need it, how we must do it. That is why the same holy Apostle tells us that *if we suffer with him*, we shall *be also glorified with him*; and to encourage us he says: *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us* (Rom. 8:17–18).

If you look closely at the first quarter of the plate, above Adam and Eve before they sinned there is a triangle, symbol of God, three in one. And in no. 11, above Jesus and Mary, there is another triangle. This is so you may understand that Jesus and Mary have brought us back to God, from whom Adam and Eve had separated us, and have done so with great advantage.

So, my son, in this fall of man and in the redemption Jesus Christ has worked, we see shining forth the charity or love of God, his wisdom, his mercy, his justice and all his divine attributes. At the same time we see the opportunity man has of exercising all the virtues and acquiring great merits for heaven. With this explanation, my son, you will understand that great mystery we see in man. He is the noblest of all creatures on earth, yet he is troubled by so many pains, labors and miseries that he can rightly be called more unhappy than the other animals. Believe, my son, this truth and all the others God commands you to believe, and try to make your works conform to this faith, and so you will be saved. Otherwise you would be damned, as the Gospel says: *He that believeth and is baptized* (and you know already that Baptism is the Sacrament that blots out original sin) *shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned* (Mark 16:16).

Q. What does “almighty” mean?

A. That he can make and unmake all things.

Q. What does “creator of heaven and earth” mean?

A. That he made heaven and earth out of nothing.

Q. Did God not also create the Angels, men, animals, plants and other things?

A. Yes.

Q. Then why is he not called creator of all these things?

A. Because under the name of heaven is understood everything in heaven, and under the name of earth everything on earth.

Q. What are the Angels?

A. They are intelligent spirits, of a nature higher than ours.

Q. In what state did God create the Angels?

A. In the state of grace.

Q. Did they all persevere in this state?

A. Some persevered, and they are those we call good Angels. Others rebelled against God through their pride, and they are the bad angels or devils.

Q. What do the good Angels do?

A. They adore, love, serve and praise God, and guard men.

Q. From what you say, have you an Angel who guards you?

A. Yes, I have; and each man has his own, and he is called the Guardian Angel.

Q. How should we behave toward our Guardian Angel?

A. We should respect his presence, follow his inspirations with docility, and call on him in temptations and dangers.

Q. What is man?

A. He is a rational creature made up of soul and body.

Q. How do you know that man has a soul?

A. Because he thinks, reflects, and is aware of what he does and for what end he does it, things of which the body is not capable.

Q. In what does the excellence of the soul consist?

A. In its having been created to the image and likeness of God.

Q. In what is it the image of God?

A. In being a free and immortal spirit, capable of knowing and loving its Creator, and of sharing in heaven the happiness of God himself.

Q. How did God create man?

A. He formed a body from the slime of the earth, and then created a soul out of nothing, which he joined to this body to give it life.

Q. What were the names of the first man and the first woman God created?

A. Adam and Eve, and they are our first parents.

Q. In what state did he create them?

A. In the state of grace and honor.

Q. Did they persevere in this state?

A. No, because they sinned, deceived by the infernal serpent.

Q. For whom did God create the animals, plants and other things?

A. For man, so that, using them as means, he may attain the end for which he was created.

Q. Who preserves all the things God created?

A. God himself, by his wonderful omnipotence, wisdom and goodness.

Q. Is everything that happens in this world disposed by God?

A. Yes. All the events of the universe, great and small, are disposed or permitted by his Providence, and everything is directed to his greater glory.

Q. If it is God who does or permits all things, why are there so many pains and troubles?

A. So that we may understand that this world is an exile and a valley of tears, and that our homeland and the center of all our happiness is heaven.

Q. Why does God permit there to be rich and poor, when it would be so easy for him to give to all alike?

A. So that all may have occasion to practice the virtues according to their condition, and so merit heaven.

Q. In what does man’s happiness on earth consist?

A. In keeping the commandments of God and of the Church, in fulfilling his duties, and in being content with his lot, conforming himself in everything to the will of God.

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[1] *ipsa*.

Lesson 6. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Second Part of the Creed: “And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord”



Plate VIII. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord. The apostle St. James the Greater. 1. Jesus Christ. 2. The name of Jesus. 3. A blind man. 4. A leper. 5. The devil fleeing. 6. An Angel. 7. The sun. \[Image from the 1870 printing; the 1867 copy is faint.\]

Look, son. Do you see figure no. 1 in the middle of the plate? It is Jesus Christ, true God and true man, in whom you must believe in the same way as in God the Father almighty, as I explained to you in an earlier lesson. Notice the words you say when you say "I believe in God". To believe *a* God, to believe God, and to believe *in* God do not mean the same thing, as I am going to show you. Pay close attention. To believe a God means that we believe there is one only God. To believe God means that we believe what he tells and teaches us is true. But to believe in God amounts to saying that with our heart we go toward God, obeying what he commands us. Know, then, that you must believe the same with regard to Jesus Christ: believe a Jesus Christ, believe Jesus Christ, and believe in Jesus Christ. For he is God and man: Son of the eternal Father as God, and Son of the most holy Virgin as man.

Do you see beside Jesus Christ that Angel (no. 2) who carries the name of Jesus? And below him that blind man (no. 3), who supports himself on his staff and begs Jesus Christ, saying: *Lord, that I may see* (Luke 18:41)? Figure no. 4 is a leper, who also comes to Jesus Christ and says to him: *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean* (Matt. 8:2). Look further down. Do you not see that devil (no. 5) slinking away in shame, and above him an Angel (no. 6) who makes him go faster by shooting arrows at him? These are the effects of the most sweet name of Jesus, as Isaias had prophesied, saying that the blind would receive their sight, the lepers be made clean, and even the dead return to life (cf. Isa. 35:5; Matt. 11:5). And so it was fulfilled exactly, as is

easy to see by reading in the holy Gospel the miracles Jesus worked. But the most remarkable thing is that not only Jesus himself but also the Apostles worked like wonders with the name of Jesus. *There is no other name*, says the apostle St. Peter, in which there can be salvation (Acts 4:12). It is bodily health, as we see in the miracles, and spiritual salvation, as the Angel said to St. Joseph: *He*, that is, Jesus, *shall save his people* (Matt. 1:21), taking them out of the slavery of the devil and of sin and granting them his friendship and the grace they had lost.

Besides Jesus, which means Savior, the Son of God made man is also called Christ, which means anointed. In ancient times Prophets, Priests and Kings were anointed. And so Jesus Christ, who is also Prophet, Priest and King, was anointed with the fullness and grace of the Holy Ghost above all Prophets, all Priests and all Kings.

Look at the plate again. Do you see the figure surrounded by Angels at the very top on the left? It is the eternal Father, who says that Jesus is his beloved Son. The Gospel records that he said it twice: once at the Jordan, when Jesus was baptized, and again on Tabor, when Jesus Christ was transfigured (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). And you must know that Jesus is not only Son of the eternal Father but his only natural Son, which is what we confess when we say "only" in the Creed. It is true that the Angels and souls in the state of grace are also called children of God. But that is by adoption and not by nature, as Jesus is.

Do you see the sun at the very top (no. 7)? It is a figure of Jesus Christ, who is also called sun, and *the true light, which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world* (John 1:9). This shows that as the sun lights, warms and gives life to the world, so too, and much better, Jesus Christ, *the sun of justice* (Mal. 4:2), in the spiritual world enlightens minds, warms and kindles hearts in divine love, and gives life to souls by making them grow in virtue.

We also say that Jesus Christ is our Lord, for two reasons. The first is that together with the Father and the Holy Ghost he created us. The second is that he bought or redeemed us, and it is well known that whoever buys a thing becomes its lord. Jesus Christ bought us, *with a great price*, says St. Paul (1 Cor. 6:20). He redeemed us not with gold and silver but with the blood of his veins, as St. Peter says (1 Pet. 1:18–19). And this price, the sum of the merits of Christ, is the only coin with which the debt of the human race could be paid. The reason is plain. The fault man had committed, by which he had contracted this debt with divine justice and subjected himself to the devil, is of a malice in a certain way infinite, since it offended an infinite God. An infinite price or satisfaction was therefore necessary, and only a Man-God could give it. God alone could not, because God in himself cannot suffer or die. A man could not either, because his satisfaction is always of limited, finite value, and therefore unable to make the satisfaction equal to the offense. But a Man-God could. He suffered as man; and by the hypostatic union, the union of the human nature with the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the satisfaction he gave has infinite value.

You see, then, my son, that Jesus Christ is our Lord, because he created us, bought us and redeemed us with the blood of his veins. Let us serve him, then, with all fidelity and love, for that is our duty. Every tree bears fruit for the owner or lord who planted or bought it; so we must bear fruit for the Lord who created, planted and bought us. Even animals serve the lord or owner who bought them; and shall we not serve Jesus Christ our God and Lord? Ah, how unjust, how unhappy and how ungrateful we should be: a thousand times worse than the animals! When someone buys an animal, it is to make use of it. After it dies, however much it has served him, he throws it on a dunghill; and yet, though it is to have such an end, it serves its master all its life. And we, who were bought and redeemed by Jesus to serve him, to be his adopted children, and afterwards to be eternally happy like him and with him, shall we not serve him? Shall we have the insolence to say to him *non serviam* \[I will not serve\] (Jer. 2:20)? Ah, son, let us serve good Jesus with all fidelity and love. Let us never offend him: rather die than sin.

Q. What is the second article of the Creed?

A. And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord.

Q. What does "I believe in Jesus Christ" mean?

A. That Jesus Christ is the second person of the Most Holy Trinity, the Son of God made man.

Lesson 7. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Third Part of the Creed: "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the holy Virgin Mary"



Plate IX. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the holy Virgin Mary. The apostle St. Andrew. 1. Most holy Mary. 2. The rod of Jesse. 3. The rod of Aaron. 4. The birth of Jesus.

My son, do you not see there in the middle of the plate that Lady (no. 1), as modest as she is amazed? It is the most holy Virgin, to whom the archangel St. Gabriel brings a message from heaven, telling her that she will be Mother of the Son of God. So that you may understand all this better, you must know that when the devil led our first parents to sin, he made use of the woman. And God our Lord, to redeem them and all their posterity, which is all of us, also makes use of a woman, who is the most holy Virgin Mary. God himself said so to the serpent, or to the devil who was in it: *she* (the woman) *shall crush thy head* (Gen. 3:15). In Adam's sin we were all stained. When a cistern or tank has dirty water, all that is drawn from it comes out dirty. So all men, descendants of Adam, contracted original sin and came forth with it, except the most holy Virgin Mary, who was preserved. Original sin is the stain of our first parents, and by it we were left *children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3) and of reprobation.

God our Lord could very well have left men in this wretched state and hurled them into hell like the rebel angels, without doing them any injustice; for even human justice punishes the criminal without waiting for him to commit a new crime. But the heart of mercy of God our Lord was moved toward us. At the same time as he drove Adam and Eve out of paradise, punishing them, he promised them a Deliverer, a Redeemer. As I said already, this was to be no less than his only natural Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, and he would be born of a woman who would crush the head of the infernal serpent.

From the time our parents sinned until this God became incarnate, the long space of four thousand years passed. It was so partly because God arranged it so; partly so that man, who sinned through pride, might recognize more clearly the need for the remedy, and so humble himself and cry out for the physician; and partly also so that he might value this incomparable benefit the more. Meanwhile God sent prophets who announced the coming of the Redeemer. They marked the time, the character in which he would come, and the circumstances of his coming, his passion and his death. And by various comparisons and figures he gave them to understand the mysteries of *the expected of the nations* (Gen. 49:10). Such is what you see in no. 2 of the plate, the rod of Jesse, prophesied by Isaias (11:1) when he said: *There shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root.* It is a figure of the most holy Virgin, who brought forth Jesus for us as a most fragrant flower. And no. 3 is the rod of Aaron (Num. 17:8), also a figure of this mystery. At last the long-desired day came. It was the 25th of March, the day on which, it is thought, our first parents were created and placed in the earthly paradise. So on this same day, after so many years, the new Adam, Jesus Christ, was created and placed in the paradise of Mary, the womb of the Virgin Mary. She was betrothed to the glorious St. Joseph, for both had made a vow of chastity and always kept it, and they lived as brother and sister with all fidelity and love.

The way in which the mystery of the Incarnation was accomplished, that is, the way the Son of God became man, was this, as the evangelist St. Luke tells us in chapter 1: *The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Who having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the most High; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever. And of his kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said to the angel: How shall this be done, because I know not man?* (as if to say: I have made a vow of chastity and want to keep it always). *And the angel answering, said to her:* You will not conceive by the work of man but by the work of the Holy Ghost, so that *the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.* And in proof that this is the work of God, I tell you that *thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren: because no word shall be impossible with God* (Luke 1:26–37).

This manner of accomplishing the conception of the Redeemer of the world has nothing strange about it, if one looks well; rather it was very fitting that it should be so. The first man, Adam, who by his sin corrupted the whole human race, was formed not by way of generation but by the work of God himself, from the red, virgin earth of the field of Damascus, as some holy Fathers say. So the second Adam, Jesus Christ, who came to repair what the first had destroyed, ought with greater reason to be the work of God, not by way of generation, but from the red and virgin blood of the most chaste and most pure womb of Mary.

At last Mary yielded with all humility. Believing most firmly what the Angel announced to her from God, she said: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word* (Luke 1:38). And just as at the beginning of the world the three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity said: *Let us make man to our

image and likeness*, and formed him of clay, so now the same Persons make God become man. Authors explain the Incarnation in this way. The three divine Persons took blood from the womb of the Virgin Mary. From this blood they formed a body; they created a rational soul and joined it to that body; and to the body and soul so joined the second Person of the Most Holy Trinity united himself. And that is what it was for the Son of God to become incarnate, or to become man.

That radiance going out from the Holy Ghost and ending at most holy Mary signifies that the Son of God, coming down from heaven, was conceived in the womb of the most pure Virgin Mary by the work of that same divine Spirit. That is why the Church says that *for us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven*. He set his throne in the womb of the most holy Virgin Mary, who is *elect as the sun* (Cant. 6:9); and that is what the child you see seated there signifies. David had already said in Psalm 18: *He hath set his tabernacle in the sun* (Ps. 18:6).

The reason the Incarnation is said to be the work of the Holy Ghost is this. Power is attributed to the Father, wisdom to the Son, and love to the Holy Ghost; and since the Incarnation was a work of love, it is attributed to the Holy Ghost. Think of a very skilful tailor who has made a well-fitting suit: even if two other tailors worked on it, it is called his work. In the same way, in the Incarnation all three Persons concurred, since it is a work *ad extra* \[outside the Godhead\], as theologians say, and it was the work of all three. Nevertheless, because of the infinite love for men that this mystery shows, it is attributed to the Holy Ghost.

If you ask me why the Father or the Holy Ghost did not become incarnate, of the many reasons of fittingness I could give you I will mention only the simplest. You know already that our first parents were lost by believing the devil, the father of lies. He promised them the knowledge of good and evil, telling them they would be like God, and this disordered appetite for knowledge made them fall into the snare. It was therefore very fitting that the Son of God, eternal truth, to whom wisdom is attributed, should come to break this snare. As Adam and Eve were lost by believing the lying devil, so their descendants are saved by believing the Son of God, who is truth itself, as he himself assures us: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life* (John 14:6). So if man has such a desire to know, he knows now to whom he must go to satisfy it fully: to the Son of God, who is wisdom itself. There is yet another reason. The Incarnation was to make us adopted children of God, and it was very fitting that this should be done by the only natural Son of God.

Do you see in the plate the birth of Jesus (no. 4)? It signifies that nine months after the Incarnation the Son of God made man was born in a cave at Bethlehem. The Angels of heaven came down to adore him, singing: *Glory to God in the highest* (Luke 2:14). The shepherds came too, and even the kings from the East. And the most holy Virgin conceived and bore the Son of God made man, for which reason she is called, and with full propriety is, Mother of God. Yet she remained a virgin in giving birth and after giving birth, as she was before giving birth. When the sun passes through a pane of glass, it leaves it as whole and unharmed afterwards as it was before it passed through. So Jesus Christ, who is called the sun of justice, in being born of holy Mary, who is purer and more beautiful than the most beautiful and purest crystal, did not make her lose her beauty and virginal chastity. This is shown in the plate by the sun at her left passing through those panes of glass. Rather, he perfected and beautified it.

Ah, my son! How many thanks we must continually give God for so great a benefit: that he himself became man so that all men might be saved, making them *partakers of the divine nature* (2 Pet. 1:4) and happy in God himself, and that for ever! Let us love God always, then, since *he hath first loved us* (1 John 4:19). For he has not only created us but also deigned to come down from heaven to redeem us.

Q. What is the third article of the Creed?

A. Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the holy Virgin Mary.

Q. What does “conceived by the Holy Ghost” mean?

A. That he was not conceived by the work of man, but supernaturally, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Q. What does "born of the holy Virgin Mary" mean?

A. That he was born of most holy Mary, she being a virgin not only before giving birth but also in giving birth and after giving birth.

Lesson 8. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Fourth Part of the Creed: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried"

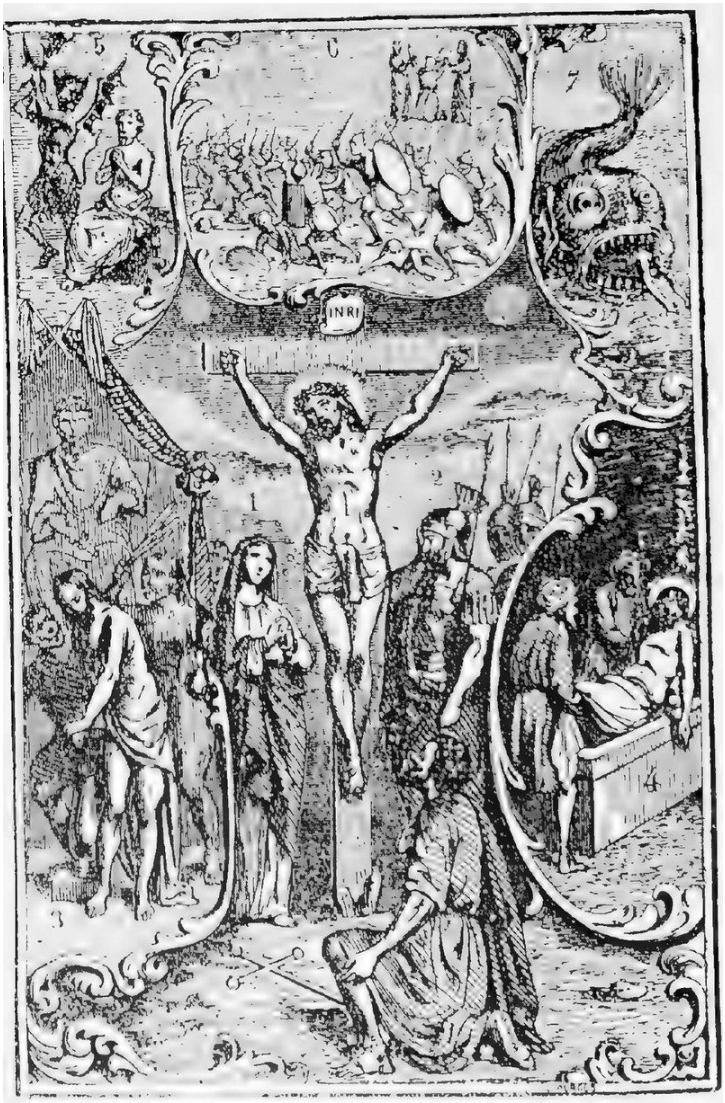

Plate X. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried. The apostle St. James the Less. 1. Most holy Mary. 2. The Centurion. 3. Jesus suffering the scourges. 4. Jesus in the tomb. 5. Patient Job, a figure of Jesus. 6. Moses with his arms in the form of a cross. 7. Jonas.

Look, my son. Alas! Do you not see our good Jesus already nailed to the cross, and his dear Mother (no. 1) standing beside it, with St. John, the Magdalen and the other Marys? What sorrow! Do you see that soldier (no. 2)? He is the Centurion. Witnessing what happened at the death of Jesus, he put his hand to his forehead, reflected and exclaimed: *Indeed this was the Son of God* (Matt. 27:54). The Centurion reported it to Pilate, who informed the Emperor of all that had happened at the death of Jesus. The Emperor therefore wanted him counted among the gods of the empire and statues raised to him, because he considered him more than a man.[1] St. Dionysius, who was one of the judges of the Areopagus in Athens, had no knowledge of Jesus Christ; and seeing what happened on the day of his death he exclaimed: "Either the Author of nature is

suffering, or the fabric of the universe is about to dissolve." There are even some who claim that the strange and singular crags of Montserrat are an effect of the earthquake that happened on the day Jesus died.

In no. 3 the scourging of Jesus is shown, and in no. 4 his being laid in the tomb. At the top of the plate are the passages of the Old Testament that already pointed to what was to happen in the New and in the person of Jesus. The first (no. 5) is Job, a most expressive figure of Jesus. Innocent Job suffered with rare patience the ill-treatment with which the devil afflicted him. Innocent Jesus suffered with patience all that the Jews, urged on by the devil, made him suffer. The other (no. 6) is Moses. Seeing that God was punishing the people for their sins by sending the Amalecites against them, he ordered Joshua to take a division and go and attack them, while he himself would go up the next day onto a nearby hill, holding in his hand the rod God had given him, which by its power was a figure of the cross. And to make this figure more expressive, God allowed that when the arms of Moses, which he held raised to heaven praying for his people, sank from fatigue, the Amalecites won. But when Moses held them raised in the form of a cross, holding in his hand the figure of the cross of Jesus Christ and so representing him crucified on Mount Calvary, then the people of God won and utterly defeated Amalec. And so it came about. For Aaron and Hur, who were there, noticing this, held up his arms; and in this posture they completed the holy cross of Christ (Exod. 17:8–13). The cross too held up his arms, nailed to it, so that by his death the infernal Amalec might be completely defeated.

The one you see in the mouth of the whale (no. 7) is Jonas, a figure of Jesus, as the Savior himself says in St. Matthew: *As Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights: so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights* (Matt. 12:40).

It is said that he suffered under Pontius Pilate in proof of the truth of the passion and death of Jesus, as St. Peter Chrysologus explains. The pains Jesus suffered are countless. He was arrested with the greatest ignominy. He was scourged, struck in the face, spat upon, crowned with thorns and falsely accused; and though he was found innocent, he was condemned by Pilate to die on the cross. St. Thomas says that Jesus suffered more than all the Martyrs together. And for all that the Prophets, Evangelists and contemplative persons have said of the pains of Jesus, many of them are still unknown and will not be known until the day of the general judgment. On that day they will be made public, so that the good may have reason to praise him, and the wicked may be confounded and put to shame.

The Creed also says that he was crucified. Death on the cross was the punishment the Romans inflicted, and it was as infamous as it was painful. Jesus chose to accept this way of dying, to save and redeem us, for many reasons. I will point out to you some of those the holy Fathers give. First, it was very fitting that, as death came to us from a tree, so life too should come to us from a tree, which the cross is. Second, Jesus came to be mediator between heaven and earth, and that is why he chose to be raised up and placed between heaven and earth, as he assures us, saying: *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself* (John 12:32). Third, Jesus is the cornerstone that is to join the two walls, which are figures of the Hebrew and Gentile peoples, of the Old and New Testaments. Placed on the cross, he has his arms stretched out to draw them to himself with each hand and form this union. Fourth, because in the four arms of the cross the four corners of the earth are represented. Fifth, because the four ends of the cross signify the four virtues Christ practiced in a special way in his passion, namely humility, obedience, patience and love. He is innocent and Lord, and suffers so infamous a death: what humility! He obeys the eternal Father, he obeys the judges without answering back, and that even unto death: what obedience! He suffers such terrible torments for all men, not excepting his enemies: what love!

Then the Creed goes on: "dead and buried". It is most certain that Jesus died. So that we might all be convinced that he had really died, he chose to be buried and to remain three days, or parts of them, in the tomb, having first been wrapped in a shroud.

Ah! If we fixed our attention on the passion and death of this God-Man, how grateful we would be to him for all he suffered for us! Tell me, my son: if you were under arrest now and they were taking you to be shot, and someone came up and said to the soldiers, “Let this boy go home, and shoot me in his place”, what would you do for such a person? Ah! Whenever you remembered so great a favor you would say: “I can never repay him.” And you would be ready to do whatever you were asked for his sake, however costly it might be to you. Think, then, that this is what Jesus did for you. And will you not be grateful to him? Yes, yes: love good Jesus, believe him, never offend him; for by offending him you would *crucify him again,* as St. Paul says (Heb. 6:6). Ah! If people thought of the death of Jesus, they would never sin. The most effective remedy for not sinning, says St. Augustine, and the best means of acquiring the virtues, is the remembrance of the passion and death of Jesus. Meditate on it, then, my son, and in this way you will never sin, and you will advance in perfection.

Q. What is the fourth article of the Creed?

A. Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried.

Q. What does “suffered under Pontius Pilate” mean?

A. That Pilate was the judge who condemned him to death.

Q. What does “was crucified” mean?

A. That he was nailed to a cross.

Q. What does “dead” mean?

A. That his soul was separated from his body.

Q. What does “buried” mean?

A. That after he died he was laid in a tomb.

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[1] *Apology* 5 and 21.

Lesson 9. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Fifth Part of the Creed: “He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead”



Plate XI. He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead. The apostle St. Thomas. 1. Jesus Christ risen. 2. Death. 3. Jesus Christ in limbo. 4. Wheat, symbol of the resurrection. 5. The parable of the wheat and the cockle.

Look, son. Do you see in the plate that figure rising up (no. 1)? You know already that it is Jesus risen. Under his feet he has death (no. 2), to which it had been prophesied that he would say: *O death, I will be thy death* (Osee 13:14). And indeed death was made to die, by his giving life to the one it had robbed of life; for death ceases then to be death. That is what Jesus did by rising. Further down is the holy sepulchre, the Angel rolling back the stone, and the soldiers who were keeping guard.

As soon as Jesus died, his soul, united to the divinity, descended into hell, that is, into the lower place, where the souls of the holy Fathers were held. They could not enter heaven until Jesus Christ had paid the price of the redemption. You will see this in no. 3. It represents Jesus Christ at the moment when he descended into Abraham's bosom, or limbo, to free the souls of the holy Fathers who were awaiting his coming. So was fulfilled what David said: *In thee have our fathers hoped: they have hoped, and thou hast delivered them* (Ps. 21:5). See how the devils flee in shame and confusion. Notice that one of them has three snakes in his hand. They signify the three snares the devils use to catch and entangle souls: the love of pleasures, the love of honors and the love of gain. But these happy souls say: "The snare is broken, the prisons are opened, and we have been set free by the merits of Jesus Christ." *Laqueus contritus est, et nos liberati sumus* \[The snare is broken, and we are delivered\] (Ps. 123:7).

There is a place called the hell of the damned. Jesus Christ did not descend there except by his power, making the reprobate feel their unbelief and malice. There is another called purgatory, to which he seems to have descended in effect, to bring those afflicted souls the hope of salvation. But into the limbo of the holy Fathers he descended really and in his very being, says St. Thomas, giving them the light of glory. Ah, how grateful those souls must have been to Jesus, seeing all he had done and suffered for them and the great benefit he brought them!

Those ears of wheat you see in no. 4 are a figure of the resurrection, both bodily and mystical. Jesus Christ says in the holy Gospel: *Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone. But if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit* (John 12:24–25). Before his death Jesus Christ preached, healed the sick, cast devils out of bodies and raised the dead, but he was almost alone. Then he died and was buried; and having sprung up, or risen, like a most beautiful grain of wheat, what beautiful and abundant ears he has produced: the Apostles, Pontiffs, Priests and all the faithful! They also signify that if we live according to the evil inclination of nature, we shall produce no fruit of eternal life; rather we shall commit sins. But if we try to die by resisting our passions, curbing and mortifying them, and to live according to Jesus Christ, we shall produce much fruit of good works. On the other side of the plate (no. 5) is shown the Gospel parable of the field in which good wheat and cockle sprang up. They grew up together and were reaped together; but the master ordered the reapers to burn the cockle and store the good wheat in the barn (Matt. 13:24–30). In this parable the world is the field, in which Jesus Christ, by himself and through those he sends, has sown the good wheat, which is the good Christians; the cockle is the wicked. The Angels are the reapers, and Jesus Christ himself is the master. On the day of the general resurrection, or of judgment, he will order the Angels to cast the wicked into the fire of hell and to carry the good like good wheat into the barns of the heavenly homeland.

So, my son, you must try to live well and holily; otherwise you would be lost for ever. Keep in mind what St. Paul says: *If you be risen with Christ* (by Baptism or a good confession), *seek the things that are above… Mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth* (Col. 3:1–2).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most convincing proofs that he is true God and true man. It follows that the doctrine he taught is divine and the religion he established is divine. Let us leave aside the prophecies that announced him as God, and the miracles he worked in proof of his divinity, as he himself said: *Though you will not believe me, believe the works* (John 10:38). Suppose too that in his life and death he had not given such clear proofs of being God; Rousseau himself acknowledged them when he said: "If the life and death of Socrates are those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus Christ can only be those of a God."[1] Even if there were none of these and other proofs of the divinity of Jesus Christ, I say that the resurrection alone is more than enough.

Jesus had often said that he would die, but he also added that on the third day he would rise again. And he said this not only to the Apostles but also to his most bitter enemies. One day he even told them that the temple of his body would be destroyed, but that he would rebuild it in three days (John 2:19). And when his enemies asked him for a sign of the divinity of his mission, he answered them: *An evil and adulterous generation seeketh a sign: and a sign shall not be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was in the whale's belly three days and three nights* (and afterwards came out of it alive), *so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights* (Matt. 12:39–40), but afterwards he will rise again. Jesus Christ's enemies were so convinced that by these words he meant his resurrection that, on the strength of this conviction, they asked Pilate for soldiers to guard his tomb. For they said: *lest perhaps his disciples come and steal him away* (the body of Jesus), *and say to the people: He is risen from the dead; and the last error shall be worse than the first* (Matt. 27:64). O adorable designs of God! The soldiers posted by the enemies of Jesus Christ to guard the tomb were the first witnesses of his resurrection. Look at them, my son, and notice how stunned and terrified they are. You see, then, how the prophecies were fulfilled.

You must also notice that he raised himself by his own power or might, as St. Thomas says. This power or might had to be wholly divine, because human power or might does not reach so far: it ends with death. If not, let them name you a man, however brave and wise he may have been, who knew how or was able to raise himself.

Knowing, then, that Jesus is God, adore him as God; respect and obey his commands as divine. Follow his religion as divine and as the only one in which you can be saved. For just as there is only one true God, so there is not and cannot be more than one true religion, outside of which, therefore, no one can be saved.

Try to live well and holily. If in life you imitate Christ, you will also follow him in the resurrection on the day of the general or final judgment. He was the first to rise never to die again. As head and king of the predestined, he went ahead. And to give us a sample of what will happen to us and to our bodies, which will have the four endowments (impassibility, subtlety, agility and brightness),[2] see him all shining. See how nothing is an obstacle to him: he comes out of the tomb without first removing the stone that closed it. If the Angel removed it, it was after he had already risen. He passes or moves in an instant from one place to another, and can never again suffer or die.

Q. What is the fifth article of the Creed?

A. He descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead.

Q. What does "he descended into hell" mean?

A. That the soul of Christ, after his death, descended into Abraham's bosom to set free the holy souls who were awaiting his coming.

Q. Did he show himself in other places, at least in effect?

A. Yes. He showed himself in the hell of the damned as conqueror and judge, and in purgatory as consoler.

Q. What does "the third day he rose again from the dead" mean?

A. That on the third day after his death his soul was joined again to his body.

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[1] from the "Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar" in Rousseau's *Émile* (1762), Book IV.

[2] *dotes*.

Lesson 10. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Sixth Part of the Creed: "He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty"



Plate XII. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty. The apostle St. Bartholomew. 1. Jesus Christ. 2. The Apostles. 3. The eternal Father, who says to Jesus Christ: "Sit thou at my right hand."

Look, my son. Do you see figure no. 1 in the plate? It is Jesus, who forty days after rising goes up to heaven. After his resurrection he appeared many times to his dear Apostles and disciples. He encouraged and instructed them, and finally he led them to the Mount of Olives, or Olivet. At about midday he began to rise, and by his own divine power he went up to heaven, like the eagle, says Bercorius, which also rises by the power of its own wings. St. Justin Martyr makes this comparison: just as the sun lifts the vapors from the earth and with its brilliant rays turns them into the loveliest clouds, so in a way the sun of the divinity of Jesus Christ did the same. It lifted his humanity from the earth and by its power turned it into wondrous beauty.

Those you see below (no. 2) are the Apostles. See how astonished and enraptured they are. They could not bring themselves to leave the place until two Angels admonished them (Acts 1:10–11). If you look closely, on the mountain the prints of Jesus Christ's feet are marked. He willed them to remain as a seal of this truth, and they are preserved even in our own day.

It is also said, and so we must believe, that he went to sit at the right hand of God the Father almighty. See how the eternal Father (no. 3) takes him by the hand, points out to him the throne on which he is to sit, and says to him those prophetic words of David: *Dixit Dominus Domino meo: Sede a dextris meis* \[The Lord (God the Father) said to my Lord (God the Son): Sit thou at my right hand\] (Ps. 109:1). I would like you to

pay attention when you say these words: “and sitteth at the right hand”. The words “sitteth” indicate the supreme authority Jesus Christ has over all creatures, as the King he is of heaven and earth. And the words “at the right hand of God the Father almighty” teach us that Jesus Christ is true God, and that as God he is equal to the eternal Father in power, glory, majesty and the other attributes. As man he is not equal, though as man he is greater than all the blessed in heaven. Yet since the humanity of Christ is united to the divine person, wherever the divinity of Christ is in glory, there too is the humanity; and since the divinity is seated at the right hand of God, the humanity is there too. It is like an emperor who puts on his mantle and sits on the throne wearing it. The mantle is not the emperor, but it is enough that he wears it for it to be wherever he sits. The same must be said of the humanity of Jesus Christ: it is where the divinity is, on the throne of glory. But it does not follow that it is in all the other places where the divinity is, because the humanity is not immense as the divinity is.

St. John tells us: *We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ* (1 John 2:1), who is *always living to make intercession for us* (Heb. 7:25). For this he keeps open the five wounds of his hands, feet and side, which like so many mouths are always pleading for us. So, my son, you must have great confidence in God through Jesus Christ. But remember that from that throne of glory where he sits he is continually watching you, and sees even your most hidden thoughts and all the desires of your heart. Try, then, to live in a way worthy of God, so that those most pure eyes may always look on you with pleasure.

St. Stephen, while they were stoning him, told the Jews that he saw *Jesus standing on the right hand of God* (Acts 7:55). On this I must point out to you that in the Creed we say that he is *seated*, to show that his power is equal to the Father’s. St. Stephen says *standing*, so that we may know that his care and providence over those who love him is very great, and that he stands to help those who fight for his honor, as St. Stephen was doing. Think well, my son, on what the Prophet says: *Dominus de caelo prospexit* \[The Lord hath looked from heaven\] (Ps. 101:20) and is watching you. Do not offend him. Rather fight with all your strength against the enemies of your soul, which are the world, the devil and the flesh. Keep in mind that *he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully* (2 Tim. 2:5). Do not be frightened by temptation. Think that it will not be stronger than God your Father wills, and that he will give you the grace to come out victorious. But if out of cowardice you let yourself be overcome, you make yourself unworthy of heaven and guilty of eternal damnation.

Q. What is the sixth article of the Creed?

A. He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty.

Q. What does “he ascended into heaven” mean?

A. That by his own power he went up to heaven forty days after rising.

Q. What does “sitteth at the right hand of God the Father almighty” mean?

A. That as God he has power and glory equal to the Father’s, and as man he is above every creature.

Lesson 11. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Seventh Part of the Creed: “From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead”



Plate XIII. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead. The apostle St. Matthew. 1. The Angel who sounds the trumpet and says: "Arise, ye dead; come to judgment." 2. This one presents the record of the wicked. 3. With the whip he makes them appear. 4. The good.

Here you have, my son, this plate, which represents to you the last judgment. To understand it better you must know that there will be two judgments. One is particular: it will take place at the moment of each one's death, and in it Jesus Christ will take exact account of everything from us. That is why he urges us in his Gospel to be always ready, because he will come when we least expect it, and each will be rewarded according to his works (Matt. 24:44; 16:27). The other is general. At the end of the world Jesus Christ our Lord will make known to all peoples our good or bad works and our sentence of salvation or damnation. It will take place in the valley of Josaphat, as a text of the prophet Joel seems to indicate (Joel 3:2). This valley lies between the Mount of Olives, called Olivet, where the garden of Gethsemani is, where Jesus began the mystery of our Redemption, and Calvary, where he completed it. The general judgment will take place in that valley to the greater confusion of sinners, who, far from profiting from the great benefit of the mystery accomplished on the neighboring hills of Olivet and Calvary, have repaid it with such black ingratitude.

That there will be such a judgment cannot be doubted, because it is of faith. The Angels affirmed it on the day of the Lord's Ascension, when they said to the Apostles: *This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come, as you have seen him going into heaven* (Acts 1:11). Jesus Christ himself said it, not only to his Apostles and friends but also to his enemies gathered in council in the house of Caiphas: *I say to*

you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven (Matt. 26:64).

The end God has in view in this judgment is his greater glory and that of his Saints, and the confusion of sinners. God our Lord will give a kind of public account, and the whole world will see the fairness and justice with which he has acted: why he has permitted pains and troubles to the just and granted prosperity to the wicked.

Then the honor that the Jews, bad Christians and other sinners took from him will be restored to him. Since they would not respect him out of love, they will respect him out of fear, when they see him in such greatness, and observe how the majesty of very God shines on that face which they disfigured with blows and spittle.

The Saints who in this world were despised, persecuted and killed will see themselves honored and praised by God in the presence of the whole world. They will be seated as judges, to judge the very

apostate angels, or at least those who left everything to follow Jesus Christ will do so (1 Cor. 6:3; Matt. 19:28). Sinners will be confounded, the proud humbled, the impure exposed, the hypocrites unmasked; and all will be put to shame publicly, shown exactly as they were here on earth in the eyes of God.

The good and the wicked, by the works they have done and by the good they have left undone, have left in this world a planted estate, as it were. For good or for ill it has gone on bearing fruit and increasing their reward or punishment. But at the judgment the account will be settled, for then all the good the just have done and all the evil of the wicked will be seen. Besides, since in the particular judgment only the soul is judged, rewarded and punished, it followed that in the general judgment the body too should be judged. As it was the soul's companion in good or evil, so it should be its companion in reward or punishment.

The manner in which this judgment will be carried out is the most terrible and frightening that can be imagined. I should rather say that it is not possible to imagine how frightening this judgment will be, judging from the description of it given by the Prophets, the Evangelists, the Apostles and the holy Fathers. It will be preceded by certain signs, which will keep recurring until the great day of the public reckoning comes. The sun will go out; the moon will not give its usual light; the stars of heaven will fall; the whole firmament will be shaken; there will be great earthquakes on the earth; and everywhere the greatest confusion and terror will reign (Matt. 24:29). After it has been announced by the most dreadful things in heaven, on earth and in the sea, there will come that consuming fire which will reduce to ashes the plants, trees, animals, palaces, gardens, towns, cities and everything man's industry has built on the earth, as the prophet Joel and St. Peter affirm (Joel 2:3; 2 Pet. 3:10). This fire will burn all men, good and wicked, with this difference: by it the good will be wholly purified, and the wicked will already begin to feel their punishment.

What a great silence will reign then over the whole world! Look at the plate. Do you see, my son, that Angel, no. 1? He represents the moment when, sounding the trumpet, he will give a cry that will be heard in every part of the globe: "Arise, ye dead; come to judgment!" At the beginning of the world God, by the power of his almighty word, made things exist that did not exist before. So on the day of judgment, by the power of this same word pronounced by the Angel, he will make those bodies that existed before exist again, even though by then they have been consumed. At the cry of this commanding voice we shall all come forth at a youthful age, whether we died as children or as old men, and without defects of the individual or of nature, as St. Thomas says. So no one will be blind, deaf or dumb, or have any other defect. Each will rise with the stature and perfections proper to his own species; and this whether we have been good or wicked.

The souls will come forth from their places and go to give life again to the same bodies they gave life to before. And what things they will say to them! "Oh, cursed be you, my body," the soul of the damned will say. "Because I pampered you and you rebelled against me, I have suffered so many torments and must

suffer them eternally!" "Cursed be you, my soul," the body will answer. "Because you did not mortify me and master me as you could and should have, I must now suffer such horrible pains through your fault!" But how different will be the conversation of the soul and body of the just! What blessings they will give each other! "Blessed be you, my body," the soul will say, "because you helped me merit the glory I have enjoyed. Blessed, because you let yourself be mortified, and willingly submitted to obey and fulfil gladly all that God commanded. Rejoice, then: the time of labors is past, and the time of rest has come. You were dead and buried; but now you are going to live in great glory. Let us praise God together, for together we shall reign for all eternity." What different effects the souls of the just will produce in their bodies from those of sinners!

Then the Angels will come and separate the one from the other, and even place them by classes. Next Jesus Christ will appear with great power and majesty. Before him will go the royal standard of the cross, carried by the Angels, and he will be accompanied by the most holy Virgin Mary, the Apostles and the other Saints. The books of consciences will be opened; as you see, they are beside the Lord. And according to what is written in them of our words, thoughts, deeds and omissions, he will judge. Then he will say to the good: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world* (Matt. 25:34). He will then make known to the whole world the faithfulness with which they kept his law and the good works they did, and full of joy they will go to heaven. But to the wicked he will say: *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels* (Matt. 25:41). Since you would not follow me but the devil, go with him; go to your ruin; in hell you shall burn eternally.

Look, my son. Do you see the devils? One (no. 2) presents the list of the wicked deeds sinners have committed. The other (no. 3) keeps them herded, whip in hand, like mad dogs. That is how they pay those who serve them! On the other side (no. 4), like meek lambs and sheep, are the good, whom the Angels accompany to heaven. So, my son, try to live well and holily, so that one day you too, in their company, may go up there. That is what I wish you.

Q. What is the seventh article of the Creed?

A. From thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead.

Q. What does "from thence he shall come to judge the living and the dead" mean?

A. That on the day of judgment he will come down from heaven to judge all men.

Lesson 12. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Eighth Part of the Creed: "I believe in the Holy Ghost"



Plate XIV. I believe in the Holy Ghost. 1. The Holy Ghost. 2. The most holy Virgin.

My son, in this plate you will see the Holy Ghost (no. 1) represented in the form of a dove and of tongues of fire. That Lady you see at no. 2, and the other men, are the most holy Virgin and the Apostles, upon whom the divine Spirit came visibly (Acts 2:1–4).

The Holy Ghost is the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity. He proceeds from the Father and the Son and has the same attributes as they, because he has the same divinity. For this reason we say and believe that the Holy Ghost is God.

This, then, is the proper name of the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity. As the first is called Father and the second Son, the third is called Holy Ghost. He who knows it well, Jesus Christ, teaches us so in the holy Gospel, when he commanded his disciples to go through the world and preach the holy Gospel to all nations, *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. 28:19). St. John says the same: *There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word* (or Son), *and the Holy Ghost* (1 John 5:7).

Perhaps you will ask me: why is the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity called Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit? The Father is spirit, the Son is spirit, the Angels are spirits and our souls are spiritual. And the Father is holy, the Son is holy, the good Angels are holy, and so are all the men and women who are in heaven. What difference is there, then, between the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity and these holy spirits? I will tell you, my son: not so that you understand it perfectly, but so that you do not confuse the third Person with

these other things. It is true that all of them are spirits, but precisely because they are spiritual. The third Person, however, is called Spirit because, besides being spiritual like the Father and the Son, and more perfectly still than the Angels and souls, he is the term of the love of the Father and the Son. This love is a kind of breathing forth of the will, an impulse toward the thing loved; and from this breathing (*spiratio*) he takes the name of Holy Spirit, which is as much as to say "breathed forth holily". It is true too that all the things named are holy: the Father and the Son by nature, and the Angels and men by participation. But the third Person is called holy in a special way that does not belong to the others, namely because he is breathed forth holily. So by this word *Holy* added to the word *Spirit* we designate the supreme purity of the love from which the third Person proceeds; and he is distinguished from intellectual creatures, from the Angels and souls. Therefore, since the third Person proceeds from this active breathing of the Father and the Son, the name *Holy Spirit* is not a name common to all the holy things called spirits. It is the proper and personal name of the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity, as it is proper to the first to be called Father and to the second to be called Son. What you do not understand, believe.

This Person of the Most Holy Trinity is also called Holy Spirit by excellence: I mean, because he is the supreme spirit and supremely holy, and the author of all created spirits and of all holiness. To help you understand it better, I will explain it with a comparison. Only to the Supreme Pontiff do we give the name of Holy Father. Yet others, such as cardinals, bishops and priests, are spiritual fathers, and by reason of their exemplary conduct or of their office are holy. So when we call the first the Holy Father, we do not do it to deny that others are fathers and holy too. We do it because that name belongs to him by excellence: both because he is the head of all the other fathers, and because he ought to be holier than all by his more regulated conduct, as he is by office, so as to represent to us worthily the person of Christ, whose place he holds on earth.

Likewise this divine spirit is called Holy because he sanctifies us, giving us his grace and dwelling in our hearts. As omnipotence is attributed to the Father and wisdom to the Son, so to the Holy Ghost is attributed the sanctification of men, to whom he communicates holiness, because he is a spirit of love and charity. What wonderful things I could tell you if I tried to explain what the Holy Ghost has done in this respect, chiefly in the Catholic Church! Who made of some rough fishermen such wise and great Apostles, and of cowards such zealous preachers of the Gospel? The Holy Ghost. Who filled the hearts of the Martyrs with such incredible courage? The Holy Ghost. Who enlightened the holy Doctors and Pontiffs of the Church? Who formed the most fragrant lily of so many millions of Virgins, and sanctified all the Saints? The Holy Ghost. With the fire of his charity he consumed all that was impure and defective in them. With his gifts and virtues, and with their cooperation, he prepared them to be happy in heaven eternally. And who gives life to, sustains and sanctifies the holy Catholic Church, the spouse of Jesus Christ, and adorns her to be presented worthy of her heavenly Bridegroom, if not the Holy Ghost?

Know, my son, that although in the plate the Holy Ghost is represented in the form of a dove, and is almost always so represented elsewhere, it is not because he has this shape. Spirits have none; shape belongs only to bodies. It is because they sometimes take one, to adapt themselves to our way of knowing things, which is through the senses. As the philosophers say: all our knowledge depends on, or takes its origin from, the senses. The divine Spirit is painted in the form of a dove for two reasons. First, because he appeared so over the river Jordan above Jesus Christ when he was baptized, and also on the shoulder of St. Gregory and on the head of St. Catherine of Siena. Second, to make us understand, by the properties of the dove, the effects he produces in us. The dove is simple, gentle, pure, jealous and fruitful. Exactly these are the effects the Holy Ghost causes in souls. He makes them simple, gentle and pure; zealous for the greater glory of God in their own sanctification and in the good of their neighbor. He makes them fruitful in virtues and in words, to bring others to birth in the life of grace, or convert them from their faults and sins, and make them grow in the practice of the virtues.

If you notice, in the plate the divine Spirit is above the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. This figure of tongues shows the effect he caused in the Apostles, giving them an altogether divine eloquence, which their enemies could not resist. And the fire signifies the ardor of charity he gave them, and the supernatural light by which he made them know all the mysteries of Jesus Christ and of his Church; and that is why they tell us such sublime things.

You must also know that those who live holily, or are in the grace of God, says the apostle St. Paul, are *the temple of God*, and the Holy Ghost dwells in their hearts (1 Cor. 3:16). For this reason, generally speaking, by any mortal sin that is committed the temple of the divine Spirit is profaned. But if the sin is one of impurity, it is profaned in a special way (1 Cor. 6:18–19), so that the divine Spirit is as it were forced to leave and give place to the devil, the infernal and unclean spirit. So, my son, never sin. Hate impurity above all and flee from it as from the sight of the serpent. Be devout to the most holy Virgin Mary, who is the Spouse of the Holy Ghost, so that through her mediation this divine Spirit may grant you his gifts and produce in you his wonderful fruits.

Q. What is the eighth article of the Creed?

A. I believe in the Holy Ghost.

Q. What does "I believe in the Holy Ghost" mean?

A. That the Holy Ghost is the third person of the Most Holy Trinity, in whom I believe.

Lesson 13. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Ninth Part of the Creed: "The holy Catholic Church"



Plate XV. The holy Catholic Church. The apostle St. Philip. 1. The figure of the Church. 2. The Holy Ghost, who rules and governs the Church. 3. The true Religion. 4. Persecutors of the Church.

Do you see, my son, that beautiful building, no. 1? It is a figure of the Church. But since that building and this word *Church* might cause you some confusion, given your childish ideas, I am going to explain both to you, so that you may know what you confess when you say the Creed. In speaking of the Church, I do not show you this plate so that by that building you will understand that when we say "I believe the holy Church" we are speaking of the material church, the place where we the faithful gather to pay God the tribute of love, honor and homage we owe him, which is called Religion. No: in that sense the church is the same as the temple, the house of God or house of prayer. By those words we confess that we believe in the Church of Jesus Christ in the proper sense. That is a society or congregation of the faithful, united by the profession of the same faith, by sharing in the same Sacraments, and by submission to their lawful Prelates, chiefly to the Roman Pontiff, its visible Head. They acknowledge him as Vicar of Jesus Christ, who is its invisible Head. And so this Church which we believe is a moral body: the kingdom of Jesus Christ, so to speak, which has the Pope as its visible Head and as its

invisible Head Jesus Christ himself. From him it not only takes the name of Christian, but also receives life through Baptism, and its preservation and perfection through the other Sacraments. The lawful Prelates with the Pope are those charged by Jesus Christ himself to make his will known to us and to keep this society in order, which they do by laws. They are also charged to watch over the deposit of faith, which is the truths he came to teach us. You see, then, that I show you that building only to make the Church in some way visible

to you.

To be a member of this congregation, a true child of this Church of Jesus Christ, and so a true Catholic, three things are indispensable. First, to be baptized. Second, to profess the same faith that this Church professes, which is the Catholic faith. Third, to obey the lawful Prelates, especially the Supreme Pontiff of Rome.

In the first place you must be baptized, because Baptism begets us in Jesus Christ. For this reason it is, and is called, the door of the Church and of the other Sacraments. Pagans and Jews, therefore, since they are not baptized, are not children of Jesus Christ, nor members of the Church, nor Catholics. Those who do not profess the same faith as the Church are called, and are, heretics. And those who do not obey the lawful Prelates, especially the Supreme Pontiff, are called, and are, schismatics. Even though they are baptized, they have separated themselves from the Catholic Church by their errors or disobedience. Heretics and schismatics are like a limb cut off from the body, or a branch cut off from the tree. And what an unhappy lot awaits them! An arm cut off from the body is good for nothing but to be buried, and a branch cut and separated from the tree bears no fruit and is good only for the fire. So heretics and schismatics, as limbs cut off from the body of the Catholic Church and branches cut from this tree of life, are no longer able to bear wholesome fruit. They are fit only to be buried in the grave of hell and burned in the flames of that devouring fire.

Do you notice above the building, which I told you is a figure of the Church, the divine Spirit in the form of a dove, no. 2? This signifies that the Catholic Church is ruled and governed by the Holy Ghost, according to the promise of Jesus Christ: *The spirit of truth… shall abide with you, and shall be in you* (John 14:17), and he will remain until the end of the world. And those flames or tongues of fire around him are the seven gifts he pours out on the Church and on the faithful.

That figure, no. 3, which holds a chalice in one hand and a flaming heart in the other and has an anchor at her feet, represents the true religion, queen of the moral virtues. The three things the figure holds signify the three theological virtues, by which the faithful go directly to God. The chalice signifies faith; the anchor, hope; and the flaming heart, charity toward God and neighbor. In these a true Catholic must exercise himself.

Do you notice that crowd in front of the building which, as I told you, represents the Church, no. 4? It signifies the schismatics, heretics, the ungodly, pagans, and all the persecutors the true Church has had and will have. Notice that they carry instruments to destroy her and do away with her and her children. The torch this one carries is not for giving light but for setting fire. The lances, swords and arrows of the others are for killing and wiping out the Christian name. Besides weapons they use heretical, ungodly, subversive and immoral writings, and that is what those books signify. Do you notice lower down that evil beast St. John tells us of in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 13:1)? It signifies the seven capital vices, the necessary consequence of bad doctrines and perverse maxims. It also signifies the seven chief tyrants who persecuted Christianity, and also the seven battles the devil wages against souls walking the road of perfection. But, thanks be to God, it has been conquered. For it is written that *the gates of hell* (which are sins, since through them many enter that place of torments) *shall not prevail* against the Catholic Church (Matt. 16:18). Even if all her enemies conspire against her like the most dreadful storm, the splendor of her divinity will always appear. That is just what the sun peeping out at one side of the plate signifies.

This sun also shows what the Catholic Church does with the religion she professes. As the sun lights, warms and makes the earth fruitful, so she enlightens minds and inflames hearts with the love of God and neighbor, making them fruitful in virtues. Ah! What would become of the universe without the sun? What darkness! What cold! What calamities and miseries! And what would become of the world without the sun of the Religion the Catholic Church professes and teaches? What darkness of mind! What errors! What cold in hearts deprived of the fire of charity and the other virtues! What vices, in the end, what sins, and what damnation of souls! That is why the devil, the enemy of our souls, envious of our temporal and eternal

happiness, takes great care to send us his blind followers to darken, since he cannot take away, the beautiful and most fruitful sun of the Catholic Church. Vain efforts! For the material sun, when it hides in the evening and leaves us in the dark, does so to light other countries, and rises the next morning more beautiful than ever. So too the sun of the Church, when because of the persecutions of tyrants and vicious men it goes out in one place, shines and triumphs in others. Then it appears again in the same country with greater splendor than before, once the virtues have been purified of the dregs of earthly affections; and its persecutors are left confounded and ashamed, with rage and spite in their hearts.

It is very much to the point, my son, that you should know that persecuting the good is characteristic of the wicked who are given over to vice. They say: *Let us lie in wait for the just, because he is… contrary to our doings* (Wis. 2:12). Jesus Christ suffered persecutions, and these were the inheritance he left his disciples, saying to them: *If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If you had been of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world… therefore the world hateth you* (John 15:20, 19). It must be a great consolation for a Christian who sees himself marked with this sign of persecution to think that in it he has a proof that he belongs to God and not to the world.

In this very thing the divinity of the Catholic Church shines out. While she shows such moderation toward all the sects of Protestants, schismatics, Jews, Mohammedans and idolaters, they show a furious rage against Catholics. They stir up so many persecutions against them and direct at them every kind of satire, mockery, insult and sarcasm, proving thereby the hatred they bear them. The reason is plain. The sects were born of error and passion, and as children of the same parents they get on together very easily. But the Catholic Church is the daughter of eternal Truth, taught by God himself and built by Jesus Christ himself, as he promised St. Peter when he said to him: *Thou art Peter* \[rock\], *and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it* (Matt. 16:18). That is why the children of such perverse parents cannot bear to see this daughter of heaven or leave her in peace. Let them persecute her, then, and welcome; we shall not give up, but rather be more confirmed in her, since persecutions are a proof of her divinity.

The Catholic Church is the mother of all Christians, since she has begotten them anew in Baptism. She is the ark of salvation, outside of which no one can be saved, and the only door by which one can enter heaven. Therefore it was necessary that God should form her in such a way that the whole world could know her, and no one could confuse her with the *synagogue of Satan* (Apoc. 2:9), mother of all the reprobate and damned. To this end he first built her on the great mountain of the holiness, virtues and merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. And seeing that her enemies also claimed to come from him and to take his name, he marked her with four signs so clear that only one willfully blind can mistake her. He did this so that not even the roughest and most ignorant person could fail to recognize her or confuse her with the church of would-be and false Christians. These signs are that she is ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC and APOSTOLIC. I am going to explain them to you, though briefly.

In the first place he made her ONE. Since there is only one God, and he has given us only *one faith*, as St. Paul says, and *one baptism* (Eph. 4:5), which is the door of the Church and of the other Sacraments, there cannot be more than one true Religion either, in which men can please God and fulfil his most holy will. Jesus Christ, who compares his Church to a flock (John 10:16), did not form several apostolates and several gatherings of the faithful, but ONE gathering and one single apostolate. He did not give it many heads but only ONE: himself as invisible Head, and St. Peter and his successors, the Popes, as visible Head. He commanded them to go and gather all the nations into his flock, teaching them all the same law and doctrine. It is otherwise with the synagogues of Satan, the sects of heretics. Some teach one thing and others another, and what they teach today they reject tomorrow, never agreeing among themselves, so that the proverb is fulfilled: “every sparrow with its own ear of corn.” And since truth can only be ONE, the true Church can only be the one that, coming from Jesus Christ, has always taught the same faith, the same law and doctrine;

that has always administered the same Sacraments; that has always had one single head or chief, one single government, one single worship; and that has always been truly ONE. One has only to open one's eyes to see that this is the Catholic Church, in whose fold we have the happiness of living.

The second character God gave his Church was to make her HOLY. A God who is holiness itself, and who was announced as coming as *the Saint of saints* (Dan. 9:24), could not make her otherwise. That is why her doctrine is HOLY, the Sacraments she administers are HOLY, the worship she gives God is HOLY, she is HOLY in all her practices, and HOLY in many of her members or children. Notice well, my son: Jesus Christ came to form for himself a society of Saints in heaven, and these were to be not few but many, for it is written: *Vidi turbam magnam, quam dinumerare nemo poterat* \[I saw a great multitude, which no man could number\] (Apoc. 7:9). For this reason there must always be Saints in the true Church. And in fact in the Catholic Church there have been, there are and there always will be Saints. Eleven years ago five were canonized. But the sects of heretics cannot count even one; if not, let them name them; nor will they ever have any. Do you know how they get rid of this argument? They mock the Saints and even the most holy Virgin Mary. But they will be the ones mocked when they are brought before the judgment seat of God. When they see that Catholics are saved because they kept the laws and doctrine our HOLY Church teaches, and that they themselves are condemned even though they kept those of theirs, they will cry out, but now to no purpose: *We fools esteemed their life* (that of true Catholics) *madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth* (Wis. 5:4–6).

The third character or sign of the true Church is to be CATHOLIC, which means universal; for the Prophets had already announced that she would spread through all lands. She is CATHOLIC as to time. Having begun in the time of Jesus Christ and with Jesus Christ, she will last until the end of the world, as he himself promised, and in heaven for all eternity. For this reason no sect of heretics can boast of being the true Church, because none of them began with Jesus Christ, but much later. Of each of them one can always point to the time it began, which was when the heresiarch who gave it its name lived. Nor will any of them last until the end of the world: either they die soon after they are born, or they change so much that at most they keep only their original name. She is CATHOLIC also as to place, in her extension and spread throughout the world. She embraces in her bosom every kind of people, without distinction of nation, class, age or sex. And in all times, in all nations and among all kinds of people where she is found, she has, has had and will always have the same faith, the same doctrine or morals, the same kind of government under the Roman Pontiff. Her members, wherever they are, will always be united by the same beliefs, the same hope and charity, being alive by grace and as to communion, which I will explain to you when I speak of the communion of Saints. Hence she embraces all who are to be saved. But being another ark of Noah, outside of which the whole world was drowned in the flood, all those too who will not enter this mystical ark, the Church of Jesus Christ, will be drowned or damned. "He cannot have God for his father," says St. Cyprian, "who has not the Church for his mother."[1]

You see, my son, that this character or sign is so peculiar to our holy Church that it can in no way belong to any other. This proves plainly that all those that are not ours are false. And this sign proves it so well that some modern heretics have tried to give themselves the name of Catholics and to call their churches, or rather synagogues of Satan, Catholic. By this name "Catholics" they mean being members of the universal Church made up of all who believe in Jesus Christ. But you see, my son, that this is only abusing the word "Catholic" to lead the unwary astray. For how can that collection of sects be called a Church, which have no union among themselves; where one believes what another denies; where one calls the other heretical and they anathematize each other? No: what makes Catholicism, the catholicity of the Church, is not simply the confession of Jesus Christ throughout the world. It is especially the unity of faith: having the same faith, doctrine and tradition, *one soul, one heart, one mouth*, one and the same preaching and form of church

government, as St. Irenaeus affirms.[2] So even if the heretics were more numerous and spread their errors throughout the world, they would not on that account be Catholics, nor would their synagogue be the true Church of Jesus Christ. Besides everything else, they would always lack unity in faith, doctrine and so on. And even if there were only one faithful believer in each nation, he would be Catholic, so long as he kept that unity described by St. Irenaeus.

The fourth mark or sign is to be APOSTOLIC. That is, she was founded by the Apostles and is governed by their successors, the bishops. These have succeeded one another from the Apostles without interruption and publicly, with a lawful mission, always keeping in their public teaching and government of the Church the unity of faith and of communion with her head and center, the Roman Pontiff. Listen, my son, to what Jesus Christ said to the Apostles when he charged them with the founding and government of his Church until the end of the world: *Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. 28:19–20). And we all know that the Apostles fulfilled the mission Jesus Christ gave them. One has only to read the list of the Catholic bishops, especially of the Supreme Pontiffs of Rome, head or chief of Christianity, or rather of Catholicism. There one sees that Pius IX, who by the mercy of God happily governs us, succeeded Gregory XVI, he Pius VIII, and so, going back from one to another, we shall come to St. Peter, whom Jesus Christ made Prince of the Apostles and his Vicar on earth. I added "with a lawful mission", that is, one coming from him who holds the keys of the kingdom of heaven, or of the Church, who is the Pope. So intruded bishops, or those who separate themselves from obedience to the Pontiff of Rome, are not successors of the Apostles but thieves, as Jesus Christ calls them (John 10:1), and we must flee from them as sheep flee from wolves. So if any heretics come to you, my son, saying that their churches are apostolic too, you have only to say to them with Tertullian: "Show the origin of your churches. Let us see that the order of your bishops has so descended by succession from the beginning that the first was one of the Apostles, or had as his predecessor one of the apostolic men who persevered in union with the Apostles."[3] Since the sects of heretics can never show this, none of them can rightly boast of being APOSTOLIC. On the contrary, the Catholic Church is the only one that can prove it, and so she alone is in all truth APOSTOLIC.

Here, then, my son, you have explained the four characters or signs which, as I told you, God has left us for knowing the true Church and not confusing her with the multitude of synagogues of Satan that also claim to be the Church of God. Since they belong to none of these but only to ours, as you have seen, it follows that ours is the only true one. In her and with her we must live and die united, if we are to go to heaven.

And since the Chief or head of this Church, St. Peter, fixed his apostolic chair in Rome, she is also called ROMAN, that is, governed by the Pontiff of Rome, successor

to the authority of St. Peter, and so, like him, Vicar of Jesus Christ and Father of all Catholic Christians.

Some heretics did not know how to answer the Catholics who asked them where their church was before their heresiarch came into the world. So they pretended that the Church of Jesus Christ could be invisible. That is as much as to say that the sun can be hidden at noon on a clear day with no eclipse. You must know, then, my son, that the true Church is necessarily *visible*. Her faithful and members are visible; the Sacraments she administers to them are visible; the conduct shaped by the wise and holy laws she gives is visible; the Pastors or Bishops who govern her under obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff are visible; and the Supreme Pontiff who governs her in all her universality and with full power is visible too. Besides, she must be visible because Jesus Christ commanded that doubts and complaints be brought to the Church and her decisions respected (Matt. 18:17). This could not be done if she were not *visible*. This *visibility* is well shown in the *city seated on a mountain* of which the holy Gospel speaks (Matt. 5:14). The heretics' evasions are therefore vain, and so you can have no doubt that *the one true Church* is our CATHOLIC, APOSTOLIC, ROMAN Church. In her you must persevere, united in heart and outwardly, and you must keep her holy laws with all

exactness if you wish to be saved. Otherwise you would be lost for ever.

[1] St. Cyprian, *On the Unity of the Church* 6.

[2] cf. St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* I, 10, 2.

[3] Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 32.

Lesson 14. Explanation of the Plate, and Continuation of the Same Part of the Creed



Plate XVI. The summary of Faith. 1. The Supreme Pontiff. 2. The Catholics. 3. The wicked.

This plate, my son, shows you the image or portrait of the Supreme Pontiff, the head of the Church (no. 1). The figures on the right (no. 2) kissing his foot are the faithful who come from the farthest parts of the earth to pledge him obedience; that is why you see them with the pilgrim's staff. Those on the left (no. 3) are the ones who will not listen to the Church or obey her. She hurls excommunications against them, treating them *as the heathen and publican,* as Jesus Christ commanded (Matt. 18:17).

I must warn you that there are some who, seeing they cannot resist the force of the arguments for the divinity of the Catholic Church, do not oppose her openly or to her face. Rather they pretend to praise her, the better to strike their blow, and they aim their shots at her head, who is the Pope. But you will understand that if a

body's head is taken off, it must perish. This is what Protestants and other sectarians do: to destroy the body of the Catholic Church they try to take away her visible Head, the Pope. So that you are not deceived, I will tell you this. Jesus Christ is the good shepherd who gave his life to redeem the sheep his eternal Father entrusted to him. When this work of redemption was finished he was to return to heaven. So as not to leave his dearly loved flock without a visible shepherd to guide it, he chose St. Peter from among the Apostles to carry out this charge or office. Among other appearances, after he had risen, Jesus Christ once appeared to St. Peter and six other companions on the shore of the sea of Galilee. Turning to St. Peter, he asked him whether he loved him more than the others. Peter answered: *Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.* Jesus Christ then said to him: *Feed my lambs.* He asked him the same question a second time and gave the same charge, and the third time he said to him: *Feed my sheep* (John 21:15–17). By the name of lambs the Church has always understood the simple faithful, and by the name of sheep the Bishops, who nourish the faithful of their dioceses as sheep do their lambs. The authority of the Pope is superior to that of the Bishops, and they must respect and obey it, because it was set up by Jesus Christ himself. So he charged St. Peter when he said to him: *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren* (Luke 22:32), that is, the Bishops. St. Peter is the foundation; and if the foundations of a house are taken away, it inevitably falls to the ground.

The need for the Pope can also be known by natural reason. No society, great or small, can last without a head or chief to preside over it and govern it. In families we see the authority of the father. In towns, cities and kingdoms we see Mayors, Governors, the King in monarchies and Presidents in republics. The same must be said of the society formed by Jesus Christ, the Church. She cannot last without a head or superior to govern her, whom we call the Pope.

The authority of the Bishops is not enough, because it is limited to their dioceses and does not extend to the Church in general. Nor are Councils sufficient. They are difficult to assemble; and even if they were not, they cannot always be in session, since the Bishops who would make them up cannot always be away from their dioceses, where their presence is very necessary. And this universal authority is always indispensable for the good of the Church, as the head always is for the body. Could anything be clearer?

Besides, in every general council the Pope is always its chief or president. There is not and cannot be a lawful general council without a Pope to convoke or confirm it. The Roman Pontiff, as Melchior Cano says, is the one who defines questions of faith. He does so not by new revelations or miracles but by human means, calling consultors, more or fewer according to the gravity of the matter, so that with their learning they may help him find out the truth. For although the assistance of the Holy Ghost is promised to the Church, God does not choose to work miracles without need. So he wants her to use human means, while he takes care to guide her so that she does not err. The Bishops (in council) are also judges in questions of faith, but the Pope is the supreme judge. Their sentence has no force without his confirmation; and if any of them depart from the truth, it is his task to bring them back to the right road, according to what Jesus Christ said to St. Peter, as I told you a moment ago.[1] You see, then, my son, the need there is of a Pope for the Catholic Church to last. Venerate him, obey him, and never listen to those who speak ill of the Pope and of the Church of Rome. However much religion and zeal those who speak so may make a show of, they are always anti-Catholic. For God's sake flee from them.

Besides believing the Catholic Church, and in her head who is the Pope, you must also believe the communion of Saints. To help you understand this communion, I must tell you that the Catholic Church is the most wonderful and magnificent society in all creation, and the whole work of creation is destined for her. She is made up of all the Angels and Saints of heaven, all the souls in purgatory, and all the Christian faithful in the world. The portion already in heaven is called the *Church triumphant*, because there they are crowned with the glory they merited by the triumphs they won here over their enemies, the world, the devil and the flesh. The portion in purgatory is called the *Church suffering*, because by the pains they suffer there

they are cleansed or purified of the faults they contracted here. They were slack in the struggle they kept up against those enemies, or let themselves be overcome by them at times, though their offenses or slackness have already been forgiven. And the portion here on earth is called *militant*, because it is always in a state of war, campaigning or fighting against the enemies of the soul already named.

These three states of the Church can be compared to three branches that grow from the same tree or trunk and rest on it. They live and bear fruit by the juice or sap it gives them; for the three states of the Church live in God and by the spirit and charity of God. Besides, just as the sap that runs through one branch passes to the others on returning to the root, so those of one state communicate with those of the others and, if need be, help them. The Angels intercede and pray to God for us and offer him our prayers and good works, as Jacob saw on that mysterious ladder on which the Angels went up and down from heaven (Gen. 28:12); the archangel St. Raphael also told Tobias so (Tob. 12:12). The holy Onias appeared to Judas Machabeus praying for the people (2 Mach. 15:12), and the other Saints do the same. We too honor the Angels and Saints. We place their images in our churches, decorate our homes with them, honor and venerate them and carry them with us. We offer them our devotion and our vows, and take them as patrons and mediators, to obtain the Lord's graces through them.

The same communication takes place with regard to the souls in purgatory. The Angels and Saints pray to God for them and accompany them to glory. We offer for them prayers, alms, fasts, labors, communions and the holy sacrifice of the Mass. And they, already sure of eternal salvation, eagerly desire ours. When they are carried to glory, their glory increases that of the Angels and Saints, and their prayers increase our protection. In this way there is a *communion of goods* among the three parts of the Church, triumphant, suffering and militant. It is like that among the members of one body, which share all they have and are all nourished by the same food.

Nevertheless, I must warn you, my son, that to share in this communication one must be in grace. If we are in mortal sin, even if we keep the faith, we are still members, yes, but dead members. In this unhappy case we share in the prayers of the other living members or Saints only insofar as they are prayers of petition: that is, insofar as by their prayers they can obtain from God that he bring us back to the right road and restore us to his friendship and grace. But if happily we are in grace, we share in all the good works done by all the faithful or Saints anywhere in the world.

Besides the state of grace, to share in the common suffrages and prayers of the Church it is indispensable not to be excommunicated. The excommunicated are like branches cut off or members separated from the body. This separation from the body of the Church militant has always been regarded as a terrible sign of eternal separation from the Church triumphant, and as a mark of reprobation. You must prefer to die a thousand times rather than separate yourself from the Church of Jesus Christ or do things for which you deserve to be separated. Excommunications, which may be called the Church's thunderbolts, not only wound the soul; they also cause sensible and manifest effects, as has been seen more than once in the present century. So, my son, you must take the greatest care not to incur any excommunication, and to keep yourself in grace, so as not to make yourself unworthy of so great a good as this communion of Saints and sharing in the goods of holy Church.

Let us sum up, finally, in a few words the doctrine contained in this article of faith, which we confess in the Creed when we say "I believe the communion of Saints". It is the union among the Church triumphant, the Church suffering and the Church militant: among the Saints in heaven, the souls suffering in purgatory, and the faithful living on earth. These three parts of one Church form one body, whose invisible head is Jesus Christ. The Pope, Vicar of Jesus Christ, is the visible head of the Church militant. And the faithful are united among themselves by the bonds of charity and by a mutual communication of intercession and prayers. From this come the invocation of the Saints, prayers for the dead, and confidence in the influence of the blessed around the throne of God. From this we deduce that everything is in common in the Church: prayers, good

works, graces, merits and so on. And one of the greatest misfortunes of a Christian is to find himself deprived, by sin, excommunication or schism, of the communion of Saints and the other goods the Church opens to us. We deduce that this dogma of the communion of Saints ought also to help unite hearts, stifle resentments both general and private, and inspire all Christians with feelings of brotherhood. In Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, *there is neither Jew nor Greek*, nor barbarian; *you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11), one body and one family. That is, for a Christian there are no parties or rivalries: it is enough for him that they are Christians. Such was the intention of Jesus Christ. If we often fail to live up to it, the fault is ours, not his Religion's.

Q. What is the ninth article of the Creed?

A. The holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints.

Q. What does "the holy Catholic Church" mean?

A. That there is a Church which is our Mother, and which is infallible in what she teaches.

Q. What is the Church?

A. It is the congregation of all the Christian faithful who believe and profess the faith and law of Christ, having Christ himself as invisible head and the Pope as visible head.

Q. Who is the Pope?

A. The Supreme Pontiff of Rome, Vicar of Christ on earth, whom we are all obliged to obey.

Q. Why is the Church called holy?

A. Because Christ, her head, is holy, her Sacraments are holy, her law is holy, and she makes holy those who keep it.

Q. What does "Catholic" mean?

A. That she teaches all revealed truths and extends to all times and places.

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[1] *Pastor Aeternus*, 1870.

Lesson 15. Explanation of the Plate, Continuation of the Same Part of the Creed ("The communion of Saints"), and Explanation of the Tenth Part ("The forgiveness of sins")



Plate XVII. The communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins. The apostle St. Simon. 1. Jesus Christ with the Saints of heaven. 2. Onias and Jeremias. 3. The inhabitants of the earth. 4. The Church with the power to forgive sins. 5. Jesus Christ gives the power to forgive. 6. The priest who absolves.

In this plate, my son, you will find shown what I explained to you in the last lesson about the communion of Saints. At the top is Jesus Christ with the Saints. Because all their merits come from the price of his blood, I show you that fountain springing from his side. It symbolizes his merits and those of the Saints, whose power reaches down to purgatory. There you see the Angels coming to take out the souls that have managed to pay their debts by these merits; and that is exactly what the Angel pouring a cup of blood over them shows. And since all graces come to us through the most holy Virgin Mary, you will see, if you look closely, that the Angel carries on his arm rosaries and scapulars of this loving Mother. Do you not see those on the right side of the plate (no. 2)? They are Onias the high priest and Jeremias the prophet, who continually offered prayers to God from Abraham's bosom for the Hebrew people, as we read in chapter 15 of the Second Book of Machabees. The prophet Jeremias handed a sword to the great captain Judas Machabeus and said to him: *Take this holy sword a gift from God, wherewith

thou shalt overthrow the adversaries of my people Israel* (2 Mach. 15:16). The others (no. 3) are the inhabitants of the earth, who also offer prayers to God. The Supreme Pontiff stands with the keys in his hand, about to open the doors behind which the treasures of the Church are locked, to give them out to the faithful, living and dead, or in purgatory. And here you have the three states of the Church in continual communication, or communion of goods. That is what we believe and confess when we say "I believe the

communion of Saints."

This article, as you know, is followed by that of *the forgiveness of sins*, by which we believe and confess that the Church has power to forgive them all. It is true, my son, that the power to forgive sins belongs properly and peculiarly to God. But it is also true that, as its owner, he can give it how he wishes and to whom he wishes. And in fact he gave it to his Church. This is what that figure (no. 4) represents, holding in one hand a staff with three crosses and in the other the keys of the kingdom of heaven. That figure represents first of all the Supreme Pontiff, visible head of the Church and successor of St. Peter. It also represents the whole Catholic priesthood, to which God communicates the share of this power that belongs to it in the Church, in due subordination to the Pope.

Before going on, my son, you must know that we are all born with the original sin in which we were conceived. So we are all *children of wrath* (Eph. 2:3) and slaves of the devil. We cannot be just, nor members of the Church, nor children of God, nor brothers of Christ, nor heirs of heaven, except by the forgiveness of sins, as the apostle St. Peter affirms (Acts 2:38).

There are two kinds of sin, original and personal. Original sin is the one we inherit from our first parents. Personal sin is the one we commit by our own malice. But the Church has power to forgive us both, by virtue of the merits of Christ placed in the Sacraments he himself instituted, and by the power of the ministry he conferred on her. *For Christ therefore we are ambassadors*, says St. Paul (2 Cor. 5:20); *let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ* (1 Cor. 4:1).

It is a truth of faith, and is clear from the holy Gospel, that Jesus Christ gave this faculty or power to the Church when he said to St. Peter: *Thou art Peter* (which in the language Christ spoke means rock), *and upon this rock I will build my church… And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven* (Matt. 16:18–19). With these words, said to St. Peter in particular, he promised what he fulfilled after his resurrection. He would make him head of his Church and give full powers to him and his successors. In his person he would also give them to the other Apostles and to all ministers lawfully sent to administer holy Baptism and the other Sacraments of the Church, to which the power of forgiving sins is attached, as the Apostles themselves taught and as unbroken tradition shows. Jesus Christ gave the same expressly when, appearing to the Apostles after he had risen, *he breathed on them* (John 20:22). It was like what he did when he created our first parents, to whom with a breath he gave natural life, giving them a spirit of life, a soul like God. So too he gave the Apostles a life-giving spirit, saying to them: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained* (John 20:22–23): they shall not be absolved. Our first parents began to live by the breath God gave them. In the same way a kind of new life is given to the ministers of the Catholic Church by the breath they receive from Christ through the ministry of the Bishops. A new spirit animates them, and it is no longer they who speak, but the Spirit of the heavenly Father through their mouth. (Notice, my son, that I say *of the Catholic Church*. Those of the other churches have none of this, because it is not Christ who breathes on them but Satan.) And when one of them says: "I baptize thee… I absolve thee… This is my body…" (*Ego te baptizo… Ego te absolvo… Hoc est corpus meum…*), it is plain that it is not they who speak but God our Lord, who uses them as his ministers or instruments.

Do you see, my son, no. 5 of the plate? It represents the act in which Jesus Christ gave this power to the Apostles and their successors. And lower down (no. 6), do you not see a priest already using it in hearing confession? Here I must warn you that when Jesus Christ gave the Church power to forgive sins, he did not give it to all the faithful, men and women, or to all who believe in him. He gave it only to the Apostles, with the power and the command to pass it on to their successors in the priestly ministry until the end of the world, so that men should never lack this means of salvation. So the Apostles ordered; so the Church received it from them; so the Councils have defined; and so Christians have always believed, until three

centuries ago a religious unworthy of the name, called Luther, rebelling against the Church our mother, began to teach the contrary. Pay close attention to this, my son. Perhaps you will meet some bad Christian, infected with the false maxims of heresy, who will try to persuade you of the errors of that heresiarch and his followers. In that case flee from him as from a viper, call upon God, and ask him to keep you in the faith of the holy beliefs I have just explained to you.

It is very much to the point, my son, that you should know this. Of the seven Sacraments instituted by Christ, only two were instituted to forgive sins and recover lost grace: Baptism and Penance. The other five were instituted to increase it. For this reason these are called Sacraments of the living, and those Sacraments of the dead, as I will tell you elsewhere. As for Baptism, you must know that holy Church, taught by Christ and the Apostles, guided by the Holy Ghost and desiring the salvation of all men, gives every human being power, in the name of Christ and in case of necessity, to administer this Sacrament and through it to obtain the forgiveness of sins. I said every human being, whether man or woman, Catholic or unbeliever, provided they have the intention of doing what holy mother Church does. But a layman should never baptize in the presence of a priest, nor an unbeliever in the presence of a Catholic, nor a woman in the presence of a man.

As for the Sacrament of Penance, you must know that two things are needed: first, canonical ordination; and second, lawful mission. For lack of the first, Lutheran and Calvinist ministers cannot administer this Sacrament, because they are not canonically ordained; nor can laymen, even if they are Catholics, so long as they are in the lay state. For lack of the second, lawful mission, the following cannot administer it, ordinarily speaking: priests who, though canonically ordained, have fallen into heresy or schism; and those who, though Catholics and canonically ordained, are not sent, which in common speech is called not having faculties; and those suspended, and so on, that is, those whom the bishops have forbidden to use faculties they once had. And yet, so great is the Church's desire for the salvation of all her children that in case of necessity she gives the power to all these who are canonically ordained. And even if the priest administering the Sacrament were a wicked man, the Sacrament would still be valid. If you were given a very precious liquor or a very effective medicine to drink, it would have the same effect on you whether it were offered in a cup of the finest gold or in an earthenware mug, because in either case the liquor or medicine would be the same. The same must be said of the Sacraments, in which we are given to drink the most precious liquor of the blood of Jesus Christ and the most effective medicine of his merits, to forgive our sins and heal the wounds they caused us. True, they ought to be administered in a cup of the finest gold, I mean by a priest full of charity. But the Sacrament does not lose its power because it is given in an earthenware mug, that is, by a bad priest, nor does it fail to cause the same effect, which is the forgiveness of sins. So, my son, if you should have the misfortune to sin after Baptism, you must not be dismayed, still less despair of your salvation. *My little children*, the apostle St. John wrote to his disciples, *these things I write to you, that you may not sin. But if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world* (1 John 2:1–2). And earlier he had said: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all iniquity* (1 John 1:9).

And what is most consoling, my son, is that this forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism, which the Church can forgive us, is not limited to a certain number or kind of them. It extends to all sins, whatever they may be. And this not just once, which would already be a great deal, but as often as the sinner comes to the priest truly contrite and humbled, even if the sins he brings are the most enormous that can be committed in the world. What makes the benefit infinite is that God forgives so sincerely that he never remembers them again. It is as if you put a great stone in a sack and dropped it into the sea: you would never see it again. He admits the sinner to his friendship and grace, gives him a right to his goods and his kingdom, and as a pledge of it all makes him a sharer in his own body in the Eucharist.

These benefits tell us how many thanks we ought continually to give God for having caused us to be born in a Christian land and made us children of the Catholic Church. To her alone Christ has given the keys of the

kingdom of heaven, and she alone has power to forgive sins. When one thinks that, however many and great they may be, she can forgive them all, provided the sinner does all he ought on his part, one is amazed and compelled to exclaim: Truly the power of heaven has been placed in men on earth! But if the sinner hardens himself, if he grows obstinate and resists the grace of the Holy Ghost calling him to penance, and his sins are not forgiven, it is not for lack of power in this Sacrament or in the Church. It is the sinner's own fault. And what will cause him the greatest pain in hell will be to think that he is damned through his own fault, when he had so many means of salvation within his reach.

Never sin, then, my son. But if you should ever have this misfortune, humble yourself as soon as possible and repent. Do not harden your heart, and do not despair of forgiveness, however many and grave your sins may be. Make a good confession, and the Church will forgive them all and throw wide open to you the gates of heaven, where may we see each other together. Amen.

Q. What does "the communion of Saints" mean?

A. That the just share in one another's spiritual goods, as members of one body.

Q. What is the tenth article of the Creed?

A. The forgiveness of sins.

Q. What does "the forgiveness of sins" mean?

A. That the Church has power to forgive every kind of sin.

Lesson 16. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Eleventh Part of the Creed: "The resurrection of the flesh"



Plate XVIII. The resurrection of the flesh. The apostle St. Thaddeus. 1. The dead rising. 2. Job confesses the resurrection of the flesh. 3. A dead man raised by touching the bones of the prophet Eliseus. 4. The resurrection of Elias and Enoch.

My son, do you notice in that plate the crowd of dead men (no. 1) stirring and hurrying to come out of their graves? It means that you must believe that we shall all rise again, good and bad, glorified and damned. Souls will be united again to their own bodies. Thus united and brought back to life, the good will go to the glory of heaven in body and soul; and the wicked, those who have lived and died in mortal sin, will go in body and soul to hell to burn there eternally.

It is called the resurrection *of the flesh*, and not of the body, to make clear that what will rise is the same, identical flesh in which each one has lived, and not an apparent body, as some have mistakenly said. It is also called the resurrection of the flesh, and not of man, so that no one should go wrong by thinking that the soul also died and would rise. The soul is immortal; only the flesh will rise, because only the flesh dies.

This is a truth that has always been believed, under the natural law, the written law and the law of grace. In a certain way nature itself teaches it, and natural reason persuades us of it.

Look, my son, at figure no. 2, at the very top of the plate. It represents Job, a man who lived under the natural law in holy simplicity and was very pleasing in God's eyes. He abounded in riches, in family and in every good that can be possessed in this world. But the Lord, to test his faithfulness, allowed him to lose everything: riches, family and even his health. The evils that oppressed him were so great that his flesh

wasted away and only bones and skin were left him. Yet in the midst of so many pains he takes heart and is consoled by the hope of the resurrection, and he cries out: *I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see my God. Whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold, and not another: this my hope is laid up in my bosom* (Job 19:25–27).

Do you not see those figures on both sides of Job? They are passages, one from the Old Testament and one from the New, that also allude to the resurrection of the flesh. The one at no. 3 is a man who, after he died, was put into the tomb of the prophet Eliseus. As soon as he touched the Prophet's bones he came to life and stood on his feet (4 Kings 13:21). The other (no. 4) is the resurrection of Elias and Enoch, of whom the book of the Apocalypse says that after three days and

a half, *the spirit of life from God entered into them. And they stood upon their feet* (Apoc. 11:11).

This truth of the resurrection of the flesh was believed under the written law as well. The prophet Ezekiel, in chapter 37, gives a most wonderful prophecy and description of it. And the prophet Daniel says: *And many* (that is, all) *of those that sleep* the sleep of death *in the dust of the earth, shall awake* (shall rise): *some unto life everlasting, and others unto reproach,* to eternal punishment (Dan. 12:2).

Under the law of grace this truth has always been held so certain that all Christians believe it. From the very beginning, when Jesus Christ came to Bethania, where Lazarus had been dead four days, he told Martha, Lazarus's sister, that her brother would rise again. Martha answered him: *I know that he shall rise again, in the resurrection at the last day.* Jesus said to her: *I am the resurrection and the life* (John 11:24–25), I who rise and give life. And St. Matthew says: *And he shall send his angels with a trumpet, and a great voice: and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them* (Matt. 24:31), from one end of the world to the other.

The resurrection of the dead was one of the things that most held the attention of the apostle St. Paul, so that he spoke of it very often, both in his sermons and in his letters: *The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall rise again* (1 Cor. 15:52). And earlier he had said: *But some man will say: How do the dead rise again? or with what manner of body shall they come? Senseless man, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die first. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be; but bare grain, as of wheat, or of some of the rest. But God giveth it a body as he will: and to every seed its proper body* (1 Cor. 15:35–38). So he will give each man the body that belongs to him. When one reflects on what happens in each grain or little seed, from which, once buried, a fine ear of wheat or a great tree springs, one sees that it is foolishness to deny that the resurrection of the flesh, of dead bodies, is possible.

"All nature," says Tertullian, "preaches to you the resurrection of bodies. Seeds, grasses, plants and trees seem dead things in winter. But spring comes, and behold, they all rise again. The sun sets in the evening, and the bright day turns into dark and dreadful night. But the next day draws near and… see how it rises again! The moon seems to die every month, and every month it rises again." Finally he says: "God has chosen to teach you that the dead will rise more by deeds than by words. So before prophecy, he set nature before you, so that, as a disciple of nature, you might believe prophecy the better, and not doubt that God raises the flesh, knowing that he raises all things."[1]

What St. John Damascene says about the resurrection of the flesh is admirable. Listen, my son, and I will give you some of his words. "That almighty God who in the beginning formed the body of man from a little dust has the same power now to form it again after it has turned to dust." He then goes on to show the great difficulties that would follow from not hoping for this resurrection. "If we were not to rise again," he says, "we could say: let us eat, drink and enjoy ourselves, for death ends everything. If we were not to rise again, how should we differ from the beasts?… If we were not to rise again, we should be more unhappy than the beasts themselves. There would be no God and no providence; everything would be chance."[2] For we see

that many who lead exemplary lives are nevertheless weighed down with pains, labors and afflictions, while others who lead very loose lives and wallow in the excesses of ungodliness swim in delights. Only by considering this, anyone with a grain of understanding will see how indispensable the resurrection of the flesh is. There will be, there will infallibly be, a resurrection of the flesh, because God is a just rewarder. As he will reward the soul and flesh that have been mortified to serve him, so too he will punish those who have turned away from him and given themselves up to pleasures. Where would God's justice be if after death the flesh that had been mortified, like that of poor Lazarus, had the same lot as the pampered and indulged flesh of the rich Epulo? You know it, my son: natural reason itself teaches you that this flesh you now have must rise again. Since it is the soul's companion in good or evil, it must also be its companion in reward or punishment.

We shall all rise at the age of Christ when he rose, who was thirty-three years old, *unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ*, as the Apostle says (Eph. 4:13). There will be no differences of children or old men, nor deformed or stunted people. Since it will be the work of God, who makes all things perfect, he will raise us all in a perfect state too, correcting the defects of nature. He will cause children, though in their own flesh, to have the body they would have had if they had lived to thirty-three. Old people will have corrected all the defects they contracted after thirty-three, and so will the deformed, and so on.[3]

We shall all rise. But the good will bear on their foreheads the sign of their predestination, with the impress of grace and of the eternal glory that will adorn their soul. From it this glory will be communicated to the body by the four *gifts* or endowments. These are: *impassibility*, which will preserve it not only from death but also from all pain and suffering; *subtlety*, by which it will pass through everything, with nothing able to hinder it; *agility*, which will make it so subject to the soul that it will move without weariness to any place in the twinkling of an eye; and *clarity*, which will make it shine like the sun and so diaphanous or transparent that through it the blessed will be able to contemplate the beauty and loveliness of this great machine of the universe, the admirable work of the Creator.

The wicked will rise with the horrible look of sin, which is the sign of reprobation. It will make their bodies so ugly, loathsome and abominable that one alone would be enough to infect the whole world if it remained on earth. But they will rise incorruptible, by an effect of divine justice, which will in this way impose on them an eternal punishment.

You see, my son, the enormous difference there will be between the one kind of body and the other at the resurrection. Little reasoning is needed to know which of these two lots is to be preferred. Be wise, then, my son. Try to live an orderly and holy life, and do not sin to pamper that flesh. Remember that it would then rise ugly and loathsome and would have to burn eternally in hell. But if you take care to mortify it, it will be preserved and will be happy for ever in heaven.

Q. What is the eleventh article of the Creed?

A. The resurrection of the flesh.

Q. What does "the resurrection of the flesh" mean?

A. That on the day of judgment all souls will be united again with their bodies.

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[1] a free paraphrase of Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 12.

[2] cf. St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith* IV, 27.

[3] St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, Suppl. q. 81 a. 1.

Lesson 17. Explanation of the Plate, and of the Twelfth and Last Part of the Creed: "Life everlasting. Amen."



Plate XIX. Life everlasting. The apostle St. Matthias. 1. Jesus Christ, who gives eternal life. 2. Death. 3. The Angel of the Lord. 4. Those predestined to glory. 5. The mountain and the Lamb of the Lord.

Do you see, my son, that personage (no. 1) in the middle of the plate? It is Jesus Christ, giving eternal life to the good, while the wicked go to the eternal pains of hell, represented by that fire down below. Above them is the figure of death (no. 2), and above it an Angel of the Lord (no. 3) hurling thunderbolts against the reprobate to show the rigor of divine justice. But the others, to whom Jesus gives his hand, have kept the commandments and will of God. By their good works and perseverance they have deserved to have their names written in the book of life, which is the one that Angel carries (no. 4). Jesus himself raises them to glory.

At its entrance there is at once a mountain (no. 5) with a lamb on its summit, which is a figurative way of speaking. The mountain signifies perfection and glory. To climb to the top of a mountain one must make an effort and struggle against one's own inclination, which, like water, always pulls downward. So too we must make an effort to reach perfection and glory. Jesus Christ himself tells us so: *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away* (Matt. 11:12). The prophet David asked long ago: *Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord: or who shall stand in his holy place?* And he answers: *The innocent in hands, and clean of heart, who hath not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbour. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and mercy from God his Saviour* (Ps. 23:3–5). That lamb, because of its great meekness, is a figure of Jesus Christ, who takes away the sins of the world; and also because he was

slain to give us eternal life, since we are saved by his merits. So, my son, imitate Jesus Christ, and thus you will climb the mountain of perfection and glory. Imitate him in all the virtues, especially in meekness and humility of heart. For you must know that he says *the meek shall possess the land* (Matt. 5:4), especially the promised land, which is glory.

It is a truth of faith that we shall all rise, as I showed you in the last lesson. Each one's soul, united with his own body, will live for ever without ever dying again, so that we shall go on being eternally just as we are found at the moment of the general resurrection. So it will not be like the resurrections of some dead people that we read of in holy Scripture or in the lives of some Saints, who, having been raised, died again. Jesus Christ and the Saints only brought those bodies back to life for a time, to show their supernatural power. But after that day these same bodies will have very different qualities, as we said, and so they will never die again. The good will live in the eternal glory of heaven, which alone deserves the name of true life. The wicked will live in the eternal pains of hell, which are worse than death itself and are called *the second death* (Apoc. 20:14); and that is why death is cast with them into the infernal abyss. The good will have complete happiness, because in body and soul they will enjoy the supreme and eternal Good, which is their last end; and this is what it is, and is called, to live eternally. The damned, on the contrary, will be deprived in body and soul of all good and plunged in every evil, spiritual and bodily. Their life will be a continual death that never finishes and never finishes them: *they shall seek death, and shall not find it* (Apoc. 9:6).

The good in heaven will have two kinds of goods, essential and accidental. The essential goods consist in seeing and enjoying God and in knowing all the mysteries of grace and secrets of nature. From this vision and enjoyment come the greatest love, an unspeakable contentment and a joy that will last for all eternity. The accidental goods are the glory, peace, delight and so on with which the Saints esteem and love one another as children of God, brothers and friends. These joys are so many and so great that they cannot be understood in this world. So the apostle St. Paul says: *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him* (1 Cor. 2:9). And Boethius, with the theologians, says that the glory of heaven is "a state made perfect by the gathering of all goods" and all joys.[1]

Besides these essential and accidental goods and joys common to all the good, there will be particular ones with which chaste persons and virgins, Martyrs and Doctors will be honored in body and soul, and all according to their merits. This particular accidental good is what St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori, with St. Thomas, calls the *aureole*, or little crown of fine gold.[2] It will be given them for the brilliant and notable victory they won in this world over the devil, driving him by their doctrine and preaching not only from themselves but from other souls as well. But this variety of particular accidental rewards will not produce the least envy or division among them. Rather it will give them satisfaction and joy, because there each one rejoices in another's good as if it were his own, knowing that the other's glory, though greater, is not owed to him. You will understand it better with this comparison. Suppose a father has three sons, one tall, the second middling and the last small, and he makes all three a suit of the same cloth and cut, but with more or less material according to their height. Since each receives a suit in proportion to his height, it is clear that the smallest will not envy the biggest's suit or the middle one's, nor the middle one the biggest's. Rather each, content with the one that suits him, will be glad to see his brothers well dressed too. The same will happen in heaven. Each, content with the glory that belongs to him, which is the garment God gives everyone in proportion to the greatness of his merits, will not only not envy that of the others but will rejoice in it.

Besides these joys, the blessed enjoy others that are properly bodily. As I told you in the last lesson, they consist in impassibility, subtlety, agility and clarity. Impassibility means that glorified bodies will feel no pain. As St. John says, *God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow* (Apoc. 21:4). But the bodies of the damned will suffer every evil, so that God himself declares he will rain punishments upon them like the drops of a heavy shower (cf. Ps. 10:7). The

bodies of the blessed will also have the gift of *subtlety*, by which they will be able to enter any place, however closed. So the glorious body of Jesus Christ came out of the tomb without removing the stone that covered it, and entered the upper room without opening the doors. Those of the damned, on the contrary, will always be shut up in those dungeons, never able to get out or escape. The gift of *agility*, which the bodies of the just will also have, will make them pass from one place to another with the greatest speed, like thought. The Holy Ghost gives us some idea of it when he says *they shall take wings as eagles* (Isa. 40:31). Not so the damned. Like those cripples who, buried in a bed of pain, cannot move hand or foot, they will not be able even to stir. Lastly, glorified bodies will have the gift of *clarity*, which will make them *shine as the sun* (Matt. 13:43). On the contrary, those of the damned will be black as the devils themselves and plunged in the eternal darkness of hell.

Finally, the Creed ends with the word *Amen*, which means "I believe and confess that everything contained in it is infallible truth." But understand, my son, that you must believe not only what is contained in the Creed. You must believe all that is contained in the holy Scriptures, and all that God has revealed and that his Church teaches us as a matter of faith, since it was to her that he revealed it and through her that he makes it known and understood to us. Know that he who believes and conforms his works to this faith will be saved, and he who does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16). In a certain way it can be said that the whole faith is contained in the Creed, inasmuch as everything comes back to it. And that is why it is said that by reciting it with devotion and attention one makes an act of faith in everything God has taught us.

Try, then, my son, to live an orderly and holy

life, keeping the precepts of God's holy law, fulfilling your duties and doing all the good works you can; and think of that great reward that will be given you. If pains and labors afflict you, bear them with patience and grace. Think of what the apostle St. Paul says: *The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come* (Rom. 8:18). That glory is infinite and eternal, and the labors of this life, however painful, soon end; afterwards soul and body will be delighted with the eternal sweetness of glory. So even if you know or hear that others do not believe these truths, do not follow them. For a day will come when, to their sorrow, they will find that what they will not believe now is just as we are taught. To finish and conclude, I will tell you what we read in chapter 5 of the book of Wisdom, which I mentioned to you elsewhere:

"*Then* (on the day of the last judgment) *shall the just stand with great constancy against those that have afflicted them, and taken away their labours. These seeing it, shall be troubled with terrible fear, and shall be amazed at the suddenness of their unexpected salvation* (or glory), *saying within themselves, repenting* (well, but late and to no purpose), *and groaning for anguish of spirit: These are they, whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach. We fools esteemed their life madness, and their end without honour. Behold how they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints. Therefore we have erred from the way of truth… We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity… What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow… Such things as these the sinners said in hell*" (Wis. 5:1–8, 14).

Q. What is the twelfth article of the Creed?

A. Life everlasting. Amen.

Q. What does "life everlasting" mean?

A. That there is another life, which will never end, where the good will be rewarded and the wicked punished.

Q. What more do these words signify?

A. That the soul will never die.

Q. How many gods are there?

A. Only one true God.

Q. Who is God?

A. God is the Lord, infinitely good, wise and powerful, a most pure and most perfect spirit, immense, eternal, the beginning and end of all things, who rewards the good with the glory of heaven and punishes the wicked with the eternal pains of hell.

Q. What does “God is the Lord” mean?

A. That God is the sovereign Master of all things because he created them, and that he himself preserves and governs them.

Q. What does “infinitely good” mean?

A. That he is supreme goodness and does good to all his creatures.

Q. What does “infinitely wise” mean?

A. That he knows all things and has ordered all things wisely *in measure, and number, and weight* \[Wis. 11:21\].

Q. What does “infinitely powerful” mean?

A. That he can do all things, and nothing is impossible to his will.

Q. What does “God is a spirit” mean?

A. That he has no body and cannot be seen or touched.

Q. What do “most pure and most perfect” mean?

A. That he is so pure and perfect that he could not be more so.

Q. What does “immense” mean?

A. That he has no limits in any of his perfections.

Q. What does “eternal” mean?

A. That he always has been, is and will be.

Q. What does “the beginning of all things” mean?

A. That he brought them all out of nothing.

Q. What does “the end of all things” mean?

A. That he directs them all to his greater honor and glory.

Q. Where is God?

A. In heaven, on earth and in every place.

Q. In how many ways is God in every place?

A. In three: by essence, presence and power.

Q. What does it mean to be in every place by essence?

A. That he gives and preserves being in all things.

Q. What does “by presence” mean?

A. That he has all things present to him, even the most hidden thoughts and desires.

Q. What does “by power” mean?

A. That he can make and unmake all things.

Q. If God is in every place, why do we not see him?

A. Because he is a spirit.

Q. Does God see us?

A. Yes. That is why we must keep from sinning and strive to do good works, knowing that the Lord who is to reward or punish us is watching us continually.

Q. Who is the most holy Trinity?

A. It is God himself, one in essence and three in persons.

Q. What are the persons of the most holy Trinity called?

A. Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Q. Is the Father God?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the Son God?

A. Yes.

Q. Is the Holy Ghost God?

A. Yes.

Q. Are they three Gods?

A. No. Although the persons are three and distinct from one another, they have only one divine nature.

Q. Which of the three persons is holier, more perfect and older?

A. None surpasses the others. All three are equal in every kind of perfection.

Q. Which of the three divine persons became incarnate, or was made man?

A. The second, who is the Son.

Q. Did the Father and the Holy Ghost become incarnate?

A. No.

Q. What did the Son of God do to become man?

A. He took a human body and soul like ours in the most pure and virginal womb of most holy Mary, by the work of the Holy Ghost.

Q. What is the Son of God made man called?

A. Jesus, which means Savior, and Christ, which means anointed.

Q. With what was Christ anointed?

A. With the fullness of the grace of the Holy Ghost.

Q. How was he anointed?

A. As King, Priest and Prophet, above all kings, priests and prophets.

Q. How many natures are there in Christ?

A. Two, divine and human.

Q. How many persons?

A. One, and that divine.

Q. How many intellects?

A. Two, divine and human.

Q. How many wills?

A. Two, divine and human.

Q. How many memories?

A. One, and that human, because as God he has all things present.

Q. Who suffered passion and death for us?

A. Jesus Christ, on the holy tree of the cross.

Q. What torments chiefly did Jesus Christ suffer in his most holy passion?

A. He was scourged, crowned with thorns, nailed to a cross, and he died on it.

Q. Why did he suffer those torments?

A. To save and redeem us sinners.

Q. What does “to save us” mean?

A. To give us his friendship and grace in this life and eternal glory in the next.

Q. What does “to redeem us” mean?

A. To bring us out of slavery to the devil and to sin.

Q. Did Jesus Christ suffer as God or as man?

A. As man, because as God he cannot suffer.

Q. Since Jesus Christ is God and man, would not anything he did have been enough to redeem and save us?

A. Yes, certainly.

Q. Why, then, did he choose to suffer so many pains and humiliations, even to the death of the cross?

A. To show us his love, and to teach us the virtues we must practice and the horror we must have of sin.

Q. Where is Christ?

A. As God, in every place; and as God and man, in heaven and in the most holy Sacrament of the altar.

Q. What does God command men?

A. He commands them to do good works and to refrain from doing evil ones.

Q. Is man free to do good and evil?

A. He is entirely free. That is why he deserves reward if he does good and punishment if he does evil.

Q. Who are the good whom God rewards with the glory of heaven?

A. Those who live and die in the grace of God.

Q. What is the glory of heaven?

A. It is a most perfect place or state in which the just see and enjoy God and possess all goods and joys, with no mixture of any evil, for all eternity.

Q. Do those who die in the grace of God go to heaven at once?

A. If they have fully satisfied for their sins, yes.

Q. Where do those go who have not fully satisfied for their sins in this life, but die in the grace of God?

A. To purgatory.

Q. What pains do the souls in purgatory suffer?

A. Two: the pain of loss and the pain of sense.

Q. What is the pain of loss?

A. Being deprived of the sight of God.

Q. What is the pain of sense?

A. The torment of the fire that burns them.

Q. Can we relieve the souls in purgatory in their pains?

A. Yes, by applying to them indulgences, the suffrage of Masses and other good works.

Q. How long will the souls be in purgatory?

A. Until they have fully satisfied for their sins.

Q. Who are the wicked whom God punishes with hell?

A. All who die in mortal sin.

Q. What is hell?

A. It is a most terrible and dreadful prison, full of fire and occupied by devils, where those who die in mortal sin are tormented according to their guilt.

Q. What pains do the damned suffer in hell?

A. Two: the pain of loss and the pain of sense.

Q. How do the pains of hell differ from those of purgatory?

A. In that those of hell will last eternally, and those of purgatory will end when the souls have fully satisfied for their sins.

Q. Where do children go who die without Baptism?

A. To limbo, where they cannot see God.

Q. Why do you believe these truths?

A. Because God, who is infallible truth, has revealed them.

Q. How do you know that God has revealed them?

A. Because our mother the Church, ruled and governed by the Holy Ghost, teaches us so.

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[1] Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy* III, prose 2: *status bonorum omnium congregatione perfectus* \[a state made perfect by the gathering together of all goods\].

[2] cf. St. Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, Suppl. q. 96.

Part Two. The Doctrine of Hope

Lesson 1. The Prayer of the Our Father



Plate XX. The prayer of the Our Father. Jesus Christ teaching the prayer of the Our Father. The Eternal Father. 1. The five parts of the world. 2. Those who seek the kingdom of God and his will. 3. Jesus in the garden, saying: "Thy will be done, not mine." 4. These ask for bread. 5. These forgive one another and ask God's forgiveness. 6. They ask God not to let them fall into temptation. 7. They ask to be delivered from all evil.

Up to now, my son, I have explained to you the plates of the Creed and what you must chiefly believe in order to be saved. Now we shall go on to explain what you must hope for, and how you are to ask it of God our Lord, that is, what prayers you are to address to him to obtain it. That is the subject of this part of the Catechism, which covers the doctrine concerning *Hope*.

But before all else you must know, my son, that prayer is the means God our Lord has given us to obtain all graces and be delivered from all evils. Do not forget, then, that one cannot reap without first sowing, nor live without eating. So God wills that, to obtain his graces and live in his grace, we should pray or ask him. In the ordinary course of his providence this is so indispensable that whoever does not pray will obtain nothing and will infallibly be lost, just as one who would not sow would gather nothing, and one who would not eat

would die. Prayer is the food of the soul. For this reason Jesus Christ speaks so often of prayer in the holy Gospel, saying *that we ought always to pray, and not to faint* (Luke 18:1), that is, never to give up. And not content with urging us to it by words, he went on to show us its necessity by deeds, so that he spent much time in this holy and important exercise, giving whole nights to it. Following the example of so holy a Master, the Apostles have done the same, and so have all the Saints and all souls who care about the important and only business of their salvation. Those who have not followed these good examples and have given up praying have been miserably lost, or will be lost beyond remedy. Look at the plate: in its center Jesus Christ is shown teaching the Apostles and disciples the prayer of the Our Father.

This prayer of the Our Father is the best and most excellent form of prayer, because it was dictated and taught by Jesus Christ himself, true God and true man, uncreated wisdom and Son of the eternal Father to whom we pray. What great confidence it should inspire in us! If we needed some favor from the king now, and to obtain it the king's own son dictated the petition to us, teaching us how to ask it, would we not already count it granted? Such, then, is the prayer of the Our Father. It is nothing less than a petition which Jesus Christ himself has dictated to us, for presenting our needs to his eternal Father, King of heaven and earth.

Pay attention, my son, to the words with which we head this petition, *Our Father, who art in heaven*, which are the consoling title we give to God our Lord. Look at the top of the plate, where the eternal Father is surrounded by Seraphim who praise him unceasingly. Reflect that he is the natural Father of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, wishing to be our brother by becoming man for us, also wishes us to have as our adoptive Father the one who is his natural Father, and to call him Father as he does. And so great is the love this good Father has for us that he wants us

to be his children. We owe this benefit to Jesus Christ and his law of grace. In the Old Testament God was always called Lord, but now he wants us to call him *Our Father*. And so he is in fact, taking such care of us that not one hair of our head will fall without his disposing it (Luke 21:18). Let us therefore give ourselves wholly to his holy will, since he alone knows what is good for us. A natural father who loves his son does for him everything he can and knows to be useful to him; if he does not, it is because he does not know it or cannot do it. So, knowing that God loves us more than all fathers and mothers love their children, that he knows all that is good for us and can do all that he knows, can we ever fear or doubt that whatever happens to us is for our good? What happiness is ours! What great good fortune has fallen to us! Let us ask him, then, with all confidence to grant us whatever is useful to us. That is just what he wants and expects of us in order to grant us his graces.

Having given these general ideas, I am going to explain the plate to you part by part, together with the seven petitions, the seven things we ask of God in the Our Father. Do you see that globe (no. 1) with the holy cross on top? Do you see those figures around it? They show that in all five parts of the world there are people who know and praise God our Lord. Here, then, is what we ask in this first petition, *hallowed be thy name*: that throughout the world it may always be blessed and praised, and that the providence by which he orders all things may be revered. Would you like a rule for knowing whether you love God? See whether you are glad to see him loved and grieved that he is offended and blasphemed, and whether you try to praise him and to prevent and correct the offenses committed against him. You especially, my son, should praise him, because he greatly delights in the praises of children. And if you hear any blasphemy against his name, try to make amends for it, even if only by raising your heart to him and saying: "Praised be God, Jesus Christ! Hail Mary most pure!"

The second petition is *thy kingdom come*. Do you see at no. 2 those people carrying a light in their hand? They represent those who seek God and his kingdom in the midst of the darkness of this world, following the command of Jesus Christ, who said: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God* (Matt. 6:33). They also signify the good works by which truly Christian souls try to shine, and so the heavenly Father is glorified, as Jesus Christ himself says (Matt. 5:16). Living an orderly and holy life, they happily reach the gates of the kingdom

of heaven. Meanwhile God our Lord already reigns in their hearts by grace, the passions of the flesh, the world and the devil having been driven out. That is what you must ask in this petition.

The third is *thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Look at no. 3 of the plate. It represents Jesus Christ in the garden of Gethsemani. In the midst of anguish and pain he asks his heavenly Father, if it is possible, to spare him from drinking the chalice of passion and death being prepared for him. And yet he says: *Not my will, but thine be done* (Luke 22:42). Here is what we ask of God our Lord in those words: the grace to do his will in all things and in every way here on earth, as the Angels and Saints do it in heaven, even in things most repugnant to nature, and if need be even to suffer death, as Jesus Christ our Lord did. Death rather than sin! Let us always aspire to perfection and sanctification by keeping all the commandments of God and the Church entirely, and what our state of life requires. For *this is the will of God, your sanctification*, as St. Paul says (1 Thess. 4:3).

The fourth petition is *give us this day our daily bread*. Look at no. 4 of the plate. Those you see there ask the heavenly Father for bread like poor little ones, like children, and this good Father gives it to them abundantly. You must know that there are three kinds of bread: bodily bread, which is everything that has to do with sustaining the body; the bread of the divine word; and the eucharistic bread. Those ears of wheat and bunches of grapes you see in the plate under the same no. 4 signify bodily bread. The open book, which is holy Scripture, signifies the bread of the divine word. And the chalice with the host signifies the eucharistic bread. Ask God that you may receive them all to the profit of your soul.

The fifth petition is *forgive us our trespasses*[1] *as we forgive those who trespass against us*. Look at no. 5 at those two shaking hands. They had quarreled; they did not speak to or look at each other; but now they forgive each other. These who are kneeling pray for their enemies. They ask God to forgive them as they forgive with all their heart all who have offended and wronged them, and they wish to return good for evil and be their friends. Here is what you must do, my son: bear ill will to no one and forgive everyone. Otherwise God would not forgive you (Matt. 6:15).

The sixth petition is *lead us not into temptation*.[2] Look, my son, at no. 6 of the plate. Those two kneeling pray and beg God to keep them from falling into the temptation of the enemies of the soul, which are the world, the devil and the flesh. Do you see them there? That globe signifies the world; that ugly one is the devil; and the one shooting arrows of impure love and evil thoughts is the flesh. Behind them stands death. This means that if one consents to their temptations, the soul is left dead. I said *if one consents*, because if on the contrary one resists them, instead of losing one will gain greater merit; for it is by conquering that one merits the crown and the reward of eternal glory.

The seventh petition is *but deliver us from evil. Amen.* In this petition we ask God to deliver us from all evils of soul and body. Those of the soul are sin and the dangers and occasions of falling into it. Those of the body are famine, wars, plague, earthquakes, scarcity and others. From these last we must ask God to deliver us if it is good for us in order to serve him and grow holy, and for his glory. But from the first, since they are true evils, we must beg him to deliver us absolutely. Let us do on our part all that is within our reach, and let us not doubt that God will do the rest. So we see at no. 7, where the Guardian Angel is driving off the enemies, who are those down below, and those who pray are left free. The word *Amen* is a Hebrew word. In the Creed and other acts of faith it means “so I believe”, as I told you; but in the Our Father and other prayers it means “so be it”, or “so I desire”, or “so I hope”. You see, my son, how wonderful the prayer of the Our Father is. In it we ask God for heavenly, spiritual and bodily goods, and we beg him to deliver us from three evils: past, present and future. Past evils are sins. Present evils are the various temptations by which we are driven toward sin. Future evils are the punishments due for sins, whether temporal or eternal. With this prayer we seek the glory of God, our own good and our neighbor’s. Let us say it often, then, with devotion and confidence. And let us think that God will not refuse what we ask him, and will grant so well-devised a petition favorably.

Q. What is hope?

A. A supernatural virtue, infused by God into the soul, by which we hope for the glory of heaven through God's help, the merits of Jesus Christ and our good works.

Q. When do we especially exercise hope?

A. When we pray.

Q. What is it to pray?

A. It is to raise the soul to God and ask him for favors.

Q. How many kinds of prayer are there?

A. Two: mental and vocal.

Q. What is mental prayer?

A. It is prayer made by exercising the three powers of the soul, without using words.

Q. What is vocal prayer?

A. It is prayer made with words that come from the heart.

Q. How must we pray?

A. With faith, attention, humility, confidence and perseverance.

Q. What are the chief vocal prayers?

A. The Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Hail Holy Queen.

Q. Say the Our Father.

A. Our Father, etc. (see the First Catechism above).

Q. Who made the prayer of the Our Father?

A. Christ our Lord.

Q. Why did he make it?

A. To teach us to pray.

Q. When you say the Our Father, with whom are you speaking?

A. With God our Lord.

Q. What do we ask of God in the prayer of the Our Father?

A. Everything we need, for the body as well as for the soul.

Q. How many petitions has the Our Father?

A. Seven.

Q. Are these words, *Our Father, who art in heaven,* a petition?

A. No. They are a greeting we make to the Lord with humility and confidence.

Q. Why do we call him Father?

A. Because he is so, since from him we have received the being and the grace we have.

Q. Why do we say *our*?

A. So that, being brothers, we may love one another and pray for all.

Q. Why do we say *who art in heaven*, since he is in every place?

A. Because heaven is where he shows himself most particularly.

Q. What is the first petition?

A. Hallowed be thy name.

Q. What do we ask of God in that petition?

A. That he may be known, loved and praised by all.

Q. What is the second petition?

A. Thy kingdom come.

Q. What do we ask of God in that petition?

A. That he may reign in us here on earth by grace, and afterwards give us the eternal glory of heaven.

Q. What is the third petition?

A. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Q. What do we ask of God in that petition?

A. That he may be obeyed by all the inhabitants of the earth as he is by the blessed in heaven.

Q. What is the fourth petition?

A. Give us this day our daily bread.

Q. What do we ask of God in that petition?

A. Sustenance for body and soul.

Q. To sustain our body, do we not need other things besides bread?

A. Yes. But since bread is the chief food, in it we ask for all the rest.

Q. With the word *bread*, what do we ask for the soul?

A. We ask for the grace to persevere in living well, the bread of the divine word, the eucharistic Bread and the other Sacraments.

Q. What is the fifth petition?

A. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Q. What do we ask of God in that petition?

A. The forgiveness of our sins and of the punishments due to them.

Q. Why do we add *as we forgive those who trespass against us*?

A. Because God does not forgive one who does not forgive his neighbor.

Q. What is the sixth petition?

A. Lead us not into temptation.

Q. What do we ask of God in that petition?

A. That he may not allow us to consent to the temptations of the enemies of our soul.

Q. What is the seventh petition?

A. But deliver us from evil.

Q. What do we ask of God in that petition?

A. That he may deliver us from all evils and dangers, spiritual and bodily.

Q. What does the word *Amen* mean?

A. So be it, or may God grant it to us.

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[1] *deudas… deudores.*

[2] *no nos dejes caer en la tentación.*

Lesson 2. The Prayer of the Hail Mary



Plate XXI. The Hail Mary. 1. The Annunciation. 2. The Visitation. 3. The most holy Virgin praying to God for us. 4. The Church militant entreating most holy Mary. 5. That she may pray at the hour of death, in which that sick man finds himself. 6. Hope and confidence in Mary.

You will have noticed already, my son, that it is the general custom to say the Hail Mary after the Our Father. This shows the great confidence the faithful have always had in the intercession of the most holy Virgin, to obtain more easily from God, through her mediation and merits, what they have asked in the Our Father. In

this they imitate those who, seeking some favor from the king, try to have the queen present the petition to him. You saw in the last lesson that the prayer of the Our Father is in fact a petition dictated by Jesus Christ, which we present to the eternal Father, King of heaven and earth. Well then, to obtain more easily what we ask in it, we make use of the mediation of the most holy Virgin or of some Saint, placing that petition in their hands for the purpose. So you must understand that when we say an Our Father to St. Joseph, for example, or to our Patrons or another Saint, we do not say "St. Joseph, St. Anthony, who art in heaven, hallowed be…" That is, we do not say the Our Father *to* them or speak with them. While we address ourselves to God, we ask the Saints by intention and affection to present our prayers to him, so as to obtain by their intercession the graces we desire. "The intercession of the Saints is useful," says the holy Council of Trent.[1] And St. Thomas affirms that we must ask them to pray for us, since the order of the divine law requires that we mortals obtain through their mediation the graces we need to be saved (*In IV Sent.* d. 45, q. 3, a. 2). If this is true of the Saints, of how much greater worth will be the intercession of the most holy Virgin, whose prayers can do more than those of all the Saints together? It is true that we have an advocate with God the Father, Jesus Christ, who is always interceding for us, as St. John affirms (1 John 2:1). This advocate is not only most powerful to obtain for us from the heavenly Father all the graces we need; he can also grant them to us himself. But it is also true that he wants us to make use of the intercession of the Saints, and above all of the most pure Virgin. In her honor he has determined that graces should pass through her hands, the hands of his most holy and dearly esteemed Mother, as St. Bernard affirms in these words: "Such is the will of God, who willed that we should have everything through Mary" (*Sic est voluntas ejus, qui totum nos habere voluit per Mariam*). Pharao said to those who asked him for food: *Go to Joseph* (*Ite ad Joseph*) (Gen. 41:55), because all the treasures of Egypt were entrusted to him. So in a certain sense the eternal Father and Jesus Christ seem to say to us too, when we come to them for some grace: "Go to Mary, because to her we have entrusted all the treasures of mercy. She is full of grace, so that all of you may receive of her fullness." So, my son, we must go to Mary if we want to obtain graces. And since the graces the faithful have received from her in all ages are so many and so great, they have honored her under different titles and in different images: of the Conception, of Carmel, of the Rosary, of Montserrat, of Atocha, and so on. But you must understand that the faithful do not believe by this that there are many Mothers of God, or that the Virgin Mary is multiplied. No: the Mother of God is one, the Virgin Mary. As there is only one God and one Jesus Christ, so there is only one Mother of Jesus; and since he is God, his Mother is, and is called, Mother of God. She is honored under various titles because her various excellences, and the graces or special favors she has granted us, give occasion for it. So, so that you may place in her

your confidence and be truly devoted to her, I am going to explain to you that plate of the Hail Mary.

First of all, my son, you must know that the Hail Mary is the most reverent and honorable prayer, and the one by which we can most oblige the most holy Virgin. It is a wholly divine and heavenly prayer. The Our Father was dictated and said for the first time by Jesus Christ, the second person of the most blessed Trinity. The Hail Mary, we may say, was dictated by the third, the Holy Ghost, and said for the first time by St. Gabriel, St. Elizabeth and our mother the Church, inspired by the same divine Spirit. I told you on another occasion that the Incarnation of the Son of God was the work of the Holy Ghost. Look at the plate, and at no. 1 you will see the archangel St. Gabriel shown in the act of bringing the message to the most holy Virgin. As minister of the divine Spirit, who is shown there in the form of a dove, he says to her these wonderful words: *Hail* (Mary), *full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women* (Luke 1:28). No. 2 shows the most pure Virgin at the time when, bearing her Son in her womb, she went to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth. Elizabeth, inspired by the same Holy Ghost, said to her: *Blessed is the fruit of thy womb* (Luke 1:42); and to these words the Church added *Jesus*. The words *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen. Jesus* were also dictated and added by the Catholic Church, ruled and governed by the same Holy Ghost. She did so when gathered in the holy Council of Ephesus to root out the errors of Nestorius, who had the audacity to blaspheme the most holy Virgin, disputing her glorious

title of Mother of God. Most jealous for Mary's honor, inspired by the divine Spirit, the Church burst out in these words, as honorable to her as they are consoling to us: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death.*

Notice, my son, at no. 3, the most holy Virgin kneeling before the most blessed Trinity, as Daughter of God the Father, Mother of God the Son and Spouse of God the Holy Ghost. Like another Esther at the feet of the divine Assuerus, she is praying for her people. And because of the great love the three divine Persons have for her, they grant us all graces through her mediation. The figures at no. 4 represent us faithful who make up the Church militant. We ask the most holy Virgin to pray to God for us now (and you see that she does so in fact) and also at the hour of our death. The figure at no. 5 is of a dying man, whom the priest attending him urges to place his confidence in Mary, sure that he will obtain a good death. That rosary at no. 6, from which an anchor hangs, reminds us of the hope and confidence we must place in Mary. It tells us that by means of the most holy Rosary we shall be delivered from the storms of this world and reach happily the harbor of eternal salvation at the hour of death. Nor is it surprising that so many graces are obtained through the Rosary, since, as Alan de la Roche affirms, after holy Mass it is the holiest, greatest and most pleasing devotion. You know already that the whole Rosary has three parts, and in each of them five mysteries are remembered: joyful in one, sorrowful in another, and finally glorious. Each mystery is followed by an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a *Gloria Patri*.[2] So you need not wonder that it is so powerful a prayer, since it is made up of the holiest and most sacred things in the Catholic religion.

So, my son, you must try to say every day at least one part of the most holy Rosary, with all attention and devotion, without dozing, wandering or doing anything unfitting, thinking instead of the mysteries you set out to meditate or of the Our Fathers and Hail Marys you are saying. Also, every day when you get up, try to say three Hail Marys to the most holy Virgin, and the same when you go to bed, always asking her for the three virtues of humility, chastity and charity. I advise you to say a Hail Mary to her too whenever you hear the clock strike the hours. Try as well to carry with you a rosary, scapular or medal of the most holy Virgin, by which you will gain many indulgences.[3] Venerate it as your spiritual Mother when you go to bed and when you get up, imitating in this well-brought-up children who on certain occasions kiss their natural mother's hand. If some temptation assails you at night, call on Mary at once and venerate her image. I assure you that if you are constant in calling on her and resisting the temptation, she will infallibly help you and you will not sin. For this purpose try to have some image of this good Mother in your room, and greet her when you go in and out, doing so often with the Hail Mary. Remember that she is very courteous. That is why St. Thomas of Villanova says that, as a well-bred person returns a greeting, Mary does the same with those who greet her. Say to her, then: "Hail Mary, full of grace," and do not doubt that, even if you do not hear it, she will answer you: "Since through you I am full of grace, I grant you graces, and abundantly, from my fullness…" What a happy lot is ours! And since this greeting is angelic, greet her as the Angels do. Unite yourself with them; live like them; be chaste like them, humble, devout and fervent like them. Commend yourself to them every day, to your Guardian especially, that he may keep you from all evil and obtain for you the grace of knowing how to serve Mary, as he serves her because she is his Queen and ours too.

Q. Why after the prayer of the Our Father do we say the Hail Mary?

A. So that most holy Mary may obtain for us what we have asked in the prayer of the Our Father.

Q. Who is most holy Mary?

A. She is a great Lady, conceived without original sin, full of grace and virtues, Virgin and Mother of God, Queen of heaven and earth, and advocate of sinners.

Q. Where is most holy Mary, the Mother of God?

A. In heaven, in body and soul.

Q. What, then, is the one in the church and in other places?

A. It is her image, which represents to us the one in heaven.

Q. How many Mothers of God are there?

A. One, and no more.

Q. Why, then, do we say Mother of God, or Virgin, of Carmel, of the Rosary, of Sorrows, and others?

A. It is because of the various titles and mysteries under which she is honored. But the Mother of God is only one; for as there is only one God, so there is only one Mother of God.

Q. Is it good to be devoted to most holy Mary?

A. It is a very good thing and a sign of predestination.

Q. In what does true devotion to most holy Mary consist?

A. In refraining from all sin, imitating her virtues, paying her some acts of homage, frequenting the holy Sacraments, and doing well, gladly and perseveringly, the prayers and other things of her service.

Q. Say the prayer of the Hail Mary.

A. Hail Mary, etc. (see the First Catechism above).

Q. Of what words is the prayer of the Hail Mary made up?

A. Of the words of the archangel St. Gabriel, those of St. Elizabeth, and those our mother the Church added.

Q. What words did the archangel St. Gabriel say?

A. These: *Hail* (Mary), *full of grace; the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women.*

Q. When did he say them?

A. When he brought most holy Mary the message that she was to be the Mother of the Son of God.

Q. What words did St. Elizabeth say?

A. These: *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.*

Q. When did she say them?

A. When most holy Mary visited her, bearing the Son of God in her womb.

Q. What words did the Church say?

A. These: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen.*

Q. When did she say them?

A. When she condemned the heresies of Nestorius at the Council of Ephesus.

Q. What do the Archangel's words *Hail* denote?

A. The deep respect with which he greeted Mary; and they teach us how we must do it.

Q. What does the name Mary mean?

A. Lady, and star of the sea.

Q. What do the words *full of grace* signify?

A. The abundance of graces with which the most holy Trinity had prepared her to be Mother of God.

Q. What do these words teach us: *the Lord is with thee*?

A. That most holy Mary is in a special way the temple and tabernacle of the most holy Trinity.

Q. What do these words signify: *blessed art thou among women*?

A. That no woman has the graces of most holy Mary.

Q. What are these words: *blessed is the fruit of thy womb*?

A. They are a praise of Jesus which redounds to the praise of his Mother, as good fruit does to the tree that bears it.

Q. Why do we say to her: *Holy Mary, Mother of God*?

A. To remind her that we venerate her as the true Mother of God and our Mother.

Q. And why do we say to her: *pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death*?

A. Because we trust that she will obtain from God and grant us the graces we continually need, and above all at the moment of death, on which eternity depends.

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[1] Council of Trent, Session XXV, decree on the invocation of the saints (1563).

[2] *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 19–21.

[3] *Indulgentiarum Doctrina*, 1967.

Lesson 3. The Prayer of the Salve Regina



Plate XXII. The Salve. Mary, Queen and Mother. 1. The book of the Salve. 2. The dove with an olive branch. 3. The tree of life. 4. The leafy vine. 5. The anchor of hope. 6. Our first parents Adam and Eve. 7. These are in great trials. 8. They present petitions through the hands of Mary, advocate; eyes of pity and clemency. 9. Thorns, crosses and death. 10. Crowns and scepter. 11. Rosaries and scapulars. 12. The beehive.

Dear son in Jesus Christ, I have just explained the Hail Mary to you and shown you the origin and excellence of this prayer. Now I am going to speak to you more at length about the most holy Virgin in explaining the *Salve*. But first I must point out that Mary is not only the Mother of God but our Mother too. For her own natural Son, Jesus Christ, entrusted her to us and gave her to us as if by will, before he breathed his last on the cross (John 19:26–27), so that she might be our adoptive Mother. On these titles rest her excellence and the confidence we must have in her.

To be Mother of God she was conceived without sin and adorned with all the graces, privileges and excellences a mere creature can possibly have. That is why the Evangelists give her the greatest praise that can be given a mere creature simply by calling her Mother of God. As our adoptive Mother, the love she bears us is so great that if it were possible to gather together the love of all fathers for their children, of all husbands for their wives, and of all men and women Saints for those devoted to them, we should see that it comes nowhere near the love the most holy Virgin bears each one of us. And since, as is well known, to love is to wish well, we can infer from this how much she will care for our happiness and how many graces she will grant us. For Mary, unlike natural mothers, who cannot always do for their children all they would like, lacks neither the will nor the power.

The faithful are deeply moved by this tender love of the most pure Virgin, and they know from the daily and special graces with which she favors them everywhere how great her power is. So their devotion to her is very great. And so they have taken care, and still take care, to dedicate images and altars in her honor under various titles and scenes of her life. So that you may have true respect and veneration for them, I will speak to you a little about these images of Mary which the faithful place in churches, in houses and in public places, and before which they burn lamps and which they venerate. I wish everyone would imitate this praiseworthy custom, or at least have a picture of this good Lady in the most public or principal place in the house, and also in the place where they usually say their devotions. When we see a portrait of a general or some famous man, at once some of his victories and exploits come to mind. In the same way we recall the perfections and virtues of the most holy Virgin and the Saints when we look at their images or pictures. Here it will be very much to the point to tell you what the holy Council of Trent laid down on this subject in Session 25: "The images of Christ, of the Virgin Mother of God, and of the other Saints are to be had and kept, especially in churches, and due honor and veneration are to be given them. This is not because any divinity or power is believed to be in them for which they are to be venerated, or because anything is to be asked of them, or confidence placed in them, as was done of old by the gentiles, who placed their hope in

idols. It is because the honor shown them is referred to the originals they represent, so that through the images we kiss, and before which we uncover our heads and bow down, we adore Christ and venerate the Saints whom they represent".

The same holy Council, and St. Thomas too, also teaches that the veneration of sacred images bears much fruit. They remind us of the wonders God has worked through the Saints and of how the Saints practiced virtue, and at the same time they teach us what we must do to be like them. Given our human condition, we need these sensible things. Our soul is in the body as in a dark prison, which can perceive almost nothing except through the windows of the senses. That is why we must use material images to form some idea of spiritual and absent things and to remember them. And for the same reason the faithful, so as not to forget the most holy Virgin, have built so many churches and dedicated so many images in her honor.

Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, as Jesus Christ teaches us (Matt. 12:34). So the faithful who love Mary show her their heartfelt love not only with the angelic words of the Hail Mary but also with other prayers and forms they have composed to satisfy their desire to praise and venerate her. One of them is the *Salve Regina*. It was composed by a monk of St. Benedict, represented by the one in the plate seated below Mary, to whom he was very devoted. This divine Virgin granted him great wisdom. Grateful for so signal a favor, he honored her with this prayer, which the Catholic Church has adopted to praise the sovereign Queen of heaven and earth every day, even in the divine office.

I now go on to explain to you the emblems and symbols of the plate and the words of praise of Mary contained in the *Salve*. You see, my son, that this image of Mary holds Jesus in her arms, and this shows plainly that she is Mother of God. She also bears a scepter and crown, to signify that she is Queen of heaven and earth. As such that monk, her devotee, greets her, and so in the book on his table (no. 1) one reads: *Salve Regina*, "Hail, holy Queen".

Mother of mercy. Do you notice up there at the very top that dove (no. 2) carrying an olive branch in its beak? It is a figure of Mary. After the flood a dove showed by this sign that the waters had gone down (Gen. 8:11). So too Mary brings us the branch of her divine Son, to show us plainly that some of the punishments the Lord used to send upon the earth in ancient times have now abated and been withdrawn. The branch is of olive because the olive is a symbol of peace. It points to the peace made between God and men by virtue of the Redemption and through the intercession of Mary, who takes pity on our miseries. For this reason we call her *Mother of mercy*.

Our life. This is the meaning of that tree (no. 3). It represents the tree of paradise, whose fruit made those who ate it immortal, and it is a most expressive figure of Mary. Those who have the happiness of eating or receiving, with due disposition, Jesus Christ, the blessed fruit of her womb, in holy Communion will not die eternally, as the holy Gospel teaches us (John 6:51). She is also *Life* because she obtains grace for sinners, perseverance for the just and relief for the souls in purgatory.

Our sweetness. Look at that winepress (no. 4). From a leafy vine of good stock come clusters which, pressed in the press, give a generous wine. Besides being a smooth and sweet drink, it strengthens and gladdens the heart. So too Mary, as an abundant vine, *vitis abundans* \[a plentiful vine\] (Ps. 127:3), brought forth for us Jesus, who is the cluster, *botrus Cypri* \[a cluster of cypress, Cant. 1:13\]. Pressed in the press of his passion and death, he gives us, through the mediation of his divine Mother, a wine of grace and devotion, the most strengthening of all.

And our hope. At no. 5 of the plate you will see an anchor, which represents the hope we must have in Mary. Perhaps you have heard already that all ships carry anchors so as not to be lost. They cast them into the water when they are caught in a storm, hoping in this way to avoid shipwreck. Well, each of us is a ship tossing on the stormy sea of this world. So if we do not want to sink or be dashed to pieces, we must always carry the sacred anchor of devotion to Mary. If we make use of it in the storms our passions stir up, we shall be saved without doubt. And if we hope as we ought, it is most certain that our hopes will not be disappointed.

To thee do we cry, poor banished children of Eve. Do you notice at no. 6 Adam and Eve, with the child Eve holds in her lap? It signifies the human race, which inherited miseries and tribulations from its first parents; and that is why it asks Mary to shelter it.

To thee do we send up our sighs, mourning and weeping in this valley of tears. Of all the names given to the world, none fits it better than “valley of tears”, for so it is in fact. Besides the general calamities, consider the particular ones of each kingdom, province and city, and go down to each family and individual. We shall find so many reverses of fortune, misfortunes, illnesses, deaths and so on that one evil follows hard on another, and for every pleasure there are a thousand griefs that make us shed abundant tears. So, since we cannot escape one or another of them, we have no recourse left but to call on Mary, mother of mercy, sure that she will protect us in our needs, if it is good for us. If we do so, like those at no. 7, who are in great trials, we shall without doubt be helped, for we know that Mary is the consoler of all the afflicted who cry and sigh to her from the heart.

Turn then, most gracious advocate. Mary is our advocate, who intercedes for us with her Son who is to judge us. So we must present our petitions to her for her to recommend them, as you see this man at no. 8 doing. But do not forget that Mary will refuse to be our advocate if we do not try to imitate her virtues and lead a life in keeping with God’s holy law. For he who by his evil works renews the pains of her Son’s passion, which caused her so many sorrows, can in no way hope for the Mother’s protection.

Thine eyes of mercy toward us. This is what that eye of pity and clemency at no. 8 signifies. If we have the happy lot of being looked upon by Mary, she will undoubtedly help us, because she never abandons those who call on her from the heart. Let us try, then, to set our tribulations before her with fervor and humility; she will look on us with favorable eyes.

And after this our exile, show unto us the blessed fruit of thy womb, Jesus. This crown of thorns at no. 9 signifies our exile in this world because of our first parents’ sin, since which the earth brings forth thorns. The two crosses signify the pains of body and soul that are so common, and the skull death, which we must infallibly suffer. But after death Jesus Christ is to judge us. That is why we beg Mary to show us her Son, the fruit of her womb, or to accompany us into his presence. Seeing that it is his Mother who pleads and intercedes for us, he will heed her, and the sentence he pronounces will be favorable.

O clement! We give this title to Mary with every right, because it is she who tempers the rigor of divine justice, so that the clemency of this exalted Queen causes us to be judged with indulgence. Her clemency is so great that it surpasses beyond comparison that of all the emperors, kings and princes there have been and will be. This is what those crowns and scepters at no. 10 show, turned upside down to indicate that they have been surpassed by Mary.

O loving! This title too is one of Mary's most honorable, for she stood out among all creatures for her piety. The rosary and other devotional things you notice at no. 11 remind us that we must imitate her in this virtue of piety to deserve her love and protection.

O sweet Virgin Mary! Finally, with these words we call upon the exalted Queen of heaven and earth, because she is sweetness and tenderness itself, and because she was the most chaste and pure of all creatures. Not without reason has that beehive, no. 12, been placed beneath her feet. Bees are a symbol of virginity, because they busy themselves only with drawing honey from flowers. All this is applied to the most holy Virgin. From the lovely and fragrant flowers of her virtues she formed a most sweet honeycomb, in which her perfection shone and was admired, and by it she deserved to be Mother of the Son of God. And since this privilege is the greatest that can fall to a creature, we call upon her by this glorious title to interest her more and more in what we ask of her. We end the *Salve* with these words: *Pray for us, O holy Mother of God, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.* That is, that after she has obtained for us from her beloved Son Jesus Christ his friendship and grace in life, we may have a good death, so that in heavenly glory we may praise the Son and the Mother eternally.

All that has been said, my son, teaches you how wonderful and powerful the most holy Virgin is. Pay her homage, then, every day. Imitate her virtues of humility, chastity, patience and charity. Frequent the holy Sacraments in her honor. Flee from evil and do all the good you can. As long as you are truly devoted to her, Mary's protection will not fail you in this world, and in the next she will obtain for you the eternal life I wish you. Amen.

Q. Besides the prayer of the Hail Mary, what other prayer do we usually say to most holy Mary?

A. The *Salve*, the Litanies and others.

Q. Say the *Salve* for me.

A. Hail, holy Queen, etc. (see the First Catechism above).

Q. When you say these prayers, with whom are you speaking?

A. With the Virgin Mary, Mother of God and our Mother.

Q. How must you say them?

A. With respect, confidence and love.

Q. Must we pray to the Angels and Saints too?

A. Yes, because they are our immediate mediators.[1]

[1] 1 Tim. 2:5.

Part Three. The Doctrine of Charity

Lesson 1. The Commandments of the Law of God



Plate XXIII. The Commandments of the law of God. Jesus and Moses. 1. Receiving the tables, and the worship of the calf. 2. Death of a blasphemer. 3. Keeping holy the feasts. 4. Tobias. 5. David and Saul. 6. The chaste Joseph. 7. The hanged thief. 8. The chaste Susanna. 9. David looking at Bethsabee. 10. The covetous man.

You have seen already, my son, what every Christian must believe and hope for, and how he must make his prayers. But since this is not enough to obtain eternal life, which I wish you, I am going to explain to you the Commandments of God's holy law. They are all contained in the love of God and of our neighbor, for Jesus Christ said in his holy Gospel: *This is the greatest and the first commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart… and thy neighbour as thyself* (Matt. 22:37–39). After that I will show you the rest concerning the doctrine of Charity.

You know already that God created us for heaven. But while he keeps us on earth he wants us to be just, so that by living an orderly and holy life we may be saved. He also created all things to serve us as means to reach our end better. He gave all of them certain laws, which they keep exactly, as we see in the stars, plants and so on. To us too he gave a law, which he imprinted on our hearts. It is called *natural*, because we receive it with our very nature, and it binds all men in the world in all places and times.

And yet, clear as this natural law is, men swept along by vices and passions almost entirely forgot it in the course of time. To renew it God chose the people of Israel, and made Moses its head or leader. He is the one in the plate with the rod in his hand. On Mount Sinai God gave him the law written on two tables of stone. One of them contained the first three precepts, which concern the glory and honor of God. The other contained the remaining seven, concerning the honor and good of our neighbor. These ten commandments make up what we call the Decalogue, or the written law. When God gave this law, a great crash of thunder was heard, with lightning and flashes, so that all might understand that if they did not keep the commandments God laid on them, they would be punished in this world and the next (Exod. 19:16; 20).

These commandments bind all men now as before. Jesus Christ, who is the one beside Moses with the cross in his hand, said that he had not come into the world to abolish the law but to fulfil and perfect it (Matt. 5:17). And to a young man who asked him what he must do to obtain a happy life in this world and the next, he answered that he should keep the commandments (Matt. 19:17). I say the same to you, my son: keep the commandments, and you will be happy in this life and the next. Ah, if all the world kept them, what great happiness there would be on earth!… For these commandments contain all that must be done to love God and our neighbor. The first three teach us how we must behave toward God with our heart, our mouth and our works. The other seven teach us ways of doing good to our neighbors, and of not harming them in their person, their interests or their honor, by deed, by word or even by desire.

The finger of God wrote these ten commandments on two tables of stone. These tables should serve us as mirrors, in which we may look at ourselves and know whether we have offended God and our neighbor and so stained our soul. In that case we must repent and make a good confession. Then our soul will be left whiter than snow. And in the sight of these mirrors of the tables of God's law we shall adorn it with all the virtues, for the commandments themselves contain them all. I must also tell you, my son, that each of these commandments has two parts, one that commands and one that forbids. By the part that forbids they curb our evil inclinations; by the part that commands they spur us on to do good works.

So, so that you and others may keep and fulfil them exactly, I am going to give you a brief idea of each of them, explaining the plate to you.

Q. What is charity?

A. It is a supernatural virtue infused by God into the soul, by which we love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God.

Q. What is the sign or proof that we have the virtue of charity?

A. It is the keeping of the Commandments.

Q. How many are the Commandments of the law of God?

A. They are ten (see the First Catechism above).

Q. Why are these Commandments called "of the law of God"?

A. Because God gave them to Moses on Mount Sinai, written on two tables of stone.

Q. Has Jesus Christ given a law different from that one?

A. No; he has only declared and confirmed it.

Q. Is it necessary for salvation to keep all the Commandments of the law of God?

A. Yes; all ten must be kept, without leaving out one.

Q. To understand this very important truth better, could you give me a comparison?

A. Yes. Just as one who had to cross a great and swollen river by a bridge of

ten arches would not manage to reach the other side of the river if one of those arches had collapsed, so neither will one reach heaven who leaves one of the ten Commandments unfulfilled, however well he keeps the others.

Q. Is it possible to keep these Commandments?

A. Not only possible but easy, with the help of God, which he always gives if it is asked of him rightly.

Q. What do these Commandments of the law of God do in us?

A. They curb our evil inclinations and spur us on to do good works.

Q. What fruit do they give us?

A. Full blessing, spiritual and temporal, as God has promised.

Q. In what does this blessing consist?

A. In peace of conscience and inward joy, and outwardly in abundance of goods, if it is good for us.

Q. What is the final fruit that comes from keeping the Commandments of the law of God?

A. Eternal life.

Q. How do you know?

A. Because Jesus Christ has said so: *If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments* (Matt. 19:17).

Q. What has God prepared for those who do not keep them?

A. The curse and eternal death.

The first commandment. To understand this commandment, look at the plate. At no. 1 is Moses, receiving the tables of the law on the summit of Mount Sinai. Below are the people, who have made themselves an idol, a golden calf, out of the women's jewels, and worship it as God. As you see, those people are holding feasts in honor of that idol, eating, drinking and dancing noisily. God punished this horrible sin, called idolatry, with the death of twenty-three thousand persons.[1]

In the first commandment God says: *I am the Lord thy God… Thou shalt not have strange gods before me* (Exod. 20:2–3). The first words of this commandment are like a very short preface, in which God reminds us that he is our true and supreme Lord and Master, and that therefore we are obliged to obey him with all diligence. Then, in the other words, he commands us not to acknowledge any other as God. The Hebrews fell into this sin by worshiping the golden calf. Even today the unbelievers who worship creatures instead of the Creator fall into it, as do the superstitious and fatalists who hold the devil as their God.

So, my son, by virtue of this commandment you must adore God, love him with all your heart, and adore none but him. You must flee from vice, because vice in the heart is like an idol or false god on the altar, says St. Augustine (*Vitium in corde idolum est in altari*).

To adore God is to acknowledge him as Creator, Preserver, sovereign Lord, master of all things and the supremely perfect being.

You must adore God, my son, by *faith*, acknowledging him as truth itself; by *hope*, acknowledging him as goodness itself; by *charity*, acknowledging him as the infinite good; and by the virtue of *religion*, giving him the worship due to him. We must exercise these virtues by making acts of them. In particular we are obliged to make acts of faith, hope and charity when we reach the use of reason, when we are tempted, from time to time during life, and at the point of death.

You must also, my son, practice the virtue of religion, whose chief acts are devotion, prayer, adoration, sacrifice, offering and vow.

Flee like death, my son, from the sins opposed to Religion, which are irreligion, superstition and unlawful worship. *Irreligion* is failing in the respect due to persons, things and places consecrated to God. *Superstition* is giving to creatures a worship due to God alone, which is called *idolatry*; or else having recourse to the devil, which is properly called *superstition*. Those who go to the devil usually do so in one of these ways: by magic, divination, sorcery and vain observance. *Unlawful worship* is when God is given a worship different from what is due to him. And I must warn you, my son, that unlawful worship and superstition are tricks Satan uses to corrupt Religion and get people damned by turning them away from God.

By this same commandment, my son, you must honor and venerate most holy Mary, the Angels and Saints, relics and images.

Keep all the commandments, dearly loved son, but especially the first. So you will please God and gain much, and you will be delivered from evils spiritual and bodily, temporal and eternal. Above all you will be delivered from idolatry and ungodliness, which are the cause of a great many evils.

Q. What are we commanded in the first commandment?

A. To adore one God only and serve him perfectly.

Q. How must God be adored?

A. With the greatest reverence of soul and body, with faith, hope, charity and religion.

Q. Since God is a spirit, will not the adoration of the soul be enough?

A. No. Since we have received soul and body from God, we must adore him with both.

Q. What is it to love God above all things?

A. To be willing to lose them all rather than offend him.

Q. Who fulfils the first commandment?

A. He who exercises himself in acts of faith, hope, charity and religion.

Q. When are we obliged to make acts of these virtues?

A. When we reach the use of reason; fairly often during life; when we are tempted; and at the point of death.

Q. Make an act of faith.

A. I believe that the Son of God became man.

Q. Why do you believe it?

A. Because God, who is infallible truth, has revealed it.

Q. Who sins against faith?

A. Unbelievers, Jews, apostates, schismatics and heretics.

Q. What sin does a Christian commit who denies some truth of faith?

A. The sin of heresy.

Q. From what vices do heresies and apostasies arise?

A. Usually from pride and lust.

Q. Make an act of hope.

A. I hope that God will give me grace and the glory of heaven.

Q. On what do you base this confidence?

A. On the goodness and omnipotence of God, on the merits of Jesus Christ, and on my good works.

Q. What sins are against hope?

A. Despair, through lack of hope; presumption and rashness, through false hope.

Q. Who sins by despair?

A. He who, because of his many and grave sins, distrusts the mercy of God.

Q. Who sins by presumption?

A. He who trusts to be saved by his own strength without God's help, or only by the mercy of God without doing what he ought on his own part.

Q. Who sins by rashness?

A. He who puts off his conversion until the hour of death.

Q. Make an act of charity, or of the love of God.

A. I love God above all things.

Q. Why?

A. Because God is supreme goodness and has loved us from eternity.

Q. What sins are against charity, or the love of God?

A. Every sin against any precept or virtue, and especially hatred of God.

Q. Make an act of love of neighbor.

A. I love my neighbor as myself for the love of God.

Q. Who are our neighbors?

A. All who are already in heaven or can go there.

Q. What is religion?

A. It is a supernatural virtue by which we give worship to God as the first principle of all things.

Q. Why is it called religion?

A. Because it binds or unites our hearts with God.

Q. What are the acts of religion?

A. Some are internal and others external.

Q. What are the internal ones?

A. Those conceived in the heart which unite us with God, such as mental prayer and devotion.

Q. What are the external ones?

A. Certain actions that show the feelings of piety conceived in our soul, such as adoration, sacrifice, oath and vow.

Q. Who sin against Religion?

A. Idolaters, the superstitious, sorcerers, the sacrilegious and the ungodly.

Q. What is idolatry?

A. Adoring false gods, as the gentiles did, or giving to creatures the worship that belongs to God alone.

Q. What is superstition?

A. It is worship corrupted by vain ceremonies, or belief in things the Church has not approved.

Q. What is sorcery?

A. It is using lots or tricks to find out things, or to divine the future, or to do harm.

Q. What is sacrilege?

A. Treating sacred persons, things or places unworthily.

Q. What is ungodliness?

A. It is mocking Religion, its ministers and its sacred things and rites, and regarding with indifference and contempt the duties Religion itself imposes.

Q. Is it lawful to honor and venerate the Angels and Saints?

A. It is not only lawful but also useful to commend ourselves to them, because they are friends of God and our mediators.

Q. Is it lawful to honor the relics of the Saints?

A. Yes, because their bodies were living members of Jesus Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost, and they will rise glorious to eternal life.

Q. Must we venerate the images of Jesus Christ, of most holy Mary and of the Saints?

A. Yes, because they represent to us the originals in heaven, to whom our worship is directed.

The second commandment is: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Exod. 20:7). First of all I must tell you, my son, that the words "Name of God" mean his power, wisdom, goodness and majesty: God himself. In this commandment we are commanded to honor God by word, and forbidden to dishonor him by word.

We honor God by word when we pronounce his name reverently, recalling his divine perfections; and we dishonor him when we pronounce it lightly and for no reason at all.

We also honor God by word when we swear as we ought. By an oath we pay homage to his truth, his justice and his sovereign majesty. But for this the oath must be made *in truth*, that is, only to support something certain; *in justice*, to promise something lawful; and *in judgment*, to assure something of importance (cf. Jer. 4:2). So, my son, when the laws of the Church or of the State oblige you to swear, and especially when you are summoned by the courts to tell the truth about what you are asked, you may swear if these conditions are present. In this case the oath is not a sin, nor is it forbidden; rather it is an act of virtue, and by it we honor God, as I have told you.

What is forbidden in this commandment, my son, is perjury, or false oath, which is an enormous crime. To swear falsely is to affirm on oath something false or doubtful, or to make on oath a promise one does not mean to keep. When a promise is made on oath, it must be made with the intention of fulfilling what is promised, if it is just and reasonable; and one who does not fulfil such a promise is called a perjurer. But if the thing he swore was evil, for example if he swore to take revenge or something else evil, he sinned in making such an oath and would commit another sin if he fulfilled it. Finally, my son, I urge you most earnestly to have a great horror of the very bad habit some have formed of swearing oaths, in words or with signs, with the greatest ease and over nothing. Such oaths may be assertory, or promissory; or imprecatory, wishing oneself harm; or threatening, menacing someone. Remember, my son, the proverb that says: "In the house of him who swears, misfortune will not be lacking."

This commandment also bids us praise the Name of God, and to this end we must call upon it and praise it with humility, devotion and fervor. What happiness to be able to do already on earth what we shall do afterwards for all eternity in heaven! What happiness to practice now so as to perform so holy an occupation well afterwards in heaven! Oh, how God delights in the praises of mortals! Jesus Christ, true God and true man, listened with pleasure to the praises the children of Jerusalem gave him. And when the envious Jews complained, Jesus answered them that they should remember the words of the Prophet: *Out of the mouth of infants and of sucklings thou hast perfected praise* (Matt. 21:16; Ps. 8:3). Ah, my son, take pains to sing, and to sing well, the praises of God, of Jesus Christ and of most holy Mary. Imitate the Angels of heaven, who do it so well and with such delight; and say devoutly the prayers to Jesus and to most holy Mary. Opposed to the praises we owe God are blasphemies, horrible sins, the crimes chiefly forbidden in this second commandment. Blasphemy is an insult in words against God, outraging him directly in himself, or indirectly in the things that have a particular relation to him. Blasphemy is of two kinds, heretical and non-heretical. Non-heretical blasphemy contains no error against faith: for example, cursing God, or uttering with contempt the Name of Jesus, or his body or blood, or cursing the Mother of God or the Saints. Heretical blasphemy is an insult that, besides contempt of God, contains an error against faith: for example, denying to God what belongs to him, or attributing to him what does not befit him, or attributing to creatures what befits God alone.

Blasphemy is a most grievous sin, because the blasphemer offends God or the Saints in what is most sacred, their very honor. Its gravity is seen in the severity of the penalty with which God commanded it to be punished. The law says: *He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die: all the multitude shall stone him, whether he be a native or a stranger. He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, dying let him die* (Lev. 24:16). Look, my son, at no. 2 of the plate. Do you see the man they are stoning? He is a blasphemer to whom the law is being applied. Holy Scripture says that the son of an Israelite woman and an Egyptian quarreled with an Israelite. In the heat of the quarrel a blasphemy escaped him: he cursed the Lord. Those who heard it seized him and brought him to Moses, who had him put in prison until he could consult God about what to do with the man. And the Lord said to Moses: *Bring forth the blasphemer without the camp, and let them that heard him, put their hands upon his head, and let all the people stone him* (Lev. 24:10–14). By this ceremony the Lord wished to make it understood that sins left unpunished bring harm on the whole body or nation that tolerates and overlooks them. God himself threatens to destroy the nation or country in

which this detestable vice reigns (Isa. 1:4). And Lorinus relates that when Robert, King of France, was praying for peace in his kingdom, a Crucifix assured him that there would never be peace until he had banished blasphemy from it. Both that answer and that threat seem to be coming true in our unhappy nation! So if you hear someone blaspheme, exclaim with feeling and full of zeal for God's honor: "Hail Mary most pure! Praised be God! Praised be Jesus Christ!"

This commandment includes vows and promises. By them God is honored if they are well kept, and one sins if they are not kept. So they must be fulfilled in the way they were made, at the time and in the form intended, except in cases of impossibility or lawful dispensation. That is why we must not make vows without first reflecting and taking our confessor's advice. I must tell you that there are solemn vows and simple vows. Solemn vows are those made on receiving sacred orders or on making profession in one of the religious Orders approved by the Church. Simple vows are those made privately, or in some congregation not raised to a religious Order. I must also tell you that the vows of religion are three: poverty, chastity and obedience. They are opposed to the three great passions of the human heart, which are love of riches, love of sensual pleasures and love of independence. Finally, my son, I will tell you that this second commandment brings us two great goods. First, it serves as a safeguard for loving God, by obliging us to respect him; for what can be despised with impunity is easily no longer loved. Second, it safeguards dealings among men and their good faith, which are the foundation of society. Keep this and the other commandments well, my son,

and I promise you that you will be happy in time and in eternity, as I so much wish you.

Q. What are we forbidden in the second commandment?

A. We are forbidden to swear false oaths, and even true ones without necessity; to fail to fulfil vows; to utter blasphemies; and any other dishonor done to God with words.

Q. What is it to swear?

A. To call God to witness something.

Q. What conditions must an oath have to be lawful?

A. Three: truth, necessity and justice.

Q. What is it to swear without truth?

A. It is to swear against what one thinks, or falsely.

Q. What sin does one commit who swears without truth, or in doubt whether what he swears is true?

A. It is a mortal sin, even if the oath is about a light matter, because of the grave irreverence done to God.

Q. What is it to swear without necessity?

A. It is to swear without grave cause, or about things of little moment.

Q. What sin is it to swear without necessity?

A. It is a venial sin, if truth and justice are not lacking.

Q. What is it to swear without justice?

A. It is to swear something unjust or evil, such as doing some harm to one's neighbor.

Q. What sin does one commit who swears without justice?

A. Mortal or venial, according to what is sworn.

Q. Is one who swears to do something good obliged to do it?

A. Yes.

Q. Is one who swears to do something evil obliged to do it?

A. No; rather he must repent and confess it.

Q. Is it a sin to swear in vain by creatures?

A. Yes, because in them one swears by the Creator.

Q. What remedy is there against swearing in vain?

A. To get used to saying yes or no, as our Lord Jesus Christ teaches us (Matt. 5:37).

Q. What is a vow?

A. To promise God something.

Q. Will it be enough that the thing promised is good?

A. No; it must be better than its contrary.

Q. How must vows be made?

A. With deliberation and advice.

Q. Are we obliged to fulfil vows and promises?

A. Yes; and one who cannot should tell his confessor.

Q. What is blasphemy?

A. A word insulting to God, to the Saints or to Religion, such as taking from them what belongs to them, or attributing to them what does not befit them.

Q. Is the sin of blasphemy very grave?

A. It is most grave, because the blasphemer offends God or the Saints in what is most sacred, their very honor.

Q. Do those sin against this commandment who always have the name of God, of Jesus or of some Saint on their lips, not out of devotion but out of habit and for no purpose?

A. Yes.

The third commandment is: *Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day* (Exod. 20:8), which the Spanish formula gives as "Keep holy the feasts". This commandment directs how we must honor God with our works on Sundays and feast days, commanding us to refrain on them from servile works and to hear holy Mass. You must know, my son, that God our Lord laid down that in each week there should be one day consecrated to his holy service. In appointing one day each week the Lord intended to establish order and uniformity in the worship that must be paid him, to remind us of this obligation, and finally to maintain interior worship and promote exterior and public worship. In ancient times this day was the Sabbath, but now it is Sunday, for many reasons, of which I will give you some. First, to distinguish us Christians from the Jews. Second, because Sunday was the first day of the world. Moreover, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was on a Sunday; the Holy Ghost came on a Sunday; and some authors say that the general judgment, when we shall have to give an account of all our works, will be on a Sunday. Oh, if we thought continually of that great day, how well we should live, and how we should keep holy, as we ought, the Sundays and other feasts of the year!

Sundays and feasts are kept holy by refraining from servile works and doing good works. By servile works are meant the labors proper to servants, craftsmen and workmen, which are done more with the body than with the mind. They are forbidden even if not done for gain. However, if a case of necessity arises one may work, first asking leave of the parish priest and hearing Mass before or after, as is convenient. It is also allowed when there is a lawful custom approved by the superiors, as in some places at harvest time if there is danger that the crops will be lost. Today, however, in some places, not by custom but by abuse, people work on feasts and Sundays. In the fields one sees ploughing, digging and so on; and in the towns too, unfortunately, one sees some at work. Woe to them!

I tell you, my son, that working on Sundays and feasts without necessity is a sin, more or less grave according to the time spent and the scandal that results. Those who make others work without grave cause sin likewise, and they also violate the consciences of their brothers. You must know, my son, that working on feasts is not only a sin; it leads to losing Religion oneself and making others lose it. For in this way people forget God and the end for which they were created, and open the door of eternal damnation for themselves, not to mention the many temporal and bodily evils such profanation brings. In the sacred book of Exodus God our Lord commanded that the feast day be kept, under pain of death for anyone who worked (Exod. 35:2). And in the book of Numbers we read how this law was applied. It says: "*And it came to pass, when the children of Israel were in the wilderness, and had found a man gathering sticks on the sabbath day, that they brought him to Moses and Aaron and the whole multitude. They put him into prison, not knowing what they should do with him. And the Lord said to Moses: Let that man die, let all the multitude stone him without the camp. And when they had brought him out, they stoned him, and he died as the Lord had commanded*" (Num.

15:32–36). This tragic event was a lesson and a warning to the Israelites. It should be so with far more reason for Christians, who must be very exact in keeping holy the feast days consecrated entirely to the Lord's service, setting aside every other business that would distract them from this most essential obligation. This was the example the Apostles gave Christians (Acts 16:13).

It is true that now, under the law of grace, the death penalty is not applied to those who work on feast days. But the Lord does not bless their labors or their persons, so these do them no good; rather they lose, as the proverb says: "Work on feasts is losing, not gaining." What will farmers get from ploughing, digging and doing other work, if afterwards a drought, a hailstorm or some other mishap comes and destroys everything, and they gather nothing? What will muleteers gain by working on feast days, if afterwards one of their beasts falls and is crippled? What will manufacturers get from making people work on feast days, if afterwards slack times come and they sell nothing, or a fire burns down their factory, or a bankruptcy makes them lose everything? Finally, what do workmen gain by working on feast days, if afterwards they fall ill? Let them remember the proverb: "What is earned on the feast is spent at the apothecary's." God does not bless but curses those who work on a feast day. They are thieves who rob God of what is his: Sunday is *Dies Domini*, the Lord's day. Yes, they rob him of it by working for themselves. But let them know once and for all that their labors will be their sorrows and misfortunes, temporal and eternal. They will be poorer and more wretched in this world and the next.

Do not imitate those profaners, my son. Imitate rather that family you see at no. 3 of the plate, a model of all the virtues. They have laid aside their work, as the tools you see hanging there show, and are busy reading good books, in spiritual conversation, in prayer, and in teaching and learning Christian doctrine. You must do the same. And since the chief work the Church prescribes for keeping the feast holy, under pain of mortal sin, is hearing holy Mass, I tell you that you must hear it on Sundays, on feasts and on the days when there is an obligation. You will hear it with respect, attention, devotion and completeness. *With respect* means that you must go decently dressed and keep a modest posture in church, avoiding looking about, talking and anything that might scandalize the faithful. *With attention* means that you must occupy yourself with what is being done at the altar; for this purpose read in your prayer book, following the order of the ceremonies. *With devotion* means that you must offer yourself with our Lord Jesus Christ, sincerely desiring to imitate his examples and live according to the Gospel. *With completeness* means that you must hear the whole Mass. Besides hearing holy Mass, my son, try to attend the other religious services and to exercise yourself in works of mercy toward your neighbors.

Finally I will tell you, my son, that the goods brought by keeping the third commandment are very great. First, it keeps us from forgetting our last end, and preserves us from staining our heart with disordered attachment to earthly goods. Second, it gives workers time to restore their strength of body and soul. And lastly, it draws down blessings on our works. Happy those who keep the feasts holy and keep the other commandments, for they will be happy in time and in eternity!

Q. What does the third commandment command us?

A. That on Sundays and feast days we refrain from servile works and hear Mass.

Q. What are servile works?

A. The labors proper to servants, craftsmen and workmen, such as tilling the ground, weaving, sewing and other mechanical occupations.

Q. May these labors sometimes be done lawfully on Sundays and feasts?

A. Yes, when there is necessity, first asking leave, if possible, of the Bishop or the parish priest, but without failing to hear holy Mass.

Q. Does one sin who works on Sundays and feasts without necessity or leave?

A. Yes, more or less gravely according to how long it lasts and the scandal that results.

Q. To fulfil the precept, besides hearing Mass, is it necessary to exercise oneself in good works?

A. One does not fulfil it perfectly who, being able, does not exercise himself in works of piety, such as frequenting the Sacraments, attending the divine offices, catechism and sermon, visiting the sick and practicing other works of mercy.

The fourth commandment is: *Honour thy father and thy mother* (Exod. 20:12). It includes our elders and all superiors, whom we must obey by doing what they command; and we also owe them reverence and help. Look at no. 4 of the plate. That old man is Tobias. The young man before him is his son, and the other one further off is the archangel St. Raphael, teaching him how he must revere his father. The young Tobias always and in everything followed the Archangel's counsel, and so he was the joy of his parents and had the happiest lot, both in this world and in the next. Ah, dear son, believe me, I wish you well like another Raphael. Love, obey, revere and help your parents. Think that they are representatives of God and of his divine providence, and that they cannot be offended without offending God himself. Imitate Jesus, who was wholly *subject to* Mary his Mother and St. Joseph (*Et erat subditus illis*, Luke 2:51), not only as a child but as a youth. All his life, until his death, he honored his parents perfectly. Although he was God, and so their superior, he chose to give this good example to all children and subordinates. Happy those who imitate him, for they will be happy in this world and the next! But unhappy those who, instead of imitating Jesus, imitate Satan, who would not be subject to God his Creator. He was cast into hell, where he suffers the punishment of his rebellion. The same unhappy lot will fall to children who do not honor their parents. They expose themselves to having their parents, provoked by their disobedience, utter curses on them, which are commonly followed by God's curses.

In the dialogue that follows immediately you will find explained, my son, how parents are to be honored. You will also find that by the name of parents are meant spiritual superiors and rulers, with their respective obligations. I will only say here that the benefits brought by keeping this fourth commandment are many, and all very great. For greater clarity I will reduce them to four. First, it strengthens the peace of States and families by inspiring respect for superiors. Second, it makes authority wise and fatherly. Third, it teaches the subordinate that it is God he obeys in the person of his superiors, making his obedience affectionate, filial and constant. Fourth, it leads all to live for one another. Children and subordinates must regard their parents and all superiors as representatives of God. They must believe that the obedience, respect and services they give them are given to God, and that God will reward them generously. Parents and superiors must regard their children and subordinates as so many children of God, brothers of Jesus Christ, created and redeemed by him and destined for the kingdom of heaven. Finally, we must all remember that we are brothers. We have one father, who is God; we all have one mother, most holy Mary; and we all form one single moral body, whose head is Jesus Christ. As the members of one body help one another, so we must all help one another. By this we shall know whether we are children of God and disciples of Jesus Christ: by loving one another as he loves and has loved us (John 13:34–35).

Q. What does the fourth commandment command us?

A. To honor our parents and every superior.

Q. How are parents to be honored?

A. With love, obedience, reverence and help.

Q. What does "with love" mean?

A. That we must love our parents tenderly and constantly, as representatives of God, whose place they hold.

Q. What does "with obedience" mean?

A. That we must do what they command us with simplicity, promptness and cheerfulness.

Q. What does “with reverence” mean?

A. That we must treat them with veneration, respect and courtesy.

Q. What does “with help” mean?

A. That we must help them bodily and spiritually.

Q. What is meant by bodily help?

A. That we must assist them in poverty, in old age and in sickness.

Q. What is meant by spiritual help?

A. That we must help them to live as Christians and to receive the Sacraments when they are sick, and commend them to God in life and after death.

Q. What reward does God give children who behave well toward their parents?

A. God usually rewards them with a long and happy life.

Q. What will become of children who behave badly?

A. They will be cursed by God and men, and will suffer many misfortunes.

Q. What does this fourth commandment require of parents?

A. To feed, bring up, instruct, correct and watch over their children, to give them good example, and not to give them a state of life against their will.

Q. Are other superiors also included in this commandment?

A. Yes; our spiritual and temporal superiors are included.

Q. Who are our spiritual superiors?

A. Our Holy Father the Pope, the Bishops, the priests and our godparents.

Q. Who are our temporal superiors?

A. Kings, rulers, masters, teachers and the aged.

Q. What do we owe them?

A. We must love, obey and respect them, because they are set up by God to govern and command us.

Q. To what are superiors obliged?

A. To bring about the spiritual and temporal happiness of those under them.

Q. How must servants behave toward their masters?

A. They must serve them with submission, respect, obedience and faithfulness.

Q. What are the obligations of masters toward their servants?

A. Almost the same as those of parents toward their children.

Q. If a father, mother, authority or superior should ever command something contrary to the law of God, may one obey?

A. No, because *we ought to obey God, rather than men* (Acts 5:29).

The fifth commandment is: *Thou shalt not kill* (Exod. 20:13). You must know, my son, that our parents are the first of our neighbors; that is why the Lord deals with them before the rest, as you have seen in the previous explanation. Then immediately he says: the fifth is, *thou shalt not kill*. By this he forbids us to harm our neighbor in body and soul, by deed, by word and even by desire. The first thing God forbids in this commandment is murder or homicide, because man has no right over the lives of others. If Judges can condemn criminals to death, it is because God has delegated this power to them. Dueling or challenging is likewise forbidden, because no one has the right to take justice into his own hands. Infanticide is also forbidden, which is taking the life of a child, even one not yet born; it is a horrible crime. Moreover, it is forbidden to wound or strike one's neighbor, to speak insulting words or curses to him, to advise that some harm be done him, to desire it or take pleasure in harm done him, and to be saddened at good that has come to him. No one may, out of spite or anger, harm himself, wish himself dead or take his own life, as those do who commit suicide; for we are not masters of our own life. Health and life are a gift of God, of which he will demand a strict account.

This commandment forbids not only the death of the body but also that of the soul, which is caused by *scandal*. Scandal is a word or act that is less than upright and so gives others occasion to offend God. Scandal is a greater sin than homicide itself, because homicide takes the life of the body but scandal takes the life of the soul. And in confessing this sin the penitent must say what kind of scandal he gave and how many people were scandalized. In every case he must repair the harm done and the scandal caused, by saying or doing the contrary of the evil he said or did, and by praying for the persons scandalized.

We will end this explanation with what you will see in the plate. Look at those two figures at no. 5. The one standing is David, and the other is Saul, who pursued him to the death. But David was so meek, peaceful and generous that, although he could have killed his persecutor when he found him in the cave of Engaddi, he spared him (1 Kings 24). In spite of this generosity, Saul went on pursuing him with rancor until he died in despair, and his end was hell.[2] David, on the contrary, was dearly loved by God and was saved. So do not imitate Saul, my son. Bear hatred or rancor to no one. Forgive everyone, even your enemies, like David, who, far from taking revenge on his relentless persecutor, forgave him with all his heart. Imitate Jesus and St. Stephen, who not only forgave their enemies but prayed for them to the heavenly Father (Luke 23:34; Acts 7:59). So you will not only forgive your enemies, all who slander and persecute you; you will also pray to God for them. In this way you will be forgiven, and you will show that you are a child of the heavenly Father, who *maketh his sun to rise upon the good, and bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust* (Matt. 5:45). Imitating them thus on earth, you will go afterwards to heaven, where you will be happy for all eternity, as I so much wish you.

Finally, I must tell you, my son, that this commandment produces two great goods. First, it protects the chief of natural goods, which is the life of the body. Second, it protects the most precious of supernatural goods, which is the life of the soul.

Q. What does the fifth commandment forbid us?

A. It forbids us to offend our neighbor in body and soul, by deed, word or desire.

Q. How is he offended in body?

A. By wounding or killing him unjustly.

Q. Do soldiers and officers of justice who kill in fulfilling their duties sin?

A. No, because they do not act unjustly.

Q. May we do or wish any evil to our enemies?

A. No, because we may not take revenge; rather we must return good for evil.

Q. Is it a sin to curse one's neighbor and speak insulting words to him?

A. Yes.

Q. How is one's neighbor offended in soul?

A. By giving him scandal.

Q. What is scandal?

A. It is a blameworthy word or action by which one's neighbor is given occasion to offend God.

Q. May one harm oneself, wish oneself dead in anger, or commit suicide?

A. No, because no one is master of his own life.

Q. Do those sin against this commandment who commit excesses in eating and drinking and in other things harmful to them?

A. Yes.

The sixth commandment is: *Thou shalt not commit adultery* (Exod. 20:14), which the Spanish formula gives as "Thou shalt not fornicate". The one at no. 6, in the act of fleeing, is the chaste Joseph. His faithless mistress urged him to commit an impure sin. But he, horrified and thinking that God was watching him, rejected her urging and escaped (Gen. 39). This practice of fleeing in this kind of temptation is what gives the happiest results. From a very small boy Joseph already had such a horror of impurity that once, seeing his brothers doing something indecent, he rebuked them, and seeing that they did not mend their ways, he told Jacob his father (Gen. 37:2). Because he was so virtuous his father loved him more than the others, and as a mark of the special affection he bore him he made him a coat of many colors, which signified the various virtues that adorned him. He was in fact chaste, meek, humble, patient, obedient and charitable. He was very different from his brothers, who were vicious and, driven by envy, persecuted him and finally sold him as a slave to some merchants. From them he passed into the power of an Egyptian whose wife tried to make him sin, as I have said. When she could not seduce him she invented a slander against him, by which his master was deceived and had him put in prison. But God, who never forsakes those who serve him faithfully, came to his defense. He set him free and so ordered things that Joseph was raised up as governor of the whole land of Egypt and steward of the house of King Pharao. Yet in spite of this exaltation he took revenge on no one. On the contrary, he forgave them all and did them good. He had his brothers come with his father, and he fed them all.

From this Joseph, my son, you must learn to practice virtue from childhood and above all to be chaste. It is the virtue so loved by God, by Jesus Christ and by most holy Mary, the virtue that makes children and young people like the Angels. If you hear or see other children saying or doing shameful things, think that it is a sin. Rebuke them if you have the chance; if not, keep away from them and show them your displeasure. Imitate the chaste Joseph in chastity, meekness, charity and the other virtues, and the Lord, as a reward for these virtues, will make you happy in this world and the next. Remember always that God sees you. However well hidden you may be, God sees you. This holy thought, which is a truth of faith, will keep you from sinning. If you are good, if you keep away from and flee every sin, especially the sin of impurity, and if you practice the virtues, God our Lord will love you dearly. If it is useful for the good of your soul, he will give you goods and fortune as he gave them to the chaste Joseph; and if not in this world, it will be in the next, where he will give you a throne of eternal glory. Nevertheless, I must warn you that if anyone persecutes or mocks you because you flee from sins and practice virtue, pay no attention. Think that a day will come when he will be mocked and condemned for all eternity.

What God commands in this commandment is the virtue of chastity. He forbids everything opposed to this angelic virtue, such as adultery, fornication and every sin of impurity, whether in word, in deed or even in

looks. The sin of impurity is very great and has very fatal consequences, the chief of which is the eternal damnation of many souls. So you will make use of the means you will find in the following dialogue, so as to guard yourself and be always free of a monster that has done so much harm to bodies and souls, in time and in eternity.

This commandment brings three very great goods. First, it protects the honor of families. Second, it shelters health and innocence from one's own passions and those of others. Third, it gives a delightful peace during life and great confidence at the hour of death.

Q. What does the sixth commandment forbid us?

A. It forbids us to say, listen to, look at and touch or do shameful things.

Q. What are we commanded in this same commandment?

A. To be chaste in body and soul, because we form one body with Jesus Christ and are living temples of the Holy Ghost.

Q. What remedy has one who has sinned against chastity?

A. To repent truly and then make a good confession.

Q. And so as not to sin against chastity, what safeguards should be taken?

A. To love God much and fear his judgments, thinking that at the first sin he can cast us into hell, as he did with the angels who sinned.

Q. What else?

A. To meditate on the passion and death of Jesus Christ; to be devoted to most holy Mary, calling on her in temptations; to frequent the Sacraments; and to practice some bodily mortification, especially in looking, hearing, eating and drinking, keeping away from the dangers of sinning.

Q. And from what dangers must one keep away?

A. From all, but especially from idleness and curiosity, from familiarity with persons of the other sex, from looking at obscene figures or pictures, from reading immoral writings or books, and from listening to indecent conversations.

The seventh commandment is: *Thou shalt not steal* (Exod. 20:15). Do you see, my son, at no. 7 of the plate, the man taking something out of a chest? It is Achan, who committed this sin in the city of Jericho. As a punishment for it God caused thirty-six of the army to die, and three thousand to flee shamefully before a small number of enemies. Josue, learning by revelation from God that this had been a punishment from heaven, had Achan seized and stoned. Immediately, by order of God himself, he had all the stolen goods burned, together with everything else Achan owned (Jos. 7). My son, this example teaches you that God sometimes sends punishments on towns and kingdoms for the thefts, frauds or injustices of their inhabitants (Ecclus. 10:8), and even for those committed by some private persons. Note well that he who steals ends up poorer than he was before, because what is acquired unjustly makes one lose what was acquired lawfully. So working on Sundays and stealing are the two roads that lead infallibly to poverty. And so, my son, I urge you most earnestly never to take anything belonging to another, however small. For it is well known that from little one goes on to much, and from robbery to murder, and finally to the scaffold. Look at no. 7 of the same plate, at the man who has been hanged. If you asked him, "How did you come to mount that gallows?" and the wretch could answer, he would tell you: "When I was a child I used to take fruit, sweets and other things to eat at home, behind my parents' backs, out of greed. Because I was fond of gambling I also took from my home whatever pennies I could. With these petty thefts I began to lose the fear of God. As at first I stole at home, so afterwards I stole in other people's houses. From small amounts I went on to steal considerable

sums when the chance came; and if I ever met resistance, I murdered whoever opposed me. I fell in with bad companions who encouraged me to commit such crimes, and these have finally brought me to this gallows. If only all children would take warning from me and keep from taking other people's things, even the smallest!… Woe to them if they do, for by that same ladder they will climb to this scaffold on which I find myself!…"

This commandment, my son, forbids robbery. Robbery is unjustly taking and keeping one's neighbor's goods, and causing him some harm, such as by damaging or spoiling what belongs to him, when the neighbor has a right not to be deprived of them. The chief ways of robbing are theft, rapine and fraud. It is called *theft* when the thing is taken without the owner noticing. So these are said to steal: the workman who, without doing his duty, still demands his full pay; the tailor who skims off part of the cloth; the servant who takes something from his masters; dishonest merchants and litigants in bad faith; corrupt magistrates and judges; usurers; and in a word thieves and all who appropriate what does not belong to them. Children who steal from their parents sin against this commandment, because they appropriate what does not belong to them. *Rapine* is robbery done brazenly and with violence, which offends not only against property but also against the person. Masters who do not pay those who work for them the full wage agreed likewise fall into this wickedness. *Fraud* is robbery done by deceit: in buying or selling, passing off damaged goods as sound, using false weights and measures, making usurious contracts, and so on. Those also sin against this commandment who harm their neighbor by wasting or destroying what belongs to him, or by preventing him by unjust means from making a lawful gain. Likewise these sin against this commandment: those who unjustly keep others' goods; those who do not pay their debts when they can; those who do not pay day-laborers, workmen or servants their wages, or make them wait a long time for them; those who do not return a deposit entrusted to them; and those who have found something and do not inquire after the person who lost it in order to return it.

You must know, my son, that it is not enough for one who has sinned against this commandment to confess the sin. He must also make *restitution*. If he cannot restore everything, let him restore what he can; and if he cannot now, let him do so when he can. As for those who must make restitution, I will tell you the order to be followed. 1. The thief. 2. The one who ordered the robbery. 3. The one who advised it. 4. The one who approved it and encouraged the thief. 5. The one who authorized it, without whose consent it would not have been committed. 6. Those who hid the goods. 7. Those who shared in them. 8. Those who did not prevent it when they were bound in justice to do so. Finally, I will say that restitution must be made to the person injured, or to his heirs, and as soon as possible, also making good the damages and losses. In case of doubt, let him consult his confessor. All this is said for the past. For the future, the best means of not falling into injustice is to respect others' goods as we should wish our own to be respected. It will be good for you to know, my son, that what they call communism of goods is opposed to this seventh commandment, because it destroys the order of society established by God.

The goods that come from this commandment are these. First, it protects our fortune against the injustice of the wicked. Second, it shows us plainly the infinite goodness of God and the holiness of Religion.

Q. What does the seventh commandment forbid us?

A. Unjustly taking and keeping our neighbor's goods, and causing him any harm.

Q. How does one become guilty of robbery?

A. By theft, rapine and fraud.

Q. In what way is harm done to one's neighbor?

A. By damaging or spoiling what belongs to him.

Q. When one has robbed or done damage, will it be enough to confess and repent of it?

A. No; one must also make restitution, immediately if one can, and if not, when and as far as one can.

Q. Must things found be returned to their owner?

A. Yes.

The eighth commandment is: *Thou shalt not bear false witness* (Exod. 20:16). Look, my son, at no. 8 of the plate. The man seated is the judge before whom the chaste Susanna was brought by those two old men. Because she feared God, she would not yield to their shameful solicitations, and in their anger they accused her falsely, saying they had found her committing a sin. But God took the side of the truth, arranging that Daniel should uncover the lie and wickedness of the two false witnesses, who for this were stoned to death (Dan. 13). You must keep this passage of holy Scripture well in mind, my son, so as never to bear false witness or tell lies. For God, who punished those liars, would punish you too. Even people would loathe you and not believe you; for it is well known that a liar is not believed even when he tells the truth.

Now I will tell you, my son, how you must behave with regard to this commandment. It forbids us to bear false witness and all the sins that go with it, such as lying, detraction, calumny, tale-bearing and rash judgment. To lie is to say something contrary to what one thinks, with the intention of deceiving; sometimes one also lies by actions or outward signs. Lies are of three kinds: pernicious or harmful, officious, and idle. A *pernicious* lie is one that harms one's neighbor: for example, when someone testifies before a judge that so-and-so has committed a crime, knowing it is not true. An *officious* lie is one told to save someone from an evil, or to obtain some good for oneself or another. An *idle* lie is one told without harm or profit. All of them are sins. Every lie is opposed to God, who is truth itself, and to the true purpose of speech, the use of which was given us to communicate our ideas to one another sincerely, and not to deceive one another. To this I must add, my son, that if a lie causes great harm to one's neighbor, it is a mortal sin. Officious and idle lies are of themselves venial sins, and so they are always blameworthy in a Christian, because by them he fails in truth, even if it is in jest.

To *bear false witness* is a lie told before authority after taking an oath to tell the truth. *Calumny* is a lie to the injury of one's neighbor, imputing to him a fault of which he is innocent or a defect he does not have. *Detraction* is the unjust revealing of one's neighbor's defects, and this happens in three ways. First, by word, when without reason or necessity the hidden vices or defects of some person are disclosed. Second, by silence, when one fails to praise some good act of one's neighbor when one ought to. Third, by signs: as when someone shows impatience on hearing another praised, or shrugs his shoulders, smiles maliciously, or by some other sign shows that he disapproves of what he hears. Calumny and detraction are grave or light sins according to the harm they cause. It is also a sin to speak of faults that are publicly known, if one does so out of hatred or ill will. As a rule all these faults come from little humility and less charity. But God, in punishment for them, allows those who speak ill, or their close relatives, to fall into the same defects and even worse ones. I must also tell you that not only those who speak ill sin, but also those who listen to it, if they listen with malicious relish, or when they do not stop it though they could and should. When, however, one cannot stop the detraction, one must refrain from taking part in it, and by putting on a serious and sad face give to understand that one does not like to hear such talk.

Anyone who has fallen into any of these wicked acts must restore the other's good name or repair the harm he has caused, repent and confess. One who has calumniated, for example, must retract what he has falsely said of his neighbor. One who has spoken ill must excuse his neighbor's faults if possible, make the most of his good qualities, and commend him to God. Besides detraction there is another wickedness called *tale-bearing*. It consists of imprudent or malicious reports that can sow discord among friends and relatives, or married people. One guilty of this offense is cursed by God, as holy Scripture says (Ecclus. 28:15). There is another wickedness included in this commandment, called *rash judgment*, which consists in judging ill of one's neighbor without sufficient proof or reason. Finally, I will tell you that this same commandment

forbids indiscretion, that is, betraying secrets and reading other people's letters.

The chief benefits this commandment brings are two. First, it protects our good name. Second, it preserves peace and mutual trust among men.

Q. What does the eighth commandment forbid us?

A. It forbids us to lie, bear false witness, speak ill of others and make rash judgments.

Q. What is it to lie?

A. It is to say the contrary of what one thinks, with the intention of deceiving.

Q. Is it ever permitted to lie?

A. Never, because a lie always offends God, who is truth itself.

Q. What is it to bear false witness?

A. It is a lie told before authority after one has taken an oath to tell the truth.

Q. What is it to calumniate?

A. It is to impute to another a crime he has not committed.

Q. What is detraction?

A. It is unjustly revealing one's neighbor's defects.

Q. What must one do who has fallen into any of these wicked acts?

A. Repent, repair the harm and confess.

Q. What is rash judgment?

A. Thinking ill of one's neighbor without grounds.

The ninth commandment is: *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife* (Exod. 20:17). Do you notice at no. 9 that palace, on whose roof terrace a king is looking at the woman down below? It represents David, who, looking at Bethsabee as she bathed, fell into desire and sinned (2 Kings 11). This should serve you as a warning to be careful in looking at persons or things that may stir up lustful thoughts or desires in you. Flee from bad company, from familiarities, flirtations, dances, theaters and other shows where indecent things are done. Do not look at figures, photographs, pictures or other provocative things, and do not read obscene books. In short, guard yourself against everything that may lead you to impure thoughts and desires; for it is better to keep the fire from catching than to have to put it out once it has caught. Woe to you if you did not follow my advice! You would be lost… However good you might be, you would fall miserably, like David and others.

This commandment forbids interior sins against chastity, such as desires and thoughts. Impure desires are sins when they are voluntary and consented to in the heart, even if the evil desired is not done, as Jesus Christ says in his holy Gospel: *Whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart* (Matt. 5:28). Impure thoughts are sins when one dwells on them willingly and takes pleasure in them. But when one does not want them, nor the cause that produces them, they are not sins; rather they are an occasion for gaining much merit. What must be done in order not to fall is to guard the senses, especially the sight; to love God very much; to receive the holy Sacraments of Penance and Communion often and fervently; and to be very devoted to most holy Mary, to one's Guardian Angel and to St. Aloysius Gonzaga.

The tenth commandment is: *Thou shalt not covet… any thing that is his* (Exod. 20:17), "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods". Notice at no. 10 how the devil tempts that man to covet and steal what belongs

to another, and see how his Guardian Angel holds him back, saying to him: “What you would not want for yourself, do not want for anyone.” Would you like others to take or covet what is yours? You will say no. Then neither must you lay hands on or covet anything of your neighbor’s.

You must know, my son, that in this commandment God forbids evil thoughts and evil desires, because both stain the soul and moreover lead man to commit evil actions. And this is another of the reasons why what is not lawful to do is not lawful to think or desire either. Finally, the prohibition in these two commandments shows plainly the infinite goodness of God and the holiness of the Catholic religion.

Great, my son, very great are the benefits God has done us in giving us the Decalogue. The first three commandments, by fixing our duties toward God, free men from idolatry and preserve them from irreligion, which is the seed of all evils.

The fourth commandment, by resting the duties of superiors and subordinates on mutual charity, makes society and the family secure.

The rest protect our goods, as well as our life, our honor, our virtue and our interests, against the passions of the malicious. So the whole Decalogue is a great benefit, which nothing can replace, and without which we should find ourselves in the most unhappy situation. The Decalogue, or the law of God, is as necessary to man and society as the law of gravity is to all bodies. What would become of bodies without that law! And while the Decalogue is so necessary, it is the easiest and simplest thing: it is enough to love, to love God and our neighbor. Love God, my son, for being who he is. Love him out of obedience, since he commands it. Love him for the benefits he has given you, such as creation, preservation, vocation, redemption and very many others. Love him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind. Offer to his greater honor and glory all you do, say and think. For love of him suffer with patience and resignation all the pains he sends you, without regard to the means or instruments he uses for it. Keep his commandments, since keeping them is a proof of love for him. And since he commands us to love our neighbor, let us love him as ourselves, wishing for him, for the love of God, what we would wish for ourselves.

Q. What do the ninth and tenth commandments forbid?

A. They forbid us interior sins against the sixth and seventh, because God, who sees hearts, wants us to be clean within and without.

Q. Is every evil thought that comes to us a sin?

A. When it is noticed and the will consents to it, yes. But when this is lacking, it is not a sin but a temptation.

Q. In how many ways does one sin by thought?

A. In two: by complacency and by desire.

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[1] Exod. 32:28.

[2] 1 Kings 31.

Lesson 2. The Commandments of Holy Church

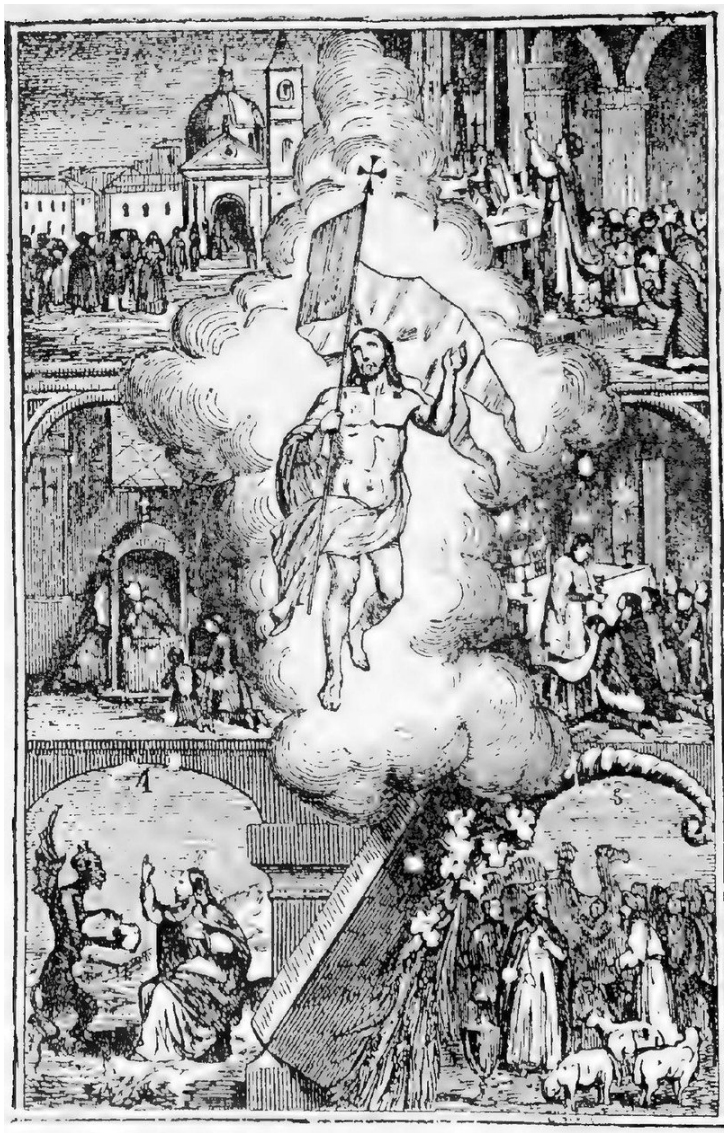

Plate XXIV. The Commandments of the Church. Jesus risen. 1. People going to church; people hearing Mass. 2. Confession. 3. Communion. 4. Jesus in the desert. 5. Abraham paying tithes to the high priest Melchisedech.

You know already, my son, that to be saved you must keep the commandments of the law of God. Since honoring parents and elders is one of them, it is clear that you must obey the Prelates of the Church, who are included under the name of elders and parents because they are spiritual fathers, and keep their precepts, if you want to be saved. They are authorized by Jesus Christ to command us, and we are obliged to obey them. So Jesus Christ himself commands that if anyone will not obey the precepts of the Church, *let him be to thee as the heathen and publican* (Matt. 18:17). And in St. Luke, chapter 10, verse 16, speaking to the Apostles, and in them to all ecclesiastical superiors, he says to them: *He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you* (or your precepts), *despiseth me.* So it is clear that those who will not fulfil the precepts of the Church, giving as their reason that only those imposed by God must be kept and not those of men, stand convicted of despising God himself, of despising Jesus Christ and his Gospel; and they declare themselves heathens and publicans. You, my son, keep them with careful exactness, as every good Christian should. Imitate that crowd of people you see at no. 1 of the plate. Like good children they are entering the holy church to fulfil what the Church, their loving mother, commands. And so that you may see the great usefulness of these commandments and understand them well, I will explain them to you with the plate.

The first commandment is: *To hear Mass entire on Sundays and holy days of obligation.* Do you see that priest at no. 1 on the right? He is shown celebrating holy Mass, which the people are hearing in accordance with this precept of the Church, whom we must all obey. Her superiors are bound to watch over our good, so much so that they must give an account of us at God's tribunal, as St. Paul teaches (Heb. 13:17). That is why they have ordained this commandment for our benefit and profit. Not only this: they must also see that the Lord's precepts are kept, that the benefits he has given us are acknowledged with gratitude, and that the Saints are venerated and imitated. To attain these ends holy Church orders that on Sundays and other days of obligation we hear *Mass entire*. By it we give God a special worship, showing ourselves grateful for the benefit the mystery of that day represents to us. And since God is praised in his Saints, at the same time as we show him our gratitude we praise him by honoring the most holy Virgin and the Saints venerated on that day, who can obtain many special graces for us. So we please God and fulfil the natural duty we all have, as creatures, of paying the tribute of love, honor and homage to the Creator. "Holy Mass," says St. Francis de Sales, "is the chief work the Church has ordained for keeping the feasts holy."

The holy Council of Trent teaches us that the holy sacrifice of the Mass is the same as that of Calvary, differing only in the manner of its offering. On the cross Jesus Christ offered himself by really dying; on the altar he is offered in a way that represents his death. There he was a victim covered with blood in the sight of men; here he is a victim covered with glory in the sight of the Angels. There he died really; here mystically. There he offered himself to redeem us; here to apply to us the price of redemption. There he merited this price for us; here he hands it over to us.

This precept binds all the faithful who have the use of reason, unless some lawful impediment excuses them. Already in the time of the Apostles the faithful attended holy Mass, as we read in holy Scripture (Acts 20:7); and it has continued ever since, as can be gathered from the canons and decrees given by the holy Fathers and Councils. So, my son, try to attend Mass on all the days the Church commands. If you can hear it every day, do not fail to do so, and you will see how useful it will be to you; but let this last be done without failing in your duties. Hear it with all attention, respect and devotion. I mean meditating on the sublime mysteries its ceremonies recall to us, keeping great modesty outwardly and the deepest reverence within your soul. And do this not coldly or merely to follow custom, as unfortunately happens not seldom, but with a lively desire to share in the wonderful effects of this holy sacrifice.

The second is: *To confess at least once a year, in Lent, or earlier if one is in danger of death or is to receive Communion.* Picture at no. 2 a lady making her confession, and others waiting recollected and modest. Imitate them, my son. Confess with every good disposition, for the Church obliges us to it, on the basis of divine law, so that no one may be negligent in a matter of such importance. And no one ought to be. It is very natural for one who has got dirty to wash, and for one who is sick to consult the doctor, tell him his ailments and take the medicines he prescribes. It is also very reasonable that if a son is negligent in these things his parents should order him to do them, since they must also watch over their children's cleanliness and bodily health. Well then, the Catholic Church, who is our mother, is anxious for the health and cleanness of our souls. She commands all of us her children to wash at least once each year in this healthful bath of the sacrament of Penance, and to take this spiritual medicine ordained by Jesus Christ himself. This commandment binds all the faithful who have the use of reason.

The third is: *To receive Communion at Easter*. Look at no. 3 of the plate, and you will see a priest giving holy Communion and some Christians receiving it with great fervor. You must know, my son, that in the early times of the Church the faithful received Communion every day, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:46), and this holy custom lasted many years. Then there was no such precept, because, according to Suárez, the devotion of the faithful made up for it or made it unnecessary. But in the course of time they took to receiving Communion only every eight days, then less often. At last, seeing this lukewarmness, Pope St. Fabian ordered that people should receive Communion at least three times a year: at Christmas, Easter

and Pentecost. Finally, that fervor having cooled more and more, the Lateran Council ordered the faithful to receive Communion once a year, and at Easter. But the Church's wish is that the faithful should receive Communion very often, as she showed at the Council of Trent: "The holy Council would wish that at every Mass the faithful present should communicate."[1] A natural mother is very glad when she sees her children have an appetite and eat with relish. On the contrary, she is distressed if she notices they have no appetite. Then she urges them to make an effort, and begs them with tears if they do not give in, because she fears they will die of starvation. So our mother the Catholic Church is greatly pleased when she sees that we hunger for this heavenly bread and, well disposed, eat it often. But if she sees that we have no appetite for it, and that it even makes some feel sick, as the manna did the Hebrews (Num. 21:5)… what affliction and grief weigh down her motherly heart! "My children," she says tenderly to negligent Christians, "alas! if you do not eat this bread, you will die, and die eternally" (John 6:54). You, my son, do not imitate these last. Rather, as soon as you are of age, ask your director whether you may receive Communion. If he allows it, receive Communion very often, and God will fill you with graces and heavenly blessings.

The fourth is: *To fast when holy mother Church commands.* Though there are four kinds of fasting, natural, moral, spiritual and penitential, I will speak to you here only of the penitential fast, and the example of Jesus Christ will teach it to you. See him represented at no. 4 in the desert, where he fasted forty days and forty nights, as the holy Gospel tells us (Matt. 4:2). Elias and Moses had fasted as long, and between them Jesus appeared transfigured on Mount Thabor. This penitential fast consists in abstaining from certain foods, and in going without all food for a certain time. Holy Church imitates doctors, who do not let the sick eat as much as they want or what they want. Because she desires our spiritual health, she prescribes for us at certain times and on certain days abstinence and fasting. She does so to subject the flesh to the spirit, in imitation of St. Paul (1 Cor. 9:27); to satisfy divine justice for the faults of our past life; to prepare the soul for prayer and other exercises of piety; to preserve innocence; and to obtain special graces from the Lord. That the Church can command fasting is beyond doubt, since it is beyond doubt that she has authority over the souls and bodies of her children. But the devil, envious of the profit we Christians draw from fasting, comes to tempt us as he tempted Christ in the desert. Do you notice at the same no. 4 how he holds out stones to him, proposing that he turn them into bread? He tempts us too with gluttony, because he knows that from it and through it many great evils come upon the human race. Read history and you will find that Adam and Eve lost grace through a dainty and made all their posterity unhappy. Through the Hebrews' excessive fondness for eating meat, many of them died in the desert (Num. 11:33), and they went to the length of idolatry. And today, unfortunately, many Christians commit idolatry too through gluttony, so that, as St. Paul says, *their god is their belly* (Phil. 3:19). Imitate not these, my son, but the Saints, many of whom from infancy knew how to mortify themselves by abstaining from the pleasures of the palate. Or at least, when you are of age, keep this precept of the Church faithfully, unless some lawful impediment excuses you from it.

The fifth is: *To pay tithes and first-fruits faithfully, or whatever has been duly substituted for them.* You must know, my son, that tithes and first-fruits, in substance, are nothing else than the fitting support of worship and its ministers. No. 5 of the plate represents the patriarch Abraham, who paid tithes to Melchisedech, the high priest (Gen. 14:20). Providing for worship and its ministers is as old as the world itself. Adam, as soon as he was created, knew the Creator and saw his obligation to be grateful to him and offer him sacrifices. Abel and Cain did the same. Noe practiced it after the flood, and after him Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Under the written law Moses, according to God's will, ordered worship admirably, and what the Israelites were to give for it.

At the beginning of the law of grace there was no need to demand or receive tithes or first-fruits, since many of the faithful placed their goods at the Church's disposal (Acts 4:34–35). In the first centuries the Church abounded in riches, the fruit of offerings which she distributed in alms. But after some time she found herself short of what was needed to maintain worship and its ministers decently. So she was obliged to use her right

and to make the payment of tithes and first-fruits another of her formal precepts.

Such, my son, are the devout ends the Church has had in establishing these precepts. From the usefulness and profit that come from them to the whole Christian people you can see how diligent you should be in keeping them. In doing so you will at the same time fulfil those of the law of God. For I told you elsewhere that he will not have Christ for his father who does not have the Church for his mother; and without her you could not attain the end for which you were created, which is heavenly glory. And so that you do not forget that in obeying holy Church you obey Jesus Christ himself, I show him to you in the middle of the plate, risen. For he is the founder and head of this holy Church, and this miracle of the resurrection is one of the chief foundations and proofs of her truth.

Q. How many are the Commandments of the Church?

A. They are five, etc. (see the First Catechism above).

Q. Are we obliged to keep the Commandments of the Church?

A. Yes; and he who despises what the Church has ordained despises Jesus Christ.

Q. What causes excuse from keeping them?

A. Two: dispensation and grave inconvenience.

Q. What is the purpose of the precepts of the Church?

A. Chiefly two: the worship of God and the sanctification of the faithful.

Q. What does the first commandment command?

A. That on feast days we hear the whole Mass with attention and devotion.

Q. What is the Mass?

A. It is a living representation of the life, passion and death of Jesus Christ, and a sacrifice in which the same Christ who offered himself on the cross is offered.

Q. To whom is the Mass offered?

A. To the eternal Father.

Q. For what ends is it offered?

A. For four: to honor him, to give him thanks, to satisfy for our sins and to ask him for favors.

Q. What must one do to hear it well?

A. Be present at it from beginning to end, and be attentive and devout, thinking of the Lord's passion or of some other spiritual thing.

Q. When does the obligation to hear Mass begin?

A. At the age of discretion, which is commonly reckoned at seven years.

Q. What does the second command?

A. That we confess every year.

Q. Why does it say "at least once a year"?

A. To show the Church's desire that we should confess more often.

Q. Whom does it bind?

A. All Christians who have reached the use of reason.

Q. What does the third command?

A. That every year at Easter time we receive Communion in our own parish.

Q. Does one who confesses and receives Communion badly fulfil these precepts?

A. No, and he commits two horrible sacrileges.

Q. What does the fourth command?

A. To keep the days of abstinence and fasting, unless there is a privilege, dispensation or grave impediment.

Q. How must we keep this commandment?

A. As people of good conscience keep it; and in case of doubt, ask the confessor.

Q. What does the fifth command?

A. The support of worship and its ministers.

Q. Who has undertaken to support worship and its ministers?

A. The civil Government.

Q. And if the Government did not fulfil it, who would be obliged?

A. The people, by divine and natural law.

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[1] Council of Trent, Session XXII, chapter 6. St. Pius X encouraged frequent and daily Communion (*Sacra Tridentina*, 1905).

Part Four. The Doctrine of Works

Lesson 1. The Vices, or Capital Sins



Plate XXV. The capital sins. Justice. 1. Pride: Lucifer and the peacock. 2. Covetousness: Judas and the vulture. 3. Lust: Noe's ark and the goat. 4. Anger: Saul, David and the tiger. 5. Gluttony: Epulo and the pig. 6. Envy: Joseph's brothers and the dog. 7. Sloth: the sleeping man and the lean donkey.

Section One. Evil Works

Up to now, dear son, I have explained to you what every Christian must believe, hope for and observe if he wishes, as he ought, to love his God and his neighbor with all his heart. But to put the keeping of the Commandments of the law of God and of the Church into practice, it is necessary, according to the maxim of the Holy Ghost, to *decline from evil, and do good* (Ps. 36:27). So I feel as it were compelled to explain to you now what works you must keep away from or guard against,

as contrary to your salvation and to the will of God; and which you must practice, if you wish to please him and be happy in this world and the next. Such is the subject of the doctrine of works, which I have divided into two sections. In the first I will treat of evil works, *diverte a malo* \[turn away from evil\]; and in the second of good ones, *et fac bonum* \[and do good\] (Ps. 36:27).

Every evil work is an offense against God, and is called sin. It can be committed by thought, word, deed and omission. It is divided into original and actual, and actual sin is mortal or venial. *Original sin* is the one we contract as descendants of Adam, and it is forgiven us by Baptism. Sin is *venial* when the offense done to God is slight, and it is easily forgiven. If one is truly sorry for it, it is forgiven without needing to be confessed by any of these nine things: 1. hearing Mass devoutly; 2. receiving Communion worthily; 3. attending sermons; 4. the bishop's blessing; 5. saying the Our Father; 6. saying the general confession; 7. holy water; 8. blessed bread; 9. acts of contrition with striking of the breast. Even so, it is better to confess it. *Mortal sin* is a grave offense against God. It is called mortal because it kills the soul, taking from it supernatural life, the life of grace. It is not forgiven unless it is confessed, if circumstances allow. If there is no time, there must be true contrition with a firm and real desire to confess it when one can. The *sin of omission* is committed by failing to do, say or think what we ought to think, say or do. Unfortunately many pay no attention to this sin, though it ruins the soul. In this lesson I will speak to you only of the vices or capital sins, from which all the others flow.

Look at the plate, my son. That figure in the middle represents divine Justice, which will give you reward or punishment according to the good or evil you have done. That is what the scales and the sword she holds signify. In one of the pans are good works, and in the other the laurel branch. This is to give you to understand that if you do well you will enter in triumph into eternal glory; but if on the contrary you do evil, the rigor of divine justice awaits you. The vices or capital sins are seven, all of which are punished with horrible pains in the next life. I will explain them to you one by one, with the virtue opposed to each.

Pride. This vice is a disordered appetite for one's own excellence. Such was the vice that mastered Lucifer, as you see at no. 1 of the plate. St. Michael attacks him, saying to him: "Who is like God!" For Lucifer in a way claimed to be equal to the Most High. His proud claim turned out so contrary for him that from a beautiful angel he was changed into a most hideous devil. From the height of heaven he was hurled into the depths of hell, and from a place of delights he was cast into a place of eternal pains. The proud man is compared to the peacock, which is shown in the plate for this reason. Seeing itself so beautiful, it grows vain and conceited and spreads its tail feathers into a fan; but they say it lowers its pride when it sees the ugliness of its feet.

Humility is the virtue opposed to this vice. By it every person, having a true knowledge of himself, judges rightly of his good or evil doing. So that you may not grow proud, my son, but may always remain humble, consider what you were before, what you are now and what you will be afterwards. Before, you were nothing… Now, as to the body, you are a sack of filth, subject to all illnesses and to death. As to the soul, besides having been born with original sin, you are capable of committing countless sins. And what will you be? Alas! As to the body, first a rottenness swarming with worms, and after them a handful of dust until the day of resurrection. As to the soul, either eternally happy or eternally wretched. Love, then, my son, the virtue of humility. Besides gaining you heavenly glory, since by it you imitate our divine Redeemer, who said: *Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart* (Matt. 11:29), it will make you happy in this life, through the great peace in which you will live, generally esteemed. The humble man draws the hearts of all people to himself. The proud man, on the contrary, is loathed by everyone. Even when some pay court to him, if he is powerful, it is not out of love but out of need. But let the wheel of fortune turn, and you will at once see the very ones who flattered him before despise him, making him go through the same humiliations he made others suffer. Even so, I charge you never to do this yourself. Pity the proud man both in prosperity and in misfortune, and pray God for him, that he may touch his heart. And never forget that maxim of the holy Gospel: return good for evil.

Covetousness. This vice is a disordered appetite for temporal riches. Look at no. 2 of the plate. This figure represents Judas, who hanged himself after selling Jesus, his master, for thirty pieces of silver, which is what the purse in his hand indicates. Such are the effects of covetousness. Oh! How many there are who commit

the most horrible crimes to increase their wealth!… The covetous man is compared to the vulture, because this animal is insatiable for human blood and devours people's entrails. So too the covetous man commits the greatest felonies, extortions and injustices to enrich himself at the cost of his fellow men's misery, and is never satisfied.

Liberality is the opposite virtue. One who has it disposes of riches in the way fitting for himself and for others, wanting only what belongs to him in justice. He relieves his neighbor's needs with alms as far as he can, and shows the generous and prudent marks of kindness his fortune allows.

Lust. This vice is a disordered appetite for base pleasures. It is so monstrous, so terrible and so hateful to God that for it he has sent the greatest punishments upon the earth. Note at no. 3 the ark of Noe, in which only eight persons were saved out of all who peopled the world. All the rest were drowned in the waters of the flood God sent on the earth to punish the sins of impurity; and understand that at that time the world was already very populous. Because of this same sin God sent fire and burned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha; and for it the men of Sichem, of Israel and of Benjamin were slain, with many others I could cite to you. The lustful person is compared to a lascivious beast, as you see in the plate. Yes, my son, yes: this sin turns into a beast whoever commits it; it turns him into a devil. Flee, then, from such a vice. It would make you unhappy in this world, with diseases, expense, dishonor and early death, and in the next it would make you suffer the eternal pains of hell.

Chastity is the contrary virtue. By it the chaste person lessens the force of lustful passion by fleeing occasions and mortifying the body, and by prayer obtains from God and the most holy Virgin the grace not to sin. I charge you in a special way, my son, to try at all costs to keep yourself chaste. Remember that we are living temples of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:19), who took possession of us on the day of our baptism. We must not profane that temple, as we should certainly do by any impurity we committed. Think that God sees you, and that he can strike you dead at any instant and cast you into hell.

Anger. This vice is a disordered appetite for revenge. Look, my son, at no. 4 of the plate: Saul pursuing David weapon in hand, though he had received nothing but favors from him. But he began to be jealous and envious of David's successes and exploits, and was always scheming to kill him. This passion is compared to the tiger, the fiercest beast, which kills and tears apart for the mere pleasure of doing harm; the spiteful man does the same.

Meekness and Patience are the virtues opposed to the cruel vice of anger. With meekness we bear with our neighbors and treat them with kindness and charity. With patience we bear without irritation the pains, damages and injuries that afflict us. Try to acquire these virtues, my son, being meek and humble of heart in imitation of Jesus Christ, the most holy Virgin and the Saints. Never fly into a rage or let yourself be carried away by anger. Think that if you do not forgive, you will not be forgiven (Matt. 6:15); and that no mad dogs will enter heaven, such as the wrathful are, or those who let themselves be carried away by anger.

Gluttony. This vice is a disordered appetite for eating and drinking. Woe to one who gives himself up to the excesses of gluttony! His god, according to the Apostle, is his belly (Phil. 3:19). He forgets his Creator, his neighbor and himself, and at last finds himself damned at the hour he least expects, as you see at no. 5. That one below is the rich Epulo, the rich man of whom the Gospel tells us, who feasted sumptuously and let poor Lazarus, who is above in Abraham's bosom, die of want at his gate (Luke 16:19–31). The glutton is compared to the pig, which eats the acorn without stopping to look up at the oak it falls from. So he devours and gulps without raising his eyes to heaven to give thanks to God, who created him and the food he stuffs himself with. My son, do not let yourself be mastered by so degrading a passion.

Temperance is the virtue opposed to this vice. Think that we must eat and drink to live, not live to eat and drink. Abstinence, or moderation in food and drink, is most useful for body and soul. So whenever you eat, deny yourself some little trifle. And when your age allows it and your director approves, I advise you to do

some fasting besides what holy Church commands.

Envy. This vice is sorrow at another's good, or displeasure at one's neighbor's happiness or good fortune. Look, my son, at no. 6 of the plate. That youth is the chaste Joseph, and these others are his brothers, who are putting him into a dry cistern so that he may die there. They began by envying him because they saw he was more loved by his father Jacob, and because he had had dreams or visions which gave to understand that a day would come when he would be greater than they. In the end they sold him as a slave to some foreign merchants (Gen. 37). The envious man is compared to a dog. If it sees a bone or food thrown to others, it is driven by envy to run at once to take it from them, and it quarrels with all.

Charity, the virtue opposed to this vice, consists in loving our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. It rejoices in his prosperity and feels his misfortunes as if they were our own, relieving them as far as we can, as we should wish to be relieved if we were in the same case. This is what you must practice, my son. If you love your neighbor you will be loved by God, and for the good you do him you will receive the reward in this world and the next.

Sloth. This vice is a slackness or dejection of spirit in doing good, and it brings with it a certain sadness about spiritual things and the exercise of the virtues. Look at no. 7 of the plate: do you see how soundly the lazy man sleeps? But observe too how the devil, taking advantage of his drowsiness, sows cockle in his field (Matt. 13:25). The evil spirit always takes advantage of the opportunities the lazy man gives him to take possession of his soul, like the thief who breaks into the house when the master is least on guard. The lazy man is compared to the donkey, which will not move without the stick.

Diligence is the virtue opposed to sloth. Let us keep in mind, my son, what St. Peter charges us all in these words: *Be sober and watch: because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour* (1 Pet. 5:8). We must therefore watch and strive to do good works, keeping the holy precepts and each fulfilling the obligations of his state. Let us flee from sin, my son, and practice virtue, and God will crown us with glory. Amen.

Q. How many kinds of works are there?

A. Two, good and evil.

Q. Which are the good?

A. Virtuous works, or those that conform to reason and the law of God.

Q. Which are the evil?

A. Sins.

Q. What is sin?

A. Doing, saying, desiring or thinking something against the law of God.

Q. How many kinds of sin are there?

A. Two, original and actual.

Q. What is original sin?

A. It is the sin we inherit from our first parents Adam and Eve.

Q. What effects does original sin cause in us?

A. It makes us be born children of wrath and unhappy on earth, subject to all miseries, illnesses and death.

Q. What is actual sin?

A. That which is committed by one's own will.

Q. Into what kinds is it divided?

A. Into mortal and venial.

Q. What is mortal sin?

A. Doing, saying, desiring or thinking something against the law of God in a grave matter.

Q. Why is it called mortal?

A. Because it kills the soul of the one who commits it, taking from it the life of grace.

Q. What effects does mortal sin cause in the soul?

A. It strips it of all the merits previously acquired, takes from it the life and beauty of grace, makes it ugly as the devil, makes it unworthy of heaven and deserving of the torments of hell.

Q. Then is there nothing that should frighten us so much as mortal sin?

A. That is indeed so, and we must flee from it as from the sight of a serpent (Ecclus. 21:2).

Q. What is venial sin?

A. Doing, saying, desiring or thinking something against the law of God in a light matter.

Q. Why is it called venial?

A. Because it is easier to obtain *venia*, or pardon, for it than for mortal sin.

Q. What effects does venial sin cause in the soul?

A. It lessens the fervor of charity, disposes the soul to fall into mortal sin, makes it unworthy of God's benefits, and deserving of terrible pains in this world or in purgatory.

Q. Is not doing and not saying what we ought a sin?

A. Yes, it is a sin of omission, and it will be mortal or venial according to what is omitted.

Q. Should this sin be greatly feared?

A. Very greatly, all the more because it attracts less attention, and meanwhile it ruins the soul.

Q. What must concur for a word, action or omission to be a mortal sin?

A. Three things: full advertence, full consent, and a forbidden thing in grave matter.

Q. If one of these conditions is lacking, what sin will it be?

A. A venial sin.

Q. How many are the enemies of the soul?

A. Three: the world, the devil and the flesh.

Q. Why are they called enemies of the soul?

A. Because they always make war on it and try to make it fall into sin.

Q. What is the world?

A. Men who follow perverse maxims, lovers of interests, honors and pleasures.

Q. How does the world tempt us?

A. By putting before us the sayings and ways of its followers to seduce us.

Q. How shall we defend ourselves against the world?

A. With the law of God, the Gospel, and the deeds of Jesus and the Saints.

Q. What is the devil?

A. He is the bad angel, enemy of God and envious of our happiness.

Q. How does the devil tempt us?

A. By putting evil thoughts in us within, and stumbling blocks without.

Q. How shall we defend ourselves against the devil?

A. With humility, prayer, holy water and signing ourselves with the cross.

Q. What is the flesh?

A. It is our own nature, which shrinks from good and inclines to evil.

Q. How does the flesh tempt us?

A. With evil inclinations and disordered passions.

Q. What are the passions?

A. They are impulses or inward disturbances that blind us.

Q. How many are the passions?

A. Eleven, but the most harmful are two: love

of self and fear of worldly people.

Q. What is the object of self-love?

A. Pride on the part of the soul, and sensuality on the part of the body.

Q. How shall we overcome the flesh with its passions?

A. By fleeing dangers, and also by mortification, frequent use of the Sacraments, and devotion to most holy Mary, the Angels and the Saints.

Q. How shall we overcome fear of worldly people?

A. By paying no heed to their sayings or their bogeys, fearing God alone.

Q. Why does God permit the temptations of our enemies?

A. For our exercise and greater crown, since *he is not crowned, except he strive lawfully* (2 Tim. 2:5).

Q. Since the enemies are so many, so strong and so cunning, shall we not necessarily be overcome?

A. Never. No one is overcome except one who gives himself up through cowardice and of his own will. For God never permits the temptation to be greater than the grace he gives us to overcome it with profit (1 Cor. 10:13), if we on our part do what we ought.

Q. What should one do who has the misfortune to fall into sin?

A. Repent at once, and confess as soon as possible.

Q. How many are the capital sins?

A. Seven. The first, pride. The second, covetousness. The third, lust. The fourth, anger. The fifth, gluttony. The sixth, envy. The seventh, sloth.

Q. Why are these sins called capital?

A. Because they are the head of the rest.

Q. Are they always mortal?

A. No.

Q. What is pride?

A. A disordered appetite to be thought more of than others.

Q. What is covetousness?

A. A disordered appetite for riches.

Q. What is lust?

A. A disordered appetite for carnal pleasures.

Q. What is anger?

A. A disordered appetite for revenge.

Q. What is gluttony?

A. A disordered appetite for eating and drinking.

Q. What is envy?

A. Sorrow at another's good.

Q. What is sloth?

A. Slackness in doing good.

Q. Are there not seven virtues against these seven sins?

A. Yes, and they are these. Against pride, humility. Against covetousness, liberality. Against lust, chastity. Against anger, meekness and patience. Against gluttony, temperance. Against envy, charity. Against sloth, diligence.

Lesson 2. The Sins against the Holy Ghost

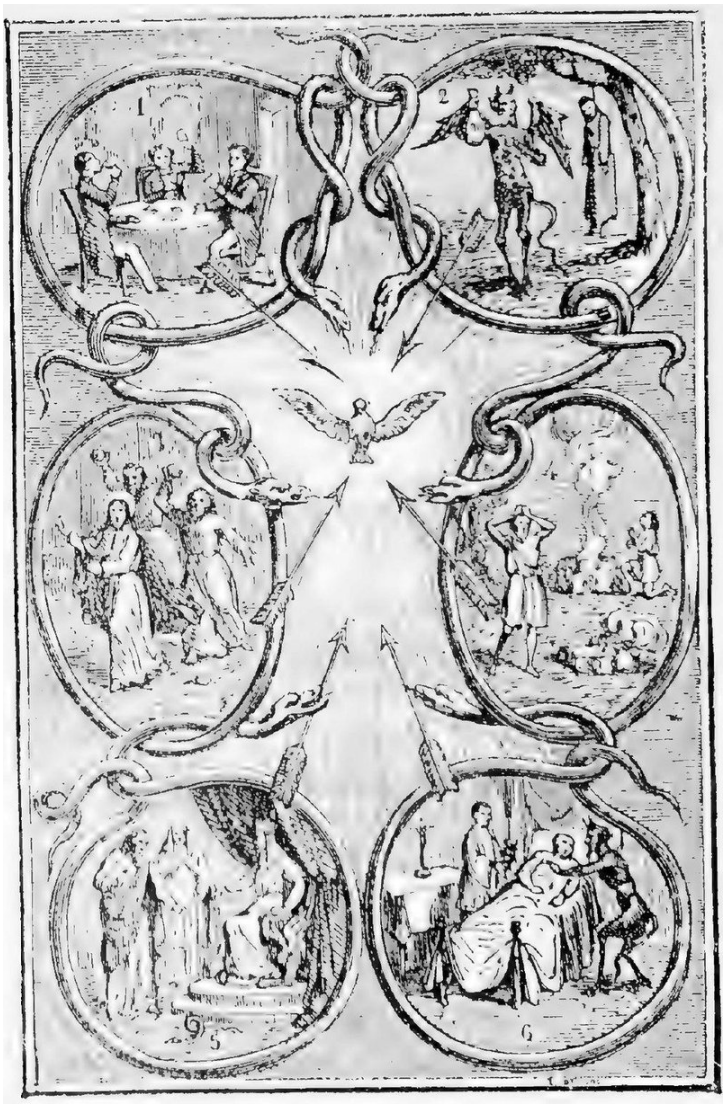

Plate XXVI. The sins against the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost. 1. Worldly people. 2. Judas in despair. 3. They try to stone Jesus. 4. The sadness of Cain. 5. The obstinacy of Pharao. 6. The impenitent dying man.

Those arrows aimed at the Holy Ghost, who is in the form of a dove in the center of the plate, are there to show you, my son, that the six sins called sins against the Holy Ghost are committed in contempt of the graces he gives us to withdraw us from sin.

The first is: *Presumption of being saved without any merit.* Do you see those at no. 1 gambling and drinking, who think of nothing but amusing themselves and passing the time? Ask them whether they want to be saved, and they will answer that they do want it and hope to achieve it. What folly! If a farmer neither tills the fields nor sows, will he reap? If a day-laborer passes the time laughing, playing and making a racket, will he deserve his wage? Certainly not. So those hope in vain to be saved who, far from doing good works, continually resist the inspirations of the divine Spirit, who tells them: "Do good while time is granted you; do on your part what you can, and God will do the rest."

The second is: *Despair of the divine mercy.* At no. 2 is Judas, whom the devil tempted and drove to despair after inducing him to betray his divine Master. He began by setting before him the enormity of his sin; he made him see that God would not forgive him; and he ended by advising him to hang himself. Oh, what a horrible wickedness this is! It is true that the malice of mortal sin is great; but it is also true that the goodness and mercy of God are greater still. That is why despair is a most grievous insult to the divine Spirit: it amounts to resisting and abandoning the grace he offers the sinner, or else denying its power and efficacy. But note the sinner's inconsistency, and the bad advice of the devil, who tells him: "Great is your sin!…

despair… kill yourself…" Ah, unhappy man! What do you gain by taking your life? Far from lessening the gravity of the crime, you increase it; and to free yourself from the remorse of conscience you cast yourself into the eternal pains of hell. No, my son, no. This is not the way to find peace after committing a crime. The way is to repent, ask God's forgiveness and firmly resolve not to commit it again. Instead of attempting his life, the sinner should ask God to preserve it, so that he may confess well and do penance in this world by bearing pains and trials, in order not to have to suffer eternally after death in hell, or in purgatory.

The third is: *Attacking known truth in order to sin more freely.* Figure no. 3 represents Jesus Christ, and the others are the Jews who wanted to stone him. The Saviour worked wonders by which his divinity was easily recognized; but far from following his teaching, they hated him. And why? Because he rebuked vices, which the proud could not bear, for they preferred darkness to light (John 3:19), like one with sore eyes who craves darkness. This is a horrible sin against the divine Spirit, who warns every person and makes known the evil he must flee and the good he must practice to be saved. But there are some who, instead of being docile to his holy inspirations, resist them. They even persecute the person the Holy Ghost uses as his instrument to warn them, uttering insults and mocking and jeering at his warnings, if they do not also stone him, as the Jews did Jesus. There are others who despise or attack the truths of the faith and the sound maxims of the Gospel, although their own conscience, moved by the Holy Ghost, tells them these are solid, holy and necessary for salvation. Do not imitate them, my son. Rather be always docile, not only to the instructions but also to the inspirations the divine Spirit will give you.

The fourth is: *Envy of the spiritual goods our neighbor has received from God.* At no. 4 are Cain and Abel. Abel offers God sacrifices of the best he has, and as soon as he can; unlike the other, who waits to sacrifice until the last hour and offers the worst. So God, seeing the goodness of what Abel offered him and the promptness and good will with which he did it, accepted his sacrifices and granted him abundant graces. And when Cain saw that God did not deal with him as with his brother, he was full of rage and, envying his brother's prosperity, fell into despair. This is what his figure with his hands on his head represents. No, my son, envy no one. Try to be good, and God, who is a most just judge, will give you the reward you have merited by your good works, in this world or the next.

The fifth is: *Obstinacy in sin.* This is represented by Pharao, shown at no. 5. The one in front of him is Moses, turning his rod into a serpent, as you see in the plate. But far from yielding at the sight of this and the other wonders, that King called the magicians, who are those other figures, to do as much by diabolical art. The wonders God worked in favor of his people Israel not only did not soften him; he persisted in persecuting the Israelites more and more. In punishment for his obstinacy he was drowned in the Red Sea with all his army. In this or some similar way those will be punished who persist obstinately in sin, despising the inspirations of the divine Spirit and the admonitions of the Lord's ministers. If not in this world, then in the next they will be plunged into the sea of the flames of hell.

The sixth is: *The purpose of dying impenitent.* That man at no. 6 is a dying man. While he was healthy he thought only of amusing himself, enjoying himself and getting rich, presuming that at the hour of death everything is lost and comes to nothing. But the wretch learns, though too late, how true is the proverb *talis vita, finis ita* \[as the life, so the end\]: as one lives, so one dies. Since his life was bad, it is no wonder that his death is bad too. See how he turns his back on the priest who wants to administer the Sacraments to him, and how he listens to the devil, who persuades him to the final impenitence in which he ends.

If you have paid attention, my son, you will have noticed that all the panels showing the six sins against the Holy Ghost are framed with serpents. This is because those words of the Gospel can be applied to sinners of this kind, when they are called a *generation of vipers* (Matt. 3:7). For that is what they really are, and as such they will not escape the punishments God, whom they have provoked, has prepared for them. And you must know that these sins are almost incurable, or very hard to forgive. This is not on God's part, but on the part of the sinners themselves. By opposing and resisting what they need to be cured and obtain pardon, they are like

the sick man who will not take his medicine and so dies. What I ask of you, my son, is that the mere memory or picture of such execrable sins should fill you with horror. Regard them as the greatest obstacle to your salvation, and make yourself docile to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, which will lead you straight to the heavenly fatherland.

Q. How many are the sins against the Holy Ghost?

A. Six. The first, presumption of being saved without any merit. The second, despair of the divine mercy. The third, attacking known truth in order to sin more freely. The fourth, envy of the spiritual goods our neighbor has received from God. The fifth, obstinacy in sin. The sixth, the purpose of dying impenitent.

Q. Why are these sins called sins against the Holy Ghost?

A. Because they are committed in contempt of the graces the Holy Ghost gives to withdraw us from sin.

Lesson 3. The Sins That Cry to God for Vengeance



Plate XXVII. The sins that cry to God for vengeance. 1. Cain kills Abel. 2. Sodom in flames. 3. He turns a deaf ear to the poor. 4. He ill-treats workmen or day-laborers.

Look, my son, at the eternal Father in the plate, hurling thunderbolts from heaven at those guilty of the four horrible sins that cry to God for vengeance. Because these sins violate most plainly the charity owed to our neighbor, they are punished with terrible pains in this world and the next.

The first is: *Wilful murder.* At no. 1 Cain is shown in the act of killing his brother Abel. He urged Abel to go out with him into the field. The innocent man agreed, not suspecting his brother's evil intention, and Cain, throwing himself on him suddenly and treacherously, killed him. But God, protector and avenger of the innocent, asked Cain: *Where is thy brother Abel?* He answered: *I know not: am I my brother's keeper?* And God said to him then: *What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth. Now therefore cursed shalt thou be upon the earth… When thou shalt till it, it shall not yield to thee its fruit: a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be upon the earth* (Gen. 4:9–12). Woe to those who by wilful murder provoke, like Cain, the vengeance of the Lord! Like him they will be unhappy in this world and the next. In this world they live in constant remorse and fear, seeming to see the shadow of their victims everywhere, as some unhappy men who had the misfortune to commit so horrible a crime have publicly confessed. In the next they will suffer eternally, if they die impenitent.

The second is: *The sin of sodomy.* At no. 2 of this plate is shown the city of Sodom, from which this unspeakable sin takes its name. See how the eternal Father sets it alight and turns it to living flames, not only the houses but the animals and people too. Four persons alone were found righteous in the whole city, and at the Angels' warning they left it. Apart from these, all the inhabitants died in the flames, and the same happened to the neighboring cities of Gomorrha, Adama and Seboim. They passed from the fire of this world to that of hell, where they will burn forever. To convince yourself how infamous the vice of impurity is, which was the reigning vice in that unhappy city and those around it, attend to what God himself said: *The cry of Sodom and Gomorrha is multiplied, and their sin is become exceedingly grievous* (Gen. 18:20). On these words Cornelius a Lapide comments: "The sins themselves, like accusers, have gone up to heaven to present themselves to me. They cry out against men so impious, and compel me to vengeance." And that is why, provoked, he punished and burned them. Flee, my son, flee for God's sake from every sin of impurity. Sins of this kind are the most abominable and the most degrading, those that most provoke the Lord,

and those that cast the greatest number of souls into hell.

The third is: *Oppressing the poor.* At no. 3 is that rich man sitting in his armchair. Like another Epulo of the Gospel, he cares only for eating and drinking daintily and dressing in every luxury, stopping his ears so as not to hear the cries and weeping of the poor, the widows and the orphans whom he oppresses. How desolate these unhappy people are! Do you see them around his armchair? But raise your eyes, and see how the eternal Father hurls a thunderbolt at that pitiless man to kill him, making him hear at the same time these words: *Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee: and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?* (Luke 12:20). Let the oppressor of the poor, whoever he may be, attend to what the Holy Ghost says in the book of Ecclesiasticus, chapter 35: *The Lord will not accept any person against a poor man, and he will hear the prayer of him that is wronged. He will not despise the prayers of the fatherless; nor the widow, when she poureth out her complaint. Do not the widow's tears run down the cheek, and her cry against him that causeth them to fall? For from the cheek they go up even to heaven, and the Lord that heareth will not be delighted with them* (Ecclus. 35:16–19); that is, he will be kindled to anger against those who are the cause. On these words Cornelius a Lapide says: "Orphans and widows, like deserted houses, abandoned and exposed to the injuries of all men, are commonly harassed, despoiled and oppressed by the powerful. Since they have no other refuge, they turn to God and cry out to him to free them from oppression and take up the cause of justice. And God, who protects the forsaken, as it is written, *To thee is the poor man left: thou wilt be a helper to the orphan* (Ps. 9:35), does not despise their prayers. Rather he attends to them, and hears the words they address to him with groans, sighs and tears." Hence, even though their tears fall to the ground, the cry goes up to heaven, and God punishes the oppressors.

The fourth is: *Defrauding workmen of their wages.* Do you see at no. 4 that man with a stick in his hand driving the workmen out of his house instead of paying them their wages? He certainly would not do it if he feared God, and remembered that the Holy Ghost says in chapter 34 of Ecclesiasticus: *He that taketh away*

the bread gotten by sweat, is like him that killeth his neighbour. He that sheddeth blood, and he that defraudeth the labourer of his hire, are brothers (Ecclus. 34:26–27). And St. James says these words to such defrauders in chapter 5, verse 4, of his epistle: *Behold the hire of the labourers, who have reaped down your fields, of which you have defrauded them, crieth: and the cry of them hath entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have feasted upon earth: and in riotousness you have nourished your hearts, in the day of slaughter* (Jas. 5:4–5). That is, like victims to be sacrificed to the wrath of God on the terrible day of judgment, which is the day of his vengeance; and they already suffer great misfortunes beforehand. And to you, poor people, oppressed, harassed and defrauded, I will say with the same apostle St. James: *Be patient therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord* (Jas. 5:7), who will not leave your suffering unrewarded.

Q. How many are the sins that cry to God for vengeance?

A. Four. The first, wilful murder. The second, the sin of sodomy. The third, oppressing the poor. The fourth, defrauding workmen of their wages.

Q. Why are they said to cry to God for vengeance?

A. Because their malice is so great that God begins to punish them even in this world.

Lesson 4. The Sins of Which Many Become Guilty without Committing Them



Plate XXVIII. The sins of which one becomes guilty without committing them. 1. Herod, who orders killing. 2. Caiphas, who advises. 3. Saul, who consents. 4. Eve, who provokes. 5. A master who praises. 6. An

authority who does not prevent evil. 7. A superior who permits. 8. Sharers in stolen goods. 9. A lawyer who defends a bad cause.

Ah, my son! How very many ought to cry out and say to God with David: *From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord: and from those of others spare thy servant* (Ps. 18:13–14)! That is, forgive me the sins I do not know, and also those of which I have become guilty without committing them. So that you may know these sins and keep yourself from them, I will explain them to you with the plate. They are nine.

The first is: *Ordering some evil to be done.* At no. 1 is Herod, who orders the innocents to be killed (Matt. 2:16). See how the soldiers snatch the innocent little ones from their mothers and cut their throats. It is true that Herod killed none of them with his own hands; and yet he became criminally guilty of that great slaughter by giving the order for it, according to the principle: *Qui per alium facit, per seipsum facere videtur* \[he who acts through another is deemed to act himself\]. It follows that whoever orders something evil becomes guilty of the wickedness as if he committed it himself. We do not mean by this that the agents remain innocent, nor that in such cases they ought to obey. For it is well known that superiors are to be obeyed only when what they command can be done without sin. The reason is that human authority is a share in the divine, a power God has given them, as he himself says: *Per me reges regnant, et legum conditores justa decernunt* \[By me kings reign, and lawgivers decree just things\] (Prov. 8:15). From this it follows that they can command only just things. When they do not command such things they are not to be obeyed, since in that case they are not exercising God's authority but abusing it. Then God, who forbids the thing, must be obeyed before those who command it (Acts 5:29).

The second is: *Advising evil to be done.* At no. 2 is Caiphas, who advised the Sanhedrin, that is, the assembled Jewish scribes and elders, to put Jesus to death (John 11:49–50). All forming a plot, a kind of conspiracy, they managed to get Pilate to decree it. So although they did not kill Jesus with their own hands, they became guilty of that death by their advice, persuasion and urging. This tells you that whoever advises any wickedness, whatever it may be, becomes guilty of it just as if he committed it.

The third is: *Consenting to evil.* At no. 3 is St. Stephen being stoned to death, and the one on horseback represents Saul, who afterwards was St. Paul. Guarding the garments of those who stoned him, he consented to St. Stephen's death (Acts 7:57; 8:1). So in a way, as St. Augustine says, he was in the hands of all who threw stones. From this, my son, you can see that those who consent to, take pleasure and delight in the evil others commit become guilty of it as if they committed it themselves.

The fourth is: *Provoking to evil.* At no. 4 are our first parents and the serpent. Eve, by her idleness and curiosity, gave occasion to the temptation of the devil, who appeared to her in the form of a serpent. She fell into it and provoked Adam, and behold, God punished them all. Adam was punished because he consented; Eve and the serpent because they incited him. So those who provoke or instigate to evil, whether to theft, impurity or any other sin, are guilty and deserve punishment.

The fifth is: *Praising what is evil.* At no. 5 is shown a master to whom one of his employees brings a sum of money he has got for him unjustly. Instead of rebuking him sharply for it, the master praises the deed, and other servants approve it too. (So great is the merriment at that table that, as you see, even the little dog wants to share in it.) Masters, fathers and mothers become guilty of the same offense when, knowing that their sons, daughters or subordinates steal or swindle, they not only do not rebuke them, but even applaud and praise them.

The sixth is: *Not preventing evil when one can and ought.* At no. 6 is shown a man trying to climb into a house by night with evil intent, as is indicated by that woman holding the ladder. That other man sees it and could prevent such wickedness, but does not. Those become guilty of such an offense who, having authority or being able to, do not prevent wicked deeds and in some way consent, according to the principle: *Qui tacet, dum loqui tenetur, consentire videtur* \[he who is silent when bound to speak is deemed to consent\].

The seventh is: *Overlooking and permitting evil, knowing or being bound to know that it will happen.* At no. 7 are shown two young people talking alone together, and that other man is the girl's father or master. With his hand he signals that very bad saying: "Let them sort it out themselves." Woe to such a man, who becomes guilty of the evil that two young people left alone commit, and will probably commit! Oh, how many fathers and mothers, masters and mistresses, become guilty of the sins their sons and daughters, maids and employees commit, by allowing them dealings, dances, love affairs, theaters and other things of this kind! They will say they see them do nothing wrong. I believe it; but that is because they give them the occasion by withdrawing from their presence, or because the young people take advantage of their negligence in watching. But, parents and masters, understand and know it forever: you have a strict obligation to watch over them, keep an eye on them, and be suspicious of whatever they may do, according to the principle: *Licet parentibus de filiis suspicari* \[parents may be suspicious of their children\]. Ah, how many fathers and mothers are damned for the sins of their sons and daughters! Such is the threat already thundered by the prophet Ezechiel (Ezech. 3:18; 33:8).

The eighth is: *Sharing in evil.* At no. 8 is shown a hanged thief, and others dividing and hiding the jewels he stole, so making themselves sharers in his thefts. Those become guilty of this offense who receive stolen goods; who buy them knowing or suspecting they are stolen; or who take something to overlook it, or turn what is called a blind eye.

The ninth is: *Defending what is evil.* At no. 9 the one seated represents a judge, and the others are a lawyer and a man engaged in an unjust lawsuit. Though he knows it is unjust, he is still bent on getting his way. He tries with gifts and money to pervert the conscience of both, wanting the lawyer to defend his bad cause and the judge to give sentence in his favor. This may pass in this world, but not in the next. For at God's tribunal even justices will be judged: *Ego justitias judicabo* \[I will judge justices\] (Ps. 74:3). Woe to those who go to law unjustly! Woe to those who protect and favor such litigants! Both make themselves guilty at God's tribunal.

Q. How many are the sins of which one becomes guilty without committing them?

A. Nine. The first, ordering some evil to be done. The second, advising evil to be done. The third, consenting to evil. The fourth, provoking to evil. The fifth, praising what is evil. The sixth, not preventing evil when one can and ought. The seventh, overlooking and permitting evil, knowing or being bound to know that it will happen. The eighth, sharing in evil. The ninth, defending what is evil.

Q. Why is one said to become guilty of these sins without committing them?

A. Because by them one is the cause of, or an accomplice in, the evil others do.

Lesson 5. The Sacraments in General, and Baptism in Particular



Plate XXIX. The sacrament of Baptism. The most holy Trinity. Chair for the one being baptized. The baptismal font. Priest baptizing.

Section Two. Good Works

The Sacraments of the Catholic Church are those most pure fountains which spring from the side of Jesus Christ and pour out healing and most precious waters of grace. They heal our souls of the diseases of sin and relieve and supply for our miseries. In this sense the holy Council of Trent says that, though at birth we are deprived of grace, we obtain it by Baptism. If we lose this baptismal grace, we recover it by means of the sacrament of Penance. And if we preserve and increase it, we owe it to the Sacraments, for the strength they give us for this. Oh my son! How grateful we should be to Jesus Christ for having made the inexhaustible treasures of the Sacraments available to us! How highly we should value them! And how often we should desire to receive those of Penance and the Eucharist! If a doctor offered a sick man the surest and most effective remedy, would he not be mad not to accept it, and, being able to get well, to prefer suffering his ailments? If a gentleman handed over a great sum of money to ransom a slave, and the slave, instead of showing gratitude, told him he preferred slavery to freedom, should we not say he had lost his mind?… And what should we say of a poor man dying of hunger, thirst, nakedness and other miseries, who despised the more than sufficient help a generous and charitable hand offered him to remedy them all?

Know, then, my son, that those sick men, those slaves and those poor men are ourselves. And the gentleman who wants to remedy our ills is Jesus Christ, by means of the Sacraments. They are the most effective

remedies for curing all the diseases contracted through sin, and even sin itself, and the means of freeing us from slavery to the devil. The Sacraments are a most rich and abundant mine which, well worked, can enrich our souls with graces and merits. But do not forget, my son, that a remedy or medicine, however excellent and effective in itself, does not heal unless it is applied to the sick man at the right time. So too the Sacraments do not heal our souls unless they are received with the proper disposition.

This is a truth so important, and unfortunately so forgotten, that to make you see its importance I will put this comparison to you. Suppose that a king, the most powerful and the most loving toward his subjects, had set up well-stocked cash-boxes of money in all the towns of his kingdom, giving all his subjects leave to present themselves at the

treasurers to draw large sums, not only to pay their debts but also to increase their fortunes… Who would not praise the unheard-of generosity of such a monarch? And if his subjects, out of disdain or negligence, did not go to draw the money, but went on living in poverty and weighed down with debts, would anyone not say they were unworthy of pity, since if they suffered it was their own fault? Let us come, then, to the application, my son, and no longer to suppositions but to reality. Jesus Christ, *King of kings, and Lord of lords* (Apoc. 19:16), has deposited his merits, which are a treasure of infinite value, in the holy Sacraments. For the greater convenience of his subjects he has set up treasuries in each parish. So no one is obliged any longer to go to Rome, the capital and court of his kingdom, to draw on them. Everyone will find in his own town a treasury that will hand him the sums he needs to pay the debts of his sins, however great they are; and if he has no debts, those sums will serve him to increase his wealth of grace. What generous charity is that of Jesus Christ! And what black and guilty ingratitude is ours if we disdain it! Ah! Such immense graces are let pass unnoticed. While we cry to heaven about the miseries that afflict us and the debts that weigh us down, we fail to profit from a treasure offered us so generously and so easily obtained. Unhappy children of Adam! They prefer to die of hunger rather than take the trouble to stretch out their hand and take the morsel that would give them life. But since I suspect that in many this indolence comes perhaps from not knowing such divine dispensations, I have decided to explain them to you in order.

First of all you must know that the Sacraments are seven, neither more nor less. All were instituted by Jesus Christ, as is clear from tradition and was defined by the Council of Trent already cited. Not all are to be received in the same state; or, what comes to the same thing, not all require the same disposition in the person who is to receive them. Some are for giving grace to one who has not yet had it, or who, having had it, has unfortunately lost it. These are Baptism and Penance. For this reason they are called Sacraments of the dead, since they suppose the soul dead through sin, or without the life of grace. The others, the remaining five, increase grace or give new grace to one who already has it, and for the same reason they are called Sacraments of the living. Penance also causes this increase of grace when the person receiving it has not lost grace, for in that case it is a Sacrament of the living for him too. This being supposed, let us now treat of each in particular, and first of

Baptism. Baptism is the first Sacrament, and as it were the door to all the others, so that none can be received without first receiving this one. It is true that St. John the Baptist administered a kind of baptism before, but this was not the Sacrament of which we speak. It was a spur to penance, and a means he used to prepare people to receive the Redeemer. It was Jesus Christ who instituted this sacrament of Baptism, and he it was who commanded the Apostles to teach all nations, *baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. 28:19). Such is the necessity of this Sacrament that without it one cannot become a member of the Church or enter heavenly glory. The exception is someone who, unable to receive it, desires it and makes a supernatural act of contrition and love of God, or who suffers martyrdom. In such a case that desire and that martyrdom, called baptism of fire and of blood respectively, would supply for baptism of water.

For this and every other Sacrament three things are indispensable: matter, form, and a minister with intention. The matter of Baptism is water, and only natural water, such as rain, sea, river, well or spring water. Water that is not natural is therefore generally not fit matter, and still less any other liquid. The form is these words: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.* The minister is the parish priest, or any other priest with his leave. But in case of necessity any person at all is the minister, even if he is a heretic or an unbeliever.

The effects of this Sacrament are to forgive original sin and any other sins the person receiving it has committed before, and also all the punishments of the next life they deserved. By it a grace is given to the one receiving it which takes him out of slavery to the devil. For this reason the devil is shown in the plate under the baptismal font in an attitude of despair. It makes him a child of the Church, a friend of God and an heir of heaven. This is the meaning of the chair prepared at the top of the plate, where he will live for all eternity if in this world he lives as a good Christian. It makes him an adopted son of the eternal Father, whom from then on he calls father, saying: *Our Father, who art in heaven*; and a brother of Jesus Christ. His soul is made the spouse of the Holy Ghost, and his whole self filled with the grace of the most holy Trinity, which, as you see, takes delight in holy Baptism.

Before receiving Baptism the soul is not worthy to go to heaven, because there everything is beautiful, pure and perfect, and it is impure and ugly because of original sin at least. But as soon as through the sacrament it has been made a sharer in the redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ, it is freed from slavery to the devil, entirely purified, and most beautiful like the heavenly spirits. Ah! If only one could keep this beauty and purity without ever committing any sin! Besides what has been said, by Baptism the theological virtues and the gifts and fruits of the Holy Ghost are infused into the soul. It is sealed with the character, a mark or badge that shines in the soul, for greater glory in heaven if it is saved, and greater shame in hell if it is damned. Because it is sealed in this way, this Sacrament cannot be received more than once.

If you look at the plate you will see that besides the priest there is also the godfather holding the infant. Because the child cannot speak, the godfather asks in his name for Baptism and all that comes from it, and promises that he will fulfil what Baptism requires. Minors must abide by what their guardians do for their benefit. In the same way the baptized must fulfil all that the godparents promised in their name at Baptism. Since they profit from the advantages or benefits that result from it, they must likewise bear the burdens. So they must keep the promises made in their name to follow the faith and law of Jesus Christ, and to flee from what they have renounced.

In Baptism one renounces Satan, protesting that one will never serve him. One renounces his evil works, which are sins and what leads to them: forbidden games, or even games lawful in themselves if there is excess in the amount staked or the time spent. Likewise works of Satan are the dances, shows, theaters, flirtations, feasts and so on where improper actions are commonly committed, indecent words spoken, or gluttony stirred up. The devil uses all of these as snares to catch souls. Finally, one renounces the pomps, vanities and luxury in dress and furniture, in eating and drinking; for all this fills the Christian with pride, and Satan goes after the proud man. These are the promises made by all Christians in the presence of God, of heaven and of earth, at the time of receiving Baptism. Some keep them, but unfortunately more forget them and fail in them.

Those who are faithful to what they promised imitate Jesus Christ in humility, detachment from the things of the world, mortification, meekness, patience, chastity and the other virtues, keeping the commandments of his holy law and the maxims of the holy Gospel. A thousand times happy are they if they persevere! For they will have eternal life secure, as was promised them in Baptism.

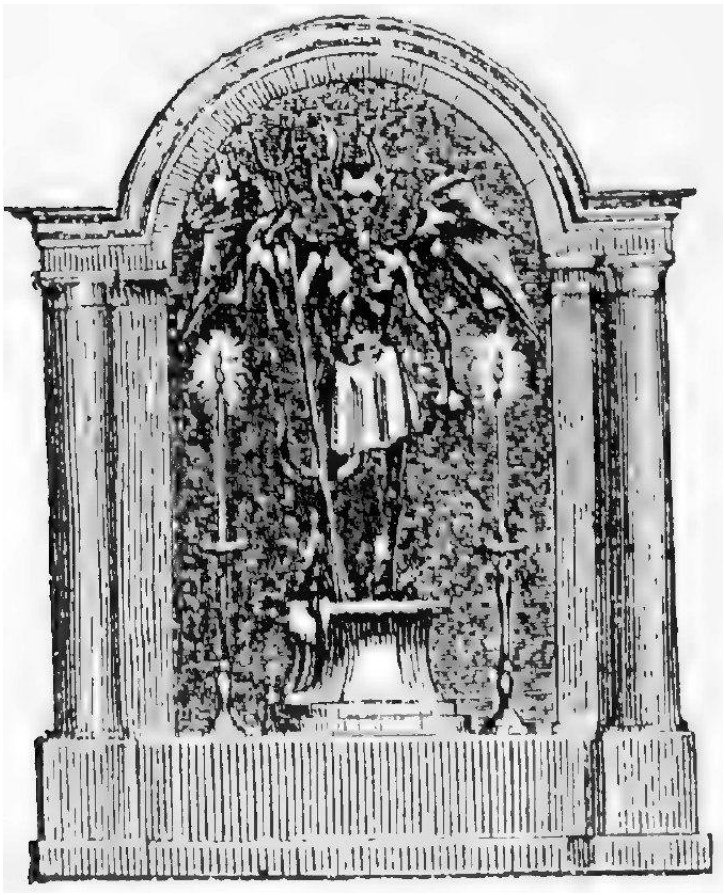

Plate XXX, figure 1. The devil honored with two candles: the works and the pomps of the bad Christian.

Others, however, behave in a way wholly contrary to what they promised. If they had bound themselves to follow Satan, they could not do more to serve him than they do. They blaspheme God, Jesus Christ and the Saints, but not the devil, whom they venerate by their works and pomps, as this figure expresses. One of the candles stands for the works, I mean sins and what leads to sin; the other stands for the pomps and vanities with which the bad Christian dishonors Jesus Christ and pays homage to the devil. Woe to those who do this! How certain and infallible is their damnation!

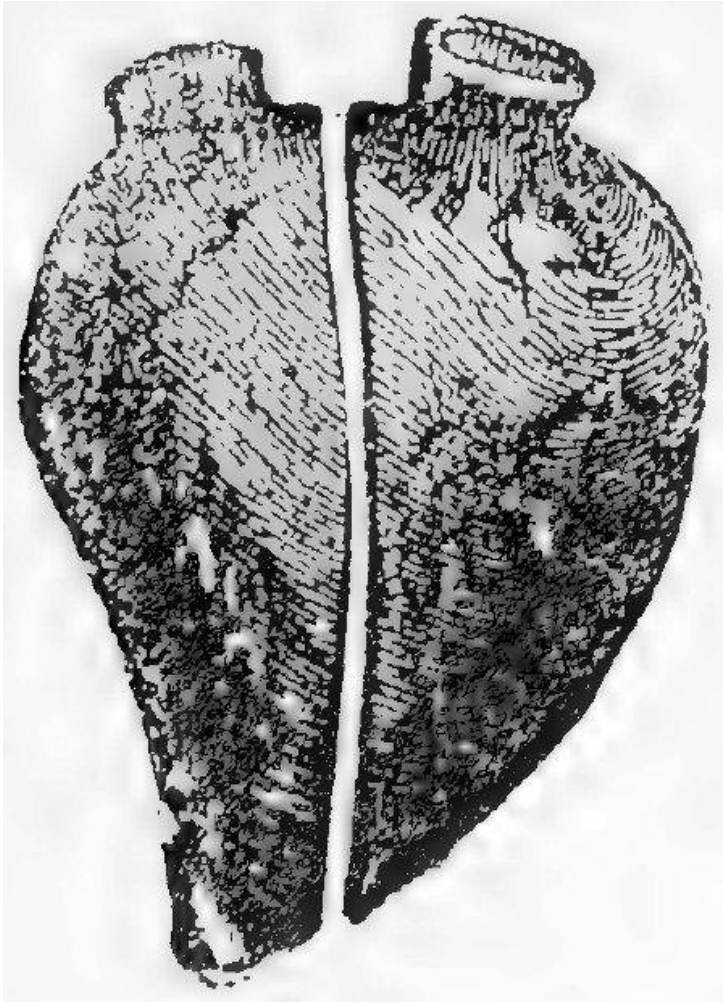

Plate XXX, figure 2. The divided heart.

There are some who have a divided heart, as is shown in this figure. With one half they claim to love Jesus Christ and keep what they promised him in Baptism, and with the other to follow the works and pomps of Satan. Plainly they attempt the impossible, for *no man can serve two masters* (Matt. 6:24), above all when they are opposed, as God and the devil are. What would you say of someone who claimed to serve at the same time in two armies or parties entirely opposed to each other?

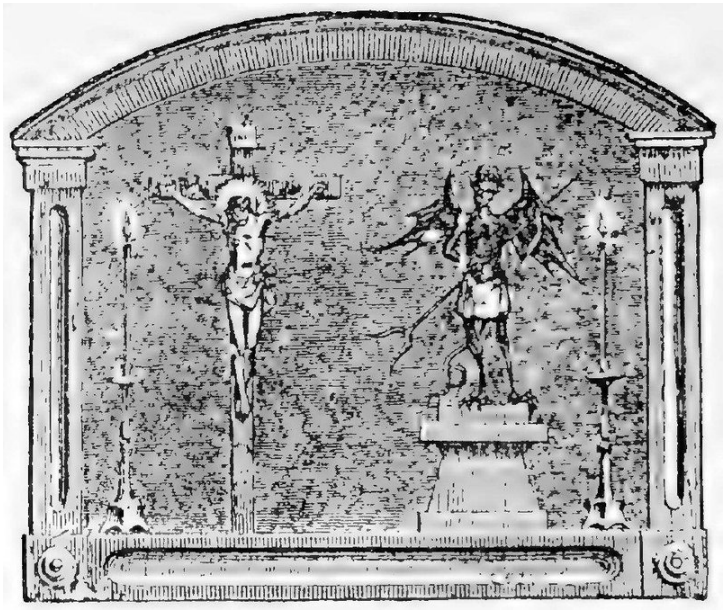

Plate XXX, figure 3. One candle to Jesus, another to the devil.

The way of life of most Christians is the one this figure shows: they burn one candle to Jesus and another to the devil. The one stands for the Mass, the Rosary, the Sacraments and the other Christian works they practice more or less often to honor Jesus Christ. The other stands for the sins they commit: gambling, dances, flirtations, immodest dress and so on. In the morning they go to Mass and to confession, and in the afternoon or evening to the dance, the theater and so on, where they commit mortal sins with full advertence and will. Woe to such people! No, my son, do not imitate them. Be a good Christian. Renew often the vows or promises made at Baptism, and keep them, so that you may go to heaven. For if you imitated them you would be damned with them, whether you think about it or not, whether you believe it or not.

Q. How are the merits of Jesus Christ applied to us?

A. By means of the Sacraments.

Q. What is a Sacrament?

A. It is a sensible thing which by divine institution has the power to signify and produce the grace it signifies.

Q. How many are the Sacraments of the Church?

A. Seven. The first, etc. (see the First Catechism above).

Q. Who instituted these Sacraments?

A. Christ our Lord, to give us his grace.

Q. What is grace?

A. A supernatural gift or divine being which makes us children of God and heirs of heaven.

Q. How many things are needed to make a Sacrament?

A. Three: matter, form, and a minister with the intention of doing what the Church does.

Q. How many kinds of Sacraments are there?

A. Two: of the living and of the dead.

Q. Which are those of the dead?

A. Baptism and Penance.

Q. Why are Baptism and Penance Sacraments of the dead?

A. Because they were instituted for those who are dead to the life of grace through original sin, or through mortal sin committed after Baptism.

Q. And if the soul receiving them is already in grace, what use are they to it?

A. They serve to increase it.

Q. Which are the Sacraments of the living?

A. The remaining five.

Q. Why are they called of the living?

A. Because they were instituted for those who are alive through grace.

Q. Would one who received a Sacrament of the living unworthily obtain the increase of grace?

A. No; he would commit a horrible sacrilege.

Q. Do the Sacraments, both of the living and of the dead, always give grace to those who receive them?

A. They always give it to those who receive them with the proper dispositions.

Q. Can all the Sacraments be received many times?

A. Not all, for Baptism, Confirmation and Orders can be received only once.

Q. Why?

A. Because they imprint a character.

Q. What is a sacramental character?

A. It is a spiritual and indelible seal imprinted on the soul.

Q. What use is the character in the next life?

A. In heaven it serves for honor and glory, and in hell for shame and torment.

Q. Are all the Sacraments equally necessary?

A. No. To enter heaven Baptism is absolutely necessary for all, and Penance for those who have sinned mortally after Baptism.

Q. What is the sacrament of Baptism?

A. It is a Sacrament by which we are born spiritually and are made Christians, children of God and of his Church.

Q. What is the matter of Baptism?

A. In ordinary Baptism, consecrated water; and in case of necessity, natural water.

Q. What is the form?

A. The words: *I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

Q. By whom and when must these words be spoken?

A. They must be spoken by the person baptizing, at the same time as he pours the water on the child’s head.

Q. Who is the ordinary minister of Baptism?

A. The parish priest, and any priest with his leave.

Q. And in case of necessity, who may baptize?

A. Any man or woman who knows how to do it; and he must have the intention of doing what the Church does.

Q. What effects does Baptism produce?

A. It makes the person become a child of God and heir of heaven; and all sins are taken from him, original sin, and actual sins if he is an adult.

Q. What further effects does Baptism produce?

A. The soul is adorned with grace, virtues and heavenly gifts; and moreover a character is imprinted on it.

Q. When Baptism takes away original sin, does it also take away the effects that concern the body?

A. No, because God wants the baptized person to remain subject to them, so that he may be humble, practice the virtues and have a constant reminder of original sin.

Q. What are the effects of original sin on the body?

A. Miseries, illnesses and death.

Q. Can one who is not baptized receive the other Sacraments?

A. No, because Baptism is as it were the door of the Church.

Q. What did you bind yourself to in the act of receiving Baptism?

A. To follow or imitate Jesus Christ, to profess his faith and to keep his holy law, even at the risk, if need be, of losing my life, as so many Martyrs have done.

Q. And what things did you renounce?

A. Through my godparents I renounced Satan, all his works and all his pomps.

Q. Are we obliged to keep the promises our godparents made for us?

A. Yes, because God received us into his friendship and grace on this condition.

Q. Why are children not allowed into the church before they are baptized?

A. Because through original sin they are slaves of Satan.

Q. Why is the one to be baptized given the name of some Saint?

A. So that he may have him as patron and imitate his virtues.

Q. What does the salt put in his mouth signify?

A. That the grace of Baptism preserves from the corruption of sin.

Q. What does the water signify?

A. That the grace of Baptism washes us from all sin.

Q. What does the white cap signify?

A. The purity of life we must keep.

Q. What does the lighted candle signify?

A. The light of good example we must give.

Q. What do the crosses made with the holy oils signify?

A. That we must live as Christians.

Lesson 6. The Sacrament of Confirmation

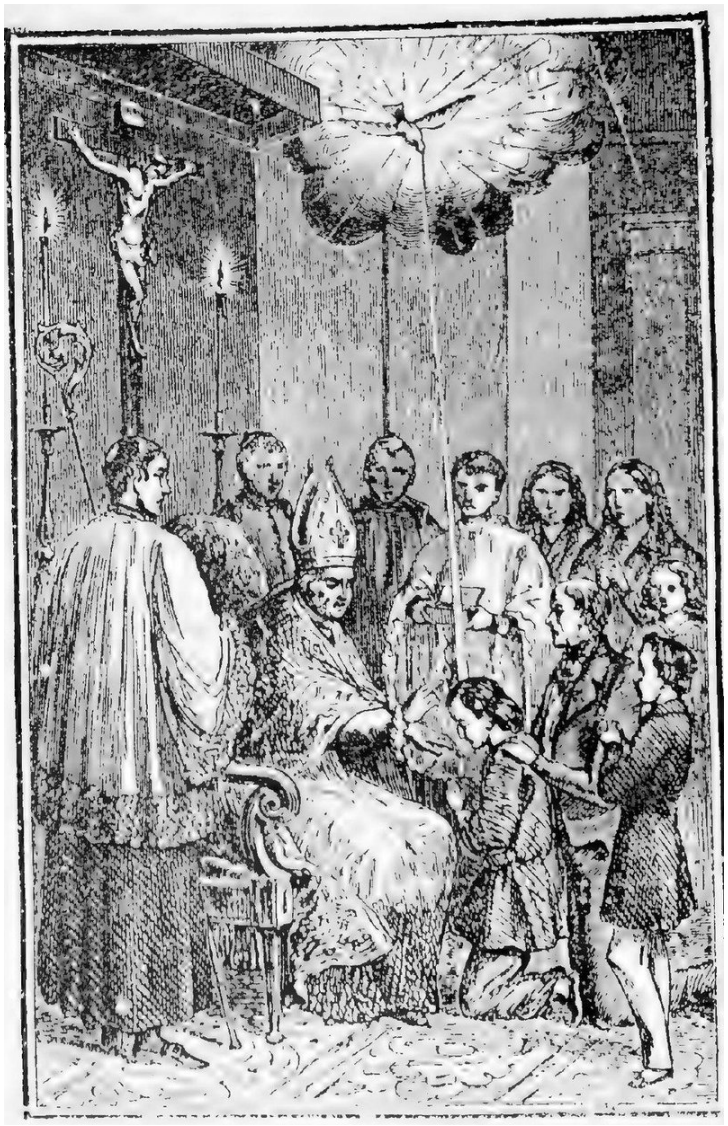

Plate XXXI. The sacrament of Confirmation. The Holy Ghost sending his grace upon the one being confirmed. The Bishop in the act of confirming.

Look at the plate, my son. Do you see how the Bishop is administering the sacrament of Confirmation? Jesus Christ instituted it to confirm us in the divine religion we have professed and to strengthen us in the spiritual life we received in Baptism. Confirmation is called the Sacrament of fullness, because it is the completion and consummation of Baptism, and also because its administration belongs to the Bishops, in whom the fullness of the ministry resides. When they confer it they lay their hands on the person confirmed and make a cross on his forehead with the sacred chrism, saying at the same time these words: *I sign thee with the sign of the cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

The effects of this Sacrament are many and wonderful. By it we receive not only an increase of sanctifying grace, as in the other Sacraments of the living, but also that sovereign gift called by St. James the *perfect gift* (Jas. 1:17), and by St. Paul the *pledge of the Spirit* (2 Cor. 1:22). You must know, my son, that by the other Sacraments the gifts of the divine Spirit are communicated to us, but in Confirmation the Holy Ghost himself is given us. The Eucharist is called the Sacrament of Jesus Christ because when we receive Communion we receive not only the grace of Jesus Christ but Jesus Christ himself. So too Confirmation might in some way be called the Sacrament of the Holy Ghost, since by it not only are the gifts of the divine Spirit communicated to us, but we also receive the Holy Ghost himself, as you see represented in the plate. And

while it is true that in Baptism we receive the life of grace, this is a weak life like that of newborn babes, as St. Peter teaches us (1 Pet. 2:2), and so it needs to be strengthened and made robust by Confirmation. In Baptism we are formed; in Confirmation we are strengthened. In Baptism we are reborn to life; in Confirmation we are armed for the fight. In Baptism we are enlisted in the army; by Confirmation we are given all we need to fight boldly. Such is the language of St. Melchiades, a Spanish pope. And in fact the special grace this Sacrament causes is to give particular helps for coming out victorious from the battles the enemies of Religion and of our eternal salvation wage against us.

So that you may form a high idea of this Sacrament, I must tell you, my son, that Jesus Christ had already communicated the gifts of the Holy Ghost to the Apostles by means of other Sacraments before Pentecost. But his promise to send them the divine Spirit himself was not fulfilled until that most memorable day. Then, coming down in tongues as of fire, he rested on the heads of the most holy Virgin and the Apostles, and all were filled with his power (Acts 2:1–4). From that day it happened for some time that whenever the Apostles confirmed, the Holy Ghost himself came down visibly on those who received this Sacrament, as we read in several chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. So Simon Magus, amazed at such a wonder, offered them a considerable sum of money if they would grant him the power to do the same. But they rejected the Magician's request with indignation (Acts 8:18–20). From him the sin by which one tries to buy a spiritual thing with a temporal one takes the name of simony.

It is true that once wonders ceased to be necessary for the spread and establishment of the Gospel, the divine Spirit also ceased to show himself visibly in Confirmation. But he has not for that reason ceased, nor will he ever cease, to come invisibly upon those who receive the sacrament of Confirmation with the proper dispositions.

You must also know, my son, that this Sacrament imprints a character like Baptism, and for this reason it cannot be received a second time either. In Confirmation too sponsors are given as in Baptism. The difference is that here only a godfather is admitted for boys and a godmother for girls, not godfather and godmother as in Baptism. These sponsors contract spiritual relationship, not with each other, but with the godchildren and their parents: in the second degree with the parents and in the first with the godchildren. So no sponsor may marry without dispensation either his godchildren or their parents. The duties sponsors take on toward their godchildren are to teach them Christian doctrine, admonish them and correct them; but this is in case the parents themselves do not do it.

From what has been said, my son, you can see how highly you should esteem the sacrament of Confirmation. How you should thank God for having granted it to you!… And since those who live holy lives are temples of the Holy Ghost, do not sadden him by sinning (Eph. 4:30). Rather try to resist manfully the temptations of the enemies, the world, the devil and the flesh. *Receive not the grace of God in vain*, I will tell you with the apostle St. Paul (2 Cor. 6:1). Try to practice the virtues this Sacrament points out to you, so that the Lord may give you the crown of glory. Understand that in heaven no one will be crowned except one who on earth has fought and overcome the enemies of the soul. But woe to you if you let yourself be overcome by them and go over to their side! What punishments you would bring on yourself from God for such cowardice or unfaithfulness! You would be cast into hell like Judas, like the apostate angels or devils, where you would burn forever.

Q. What is the sacrament of Confirmation?

A. It is a Sacrament which strengthens us in the faith and gives us the Holy Ghost with all his gifts.

Q. What is the matter of this Sacrament?

A. The laying on of the Bishop's hands and the anointing with chrism.

Q. What is chrism?

A. It is a compound of olive oil and balsam consecrated by the Bishop.

Q. What does the oil signify?

A. The fullness of grace we receive from the Holy Ghost.

Q. What does the balsam signify?

A. The fragrance of the good example we must give.

Q. What is the form of this Sacrament?

A. The words the Bishop says while applying the matter.

Q. What does the cross the Bishop makes on the forehead of those he confirms signify?

A. That we are marked as soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Q. What effects does this Sacrament produce?

A. It strengthens the Christian so that he may not be afraid to confess the faith of Jesus Christ. It arms him with the holy cross, making him a soldier of the Saviour, and confers on him the Holy Ghost.

Q. Why does the Bishop give a gentle slap to the one he confirms?

A. So that he may understand that he must suffer any affront rather than abandon the faith of Christ.[1]

Q. Can this Sacrament be received more than once?

A. No, because it imprints a character.

Q. What character is this?

A. As Baptism imprints the character of a Christian, Confirmation imprints that of a soldier of Christ.

Q. Against whom must he fight?

A. Against the enemies of the faith.

Q. Why are we given sponsors in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation?

A. So that we may have someone to help us live as Christians and confess the faith of Jesus Christ.

Q. Do the sponsors of Baptism and Confirmation contract relationship?

A. Yes; they contract it in the first degree with their godchild and in the second with the godchild's parents.

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[1] *alapa.*

Lesson 7. The Sacrament of the Eucharist



Plate XXXII. The sacrament of the Eucharist. The Sacrament exposed. A priest celebrating Mass. A priest giving Communion. The Last Supper. A priest keeping watch before the Sacrament.

My son, all you need to know about this august Sacrament you see sketched in the plate. On the front of the altar is shown the supper of the last night, at which Christ instituted this adorable Sacrament. On the right is a priest who, celebrating, renews the same supper and the passion and death of Jesus Christ, fulfilling in this the precept of the divine Lord himself. On the left is another priest distributing holy Communion to the faithful, who, docile to the loving call of the Saviour, approach this sacred banquet to share in the greatest of the benefits God has done to men. In the center of the plate is shown the most holy Sacrament exposed to the public veneration of the people. There, though hidden under the mystic white veil of bread, the consecrated host, Jesus Christ is really and truly present. We Christians adore him, contemplating him as exalted, as mighty and as august as he is in heaven, and ready to bestow on us all the graces and blessings that are good for us. This is what I am going to explain to you more fully.

This is the Sacrament par excellence, the source and center of all the other Sacraments, since it contains Jesus Christ, the author of them all. Many are the names given to this Sacrament, according to the ends of its institution and the wonderful effects it causes. It is called *Eucharist*, which means thanksgiving; or *Host*, because Jesus Christ who is in it is offered every day for us to his eternal Father as a victim of propitiation; or *Bread of the children of God*, because God, being our father, feeds us with it. As a mother nurses her children with the milk formed from the blood of her veins, so Jesus Christ, after bringing us to light in Baptism and

strengthening us in Confirmation, feeds us as his dearly loved children with the flesh and blood of his own person. It is called *Communion*, because of the common union he wants among us, loving one another as good brothers, and between him and us as between father and children. Finally it is called *Viaticum*, among many other names I omit so as not to be tiresome, because it serves as food for the journey to eternity.

God gave many figures of this Sacrament under both the natural and the written law, beginning with the tree of life in paradise and going on to the manna in the desert. On reaching the law of grace he himself says plainly that *my flesh is meat indeed: and my blood is drink indeed*, and that *he that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him* (John 6:56–57). He longed continually for the hour when he was to give us this banquet and institute so august a Sacrament (Luke 22:15). That hour came at last on the fourteenth day of the moon of March, which by our reckoning corresponds to the twenty-fifth of that month, the day before his death. On that day he chose to make his testament in our favor, and he did so in the following way. Having celebrated the Pasch of the legal lamb with his disciples, he rose from the table and with the deepest humility washed their feet, and all were astonished at so heroic an act. But their wonder rose higher still when they saw him sit down again at table and institute and give them this august Sacrament. For this he took in his sacred and divine hands unleavened bread, the only bread eaten at the Pasch. He gave thanks to his eternal Father for the power he had given him over all things; he blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to the Apostles, saying: *Take ye, and eat. This is my body.* Then he took a chalice with wine and, again giving thanks to his eternal Father, blessed it and gave it to his disciples, saying: *Drink ye all of this. This is the chalice of my blood… As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, do this for the commemoration of me* (Matt. 26:26–28; 1 Cor. 11:24–26). The astonished Apostles received Communion with all humility and devotion. They were empowered to consecrate, and to communicate that power to the Bishops and priests; and this power will continue to the end of the world, as Jesus Christ himself says, for he will be with us *even to the consummation of the world* (Matt. 28:20). What a wonder, my God! What goodness! What generosity! Oh inexhaustible love of Jesus!

What has been said is a truth of faith, since he who can neither err nor deceive us assures us of it. So, my son, you must believe it firmly; and to strengthen your belief I will give you some

reasons of fittingness, which I will make clearer with some comparisons. Knowing that God created all things out of nothing, you should no longer be surprised that by his unlimited power he changes bread and wine into the substance of his body and blood. Properly speaking there is nothing easy or hard for God. Yet in our way of speaking and understanding it is easier to change one substance into another than to make something exist that before did not exist at all. So if he did the latter in creation, what difficulty can there be in believing that at the consecration what was before bread and wine is changed into the flesh and blood of Christ? Does not something similar happen in ourselves with the bread and wine we eat and drink, which are changed into the flesh and blood of our body?

For this reason this change is called *transubstantiation*. It means that one substance, bread and wine, is changed into another, the body and blood of Christ. The accidents remain, however, like a veil drawn between the body and blood of Jesus Christ and us, so that we may exercise faith and so that fear may not hold us back from this Sacrament. We believe that the sun is above us at noon, though a cloud that sometimes comes between us and it covers it or keeps us from seeing it, because the effects it produces, heat and light, make it plain to us. In the same way, besides his infallible word which assures us of it, the wonderful effects it produces do not let us doubt the real presence of the Sun of justice, Jesus Christ, in the Sacrament, though the cloud of the sacramental accidents or appearances covers him and keeps us from seeing him. Otherwise, how do just souls have such great and lofty knowledge? How do they have such great courage and burn with love of God and neighbor? How do they practice so many virtues? Given human weakness, this is a riddle. It is explained only by the frequency with which they receive and adore this Sacrament, which enlightens, inflames and quickens them, though the cloud of the accidents covers Jesus

Christ, who is really and truly present in it, and keeps them from seeing him. And if some are not enlightened, inflamed and quickened, it is not for lack of light, warmth and life in the Sacrament. It is because, shut up in the cellars of worldly things and *sitting in the shadow of death* (Luke 1:79), they cannot receive the sovereign influence of this divine Sun. In the same way the material sun that lights us does not produce its wonderful effects in those who withdraw from its influence, living as though buried inside buildings. Do you want to experience such divine effects? Listen to what the Prophet says: *Accedite ad eum et illuminamini* \[Come ye to him and be enlightened\] (Ps. 33:6). Visit him, receive him often in Communion, and if you go well disposed you will see how great are the effects you will draw from it.

But I think you are already asking: "Is it possible for the whole body of Christ to be in a small host?" Not only is it possible; it is truly so. I have told you, my son, that Christ is in the Sacrament after the manner of substance. As the whole substance or essence of a plant is in a small seed, so too the whole body and blood of Christ is in a small consecrated form or host. You have a proof of this in yourself. Is it not true that in your eyes, small as they are, the image of a whole man, of a house and so on, is pictured? So it can be, and in fact is, that the whole body of Christ is contained in a small host or particle.

"And if a consecrated host is broken or divided, is the body of Christ divided too?" No, my son. He remains whole in each of the parts, as entire as before the Sacrament was divided. Have you ever looked at yourself in a mirror? You say yes, don't you? Well then, you saw yourself there, and saw yourself in all of it. But suppose it falls and breaks to pieces: is it you or the mirror that is divided? You will say the mirror; and yet do you not see yourself in each of its pieces? So when the host is divided it is not Christ who is divided, but the Sacrament or the sacramental species, and he remains whole in each of its divisions. And if you ask me further: "Is it possible that Jesus Christ, being only one, can be at the same time in as many places as there are tabernacles with the reserved Sacrament, and priests consecrating one or many hosts?" I will answer that not only is it possible, but the fact cannot be doubted. You will see this truth illustrated by what happens with the sun. Is it not true that, though it is only one, however many vessels full of water are set before it, it lights them all, and the same sun is seen in each? The same happens, though with the greatest perfection, in this Sacrament. However many priests consecrate one or many hosts, Jesus Christ is really present in all of them and in each one in particular. Finally, you will perhaps ask me whether, with so many people receiving Communion every day all over the world, the body of Christ grows less. Ah, my son, it does not grow less, no! To see this, we shall find a comparison in the sun itself. For so many centuries all the inhabitants of the world have shared in its heat, light and influence, and to this day we do not see that it has grown less. I will give you another, more exact comparison. If many people come to the flame of a lamp to light each his own, all carry away light, and yet the flame of the first does not grow less. In a similar way it happens with the body of Christ, which does not grow less however many receive Communion. I have put forward and explained these comparisons to illustrate this mystery of faith, not because I intend to prove it by them.

You must also know, my son, that by virtue of the words of consecration the body of Christ is in the host, and by concomitance the blood is also in it. For since Christ is alive in this Sacrament, a living body cannot be without blood. I say the same of the chalice. By virtue of the words of consecration the blood into which the wine is changed is there, and with it the body too. In the host and in the chalice are present besides the soul, the divinity and all three Persons of the most holy Trinity with all their divine attributes. This being so, as it is, you will see that one who receives Communion under one kind alone receives as much as one who receives under both. In former times little children received Communion under the species of wine, the sick under that of bread, and everyone else commonly under both kinds. But the Church, seeing that this custom brought many difficulties, decided at the Council of Constance that, apart from the priests who consecrate or say Mass (for the sacrifice requires it), all others should receive Communion under the species of bread alone.

The holy Fathers say that Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament under the species of bread and wine to give us to understand that, as these substances unite with the person nourished by them, preserve his life and feed him, so this spiritual food has the same effect in the soul of one who receives it worthily. He is united with Jesus Christ, who preserves in him the life of grace and feeds him with it, with virtues and with merits. Jesus Christ himself tells us: *As I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me* (John 6:58). So one who receives Communion well disposed can say with the Apostle: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2:20). To help you understand it better, I will tell you that one who receives Communion well disposed is like a grafted tree. It is no longer what it was before, but bears fruit according to the scion grafted into it.

Besides this grace of nourishment and union I have just explained to you, the effects Communion causes are many and very great. It increases fervor and devotion, forgives venial sins, gives strength to resist temptations and helps not to fall into mortal sins. It gives courage to persevere and weakens the heat of concupiscence. A thousand times happy is he who receives holy Communion often and with the proper dispositions! It can be positively affirmed that he has one of the surest signs of predestination. I said often, because woe to those who receive Communion only once a year! However well disposed they may think they are, it can and must be feared with good reason that they are much deceived. For by their delay they show how little they care for the salvation of their soul. What I can assure you, my son, is that of those who receive Communion often, very many go whole years without committing a single mortal sin. Of those who receive once a year, on the other hand, few reach the end of the year without having sinned mortally. I beg you, therefore, as soon as you are of the proper age and have leave for it, to receive Communion, and to do so often and with the proper disposition. Woe to you if you received Communion sacrilegiously, or in mortal sin! Oh, what a horrible sin you would commit! Better, yes, a thousand times better, would it be for you never to have been born.

To receive Communion with fruit, understand that several dispositions are required. Some concern the body and others the soul. Those concerning the body are the natural fast; cleanliness and modesty in person and dress; and recollection of the senses, not looking about or speaking without need, nor hurrying from one place to another. As regards the soul, the state of grace is indispensable. One must be clean not only of all mortal sin but, as far as possible, of venial sins too, or at least have no attachment to them. One should also try to adorn oneself with virtues, especially faith, hope, desire, charity, humility and devotion.

After receiving Communion one should try to spend about half an hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, giving thanks to God. Consider the infinite goodness and love of this heavenly Father, who has deigned to unite himself with us despite our small merits, forgetting the offenses and ingratitude with which we repay his benefits. Never imitate those who leave the church as soon as they have received Communion. Unhappy people, alas! How many graces they waste, and how many they deprive themselves of! These wretches imitate the sacrilegious Judas, who as soon as he had received Communion left the upper room driven by the devil, as St. John Chrysostom affirms.

Try too, my son, to hear holy Mass every day you can. In it the institution of the most holy Sacrament is renewed, together with the sacrifice Jesus Christ offered for us on the cross; and in it you should receive Communion, at least spiritually. This communion, as easy as it is profitable, consists in making, after a true act of contrition, acts of desire to receive Jesus in the Sacrament and to unite oneself with him inwardly. This communion can be made many times a day, even while walking or working, since it loses no time and hinders no bodily occupation. It is so pleasing to the Lord that one day he appeared to the virtuous Paula Maresca, foundress of the monastery of St. Catherine of Siena in Naples. Showing her two vessels, one of gold and the other of silver, he told her that in the gold one he kept her sacramental communions and in the silver one her spiritual communions. In the little book entitled *The Straight and Sure Way to Reach Heaven* (which I earnestly beg you to read often and attentively), at pages 78 and following, you will find this

spiritual communion explained more fully, with the practical way of making it.

Visit Jesus in the Sacrament every day. If you cannot go to church for this, do it from home, using either the *Straight Way* already mentioned, which has enough at page 183, or the *Visits to the Most Blessed Sacrament* of St. Alphonsus Mary de Liguori. Since it has prayers for each day of the month, it will help you stir up your devotion. Or at least say the "greater station", which consists of six Our Fathers, six Hail Marys and six Glory Be's; by it you will gain many indulgences. If you make this visit from home, with no one seeing you, I should like you to hold your arms out in the form of a cross. Oh, how you will please God! But if you can go to the church, that will be best. The Angels form his court continually, and men, for whom he has remained in so august a Sacrament, abandon him! Oh, this indifference is an unmistakable sign of how little God is loved; for if we loved him we could not bear to leave his presence. Love him, my son, love him with all your heart, since in proof of how much he loved and loves us he has remained among us in the Sacrament. If you love him, he will love you still more. And loving him, you will not sin. You will keep his holy precepts, hear holy Mass devoutly, receive him often in holy Communion and visit him in the tabernacle or monstrance. And after visiting and loving him here in this world, you will go to visit him in the next for all eternity, which is what I wish for you. Amen.

Q. What is the sacrament of the Eucharist?

A. It is a Sacrament which contains really and truly the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ under the species or appearances of bread and wine.

Q. What is the matter of the Eucharist?

A. Bread and wine.

Q. How are the bread and wine changed into the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ?

A. By virtue of the words of Consecration, which the priest pronounces at Mass.

Q. Who has given such power to the words of Consecration?

A. Jesus Christ, who, being almighty God, can do what he wills.

Q. After the Consecration do the bread and wine remain?

A. No, because they have been changed into the body and blood of Christ.

Q. But are they not seen just as before?

A. Yes, because the accidents remain, which are color, smell and taste, but without the substance.

Q. Who obliges us to believe all this?

A. Our holy mother the Church; and whoever did not believe it would be a heretic.

Q. Does one who receives only half the host in Communion receive the whole Christ?

A. Yes, he receives him entirely, because Jesus Christ is as much in a small part of the host as in the whole host.

Q. Is it very necessary to receive Communion?

A. It is, because our Lord has said: *Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you* (John 6:54).

Q. Should one receive Communion many times?

A. The Church's desire is that one should receive Communion often, because this Sacrament always causes very good effects in those who receive it worthily.

Q. What effects does this Sacrament cause?

A. Many. It unites us with Jesus Christ. It nourishes us and restores the lost strength of the soul. It increases sanctifying grace and the fervor of charity.

Q. What further effects does this Sacrament cause?

A. It fills us with spiritual sweetness, frees us from temptations, forgives us venial sins, and gives us helps not to fall into mortal ones.

Q. How many things are necessary to receive Communion well?

A. Five: the natural fast, outward modesty, cleanness of conscience, knowledge and desire.

Q. What does the natural fast mean?

A. Not having eaten or drunk anything since the midnight before Communion, unless one receives it as Viaticum.

Q. What does outward modesty mean?

A. That one must go with composure and humility in person and dress.

Q. What does cleanness of conscience mean?

A. Having no mortal sin on it.

Q. What must one do who is in mortal sin and is to receive Communion?

A. Make a good confession first; otherwise he would commit a horrible mortal sin of sacrilege.

Q. What does knowledge mean?

A. That the Christian must be thoroughly instructed, so that before receiving the Eucharist he can reflect on three things: who is coming, to whom he is coming, and why he is coming.

Q. What does desire mean?

A. That one must have a great longing to receive Communion.

Q. Before Communion, while the priest opens the tabernacle, what is customarily said?

A. The general confession.

Q. Say it.

A. I, a sinner, etc. (see the First Catechism above).

Q. When the priest already has the holy host in his hand and shows it to the people to adore, what must be said?

A. Three times these words: *Lord, I am not worthy that thy divine Majesty should enter my poor dwelling; but only say the word, and my soul shall be healed and saved.*

Q. How will you receive Communion?

A. I will look devoutly at the sacred host and quicken my faith, hope and love. I will raise the cloth with both hands and place it under my chin, and put out my tongue a little, so that it rests on my lower lip.

Q. And after receiving Communion what will you do?

A. I will stay a good while in the church giving thanks to God, and ask graces for myself and others; and I will not spit until the danger of ejecting any particle has passed.

Q. And how long should one go without breakfast after Communion?

A. At least half an hour, if possible, out of reverence for the Sacrament.

Lesson 8. The Sacrament of Penance

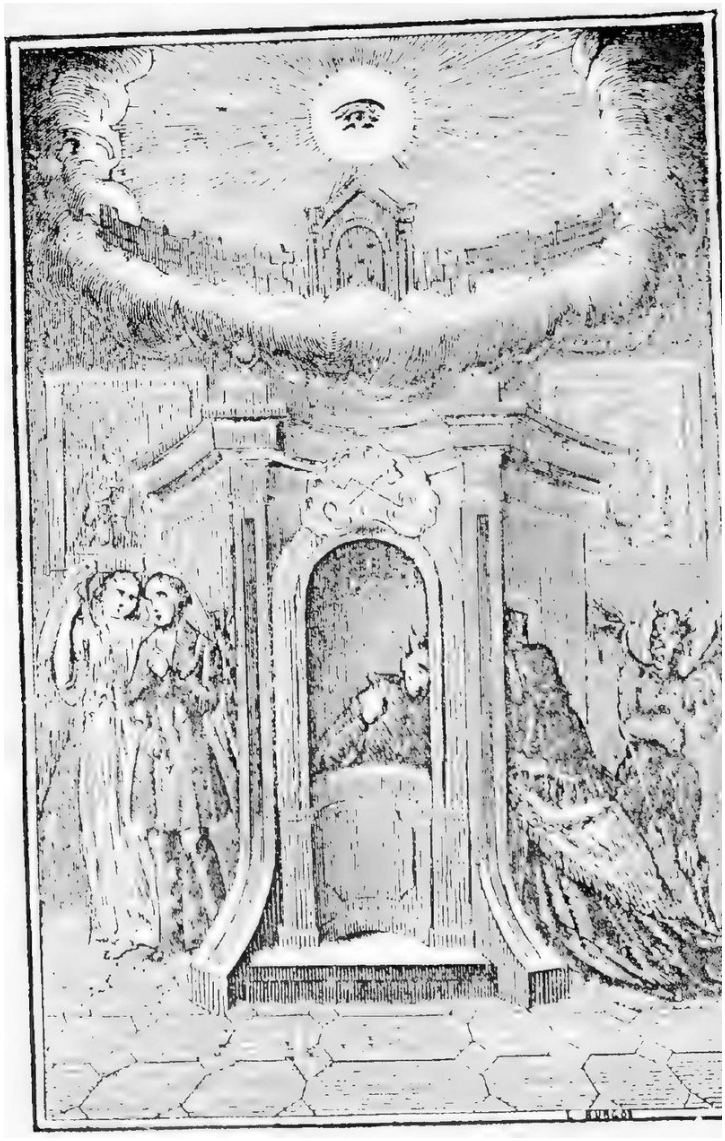

Plate XXXIII. The sacrament of Penance. The city of heaven. A priest in the confessional. A young man who has made his confession. A lady making her confession. St. Mary Magdalen and St. Jerome, models of penance.

See, my son, in this plate a priest shown in the act of administering the sacrament of Penance, that is, of hearing the confessions of sinners. You know already that one who is in mortal sin is a slave of Satan. You see this with that woman making her confession, whom the devil holds bound with a chain. It is quite otherwise with the man on the other side. Because he has made a good confession he is now free of those chains, and an Angel accompanies him. He is in the grace of God, and has practiced many virtues, such as faith, hope, charity, obedience, prudence, humility and fortitude.

For one who has sinned after Baptism there remains no other means of salvation than the sacrament of Penance, either received in fact, or by contrition with the purpose of receiving it when he can. Do you see at the top of the plate heaven pictured, surrounded by a wall, with its gates shut? This shows that one who is in mortal sin cannot enter there. Only a well-made confession, or, if one cannot confess, a firm purpose of

making it together with contrition, can open the gates to us. That is what the keys you see above the confessional signify.

Under the natural and written law confession was no more than an act of virtue, and so was penance. But under the law of grace Jesus Christ raised confession and penance to the dignity of a Sacrament, which he instituted to forgive sins committed after baptism.

So much does God desire and require of sinners the confession of their sins that, as soon as our first parents had sinned, he questioned them about their sin, so as to oblige them to humble themselves and confess their fault. God questions Adam, and he confesses his sin, saying: *I did eat* (Gen. 3:12): I have eaten of the forbidden tree, I have sinned. Then he turns to Eve, and she too confesses her fault, saying: *I did eat* (Gen. 3:13): I have eaten, I have sinned. Both did penance, and both were saved. Later he questions Cain about his brother, so that he may humble himself and confess having murdered him. But instead of humbling himself and confessing it, he denies it, and… he dies impenitent and is damned.

Under the written law the Israelites were already accustomed to confess their sins, and God commanded it, as appears from chapter 5 of the book of Numbers, verses 6 and 7, where he says: *Say to the children of Israel: When a man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit… they shall confess their sin.* On these words Cornelius a Lapide says: "Let the reader note here the use, or rather the precept, of particular confession in the old law." Its practice also appears from various other places in the Old Testament.

But let us pass to the law of grace. Here Jesus Christ is presented to us, of whom it is written, *coepit facere et docere* \[he began to do and to teach\] (Acts 1:1). Before anything else he began by making a kind of practical confession. That is, he chose to appear as though he were a sinner before he taught this precept and raised penance or confession to a Sacrament. He was conceived without sin, and it was impossible for him to commit the slightest fault, because he is God. Yet to teach us by his example our obligation to confess our sins, he chose to be circumcised like a sinner on the eighth day after his birth. As such he afterwards submitted to the baptism of St. John, and finally he chose to die as if he were a sinner. He himself assures us that he came not to abolish the law but to perfect it (Matt. 5:17). So he did not take away this law of confession. Besides perfecting it by his good example, he raised it to the rank of a Sacrament, placing his merits in it, *that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly* (John 10:10). I mean that he instituted this sacrament of Penance so that those who receive it well disposed may recover grace, if they have lost it after Baptism, or increase it, if they have kept it.

Jesus Christ saw how many souls were lost for not having the contrition indispensable for recovering grace, besides faith in the promised Redeemer. So he longed unceasingly to institute this Sacrament. Before the hour for doing so came, he said to St. Peter: *I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven,* as we read in the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapters 16 and 18. He made the same promise to the other Apostles, and in them to all priests.

The holy Council of Trent, in session 14, says that these promises of the Saviour were fulfilled when, after the Resurrection, he appeared to his Apostles, breathed on them and said to them: *Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained* (John 20:22–23). By these words he made the Apostles and their successors, the priests, judges in the tribunal of Penance until the end of the world. They are to condemn or absolve, not at their whim, but in conformity with the laws of sound morals, having heard the case through the penitent's confession. By the same act and with the same words Jesus Christ commands all sinners without distinction to submit to the power of judging he has given the priests, if they wish to obtain pardon of their sins; otherwise this power would have been illusory and merely nominal. St. Augustine and the Council of Trent say that Jesus Christ gave the name of keys to this power he gave the priests to absolve sins. He did so in order that sinners might understand that,

as no one can enter a locked house without the keys, so neither will they enter heaven, which was shut to them by their sins, unless they use the keys or power he gave the priests for the purpose. And if they had any other means of entering than these keys, it would have been superfluous to hand them over to the priests.

Peraldus, bishop of London, observes that this divine precept of confessing sins was promulgated by the apostle St. James when he said: *Confess therefore your sins one to another* (to one who is a priest), *and pray one for another, that you may be saved* (Jas. 5:16) by confession and prayer. On these words Hugh of St. Victor, in book 2 of *De Sacramentis*, says: "The apostle St. James, as God's herald, announces to men this precept of confessing sins, on the strict condition that if they do not confess they will be damned." And in proof that the other Apostles taught the same doctrine, we read in the Acts of the Apostles that when St. Paul was preaching in Asia, *many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds* (Acts 19:18), that is, their sins. And down to the present day even the most learned and powerful men have submitted to this precept and Sacrament.

I have given you, my son, these notions about the divine right of sacramental confession, its origin and its practice, not only from the beginning of the Church but even before it was a Sacrament. I have done so that you may not let yourself be led astray by the errors of the Montanist, Novatian, Lutheran and Calvinist heretics. As ministers of the devil, who rages at the many souls that escape the snare in which he held them bound, they are persuaded or driven by him to shout that confession was unheard of until a few years ago, or that it is an invention of priests and friars. Those who talk so are very ignorant. If they were instructed in history they would see how ancient confession is, as I have just shown you. But if saying that confession is a modern thing is at least a proof of ignorance, maintaining that it is an invention of priests and friars is the grossest absurdity. If that were so, priests and friars would have no obligation to confess or to submit to this law, for it is well known that the lawgiver is not subject to his law. So if all men, even the Sovereign Pontiff himself, must of necessity submit to confession if they wish to obtain pardon for their sins, it is utterly ridiculous to suppose that confession was an invention of churchmen. There is, then, no other means or recourse for those who have sinned mortally than confession, actual or by desire, or damnation. I mean: either to confess in fact, if one can; or, if one cannot, to have sorrow of contrition with the purpose and will to confess, under pain of damnation.

So far, my son, I have shown you the necessity of this Sacrament. Now I will explain to you, though briefly, what is required to receive it worthily or with fruit. Five things are necessary, namely: examination, sorrow, purpose of amendment, confession and satisfaction.

Examination is the same as searching the conscience. It is required of us, as indispensable for a proper and well-made confession, that we make the efforts within our reach to remember all the sins of commission or omission committed since our last well-made confession. We should go over each of the commandments of the law of God and of the Church, and over the duties of each one's state. To make this easier one should try to remember the places one has been, the persons one has dealt with, and the business or occupations one has had in hand. If one can find out the number of times one has failed, it must be said; if not, say the number that seems approximately right. One who has had some vice will try to remember how long he lived in it, and will reckon the times he fell each week or each day. He should put into this examination the care usually given to business of great importance, having first implored the help of heaven. (See page 3 and following of the book entitled *The Straight Way*, where you will find all that can and should be done for a good confession.)

Sorrow is a feeling and grief of the soul at having offended God, and it is of two kinds: contrition and attrition. Sorrow of contrition has as its motive the infinite goodness of God offended. That of attrition has as its motive fear of the harm that follows from sins: the loss of the glory of heaven, liability to eternal punishment, and the stain or ugliness they cause in the soul. You will understand this better from what I am going to tell you. Suppose a son, carried away by rage, had the audacity to kill his father. But afterwards, coming to himself, he reflected on so horrible a crime and said to himself: "Woe is me! Wretch, what have I

done! I have taken the life of my own father, a father who loved me so much and had given me so many proofs of love!!!" Such a feeling, if he did not think of the harm that might come to him from so atrocious a crime, is a likeness of the sorrow of contrition. This the sinner has who, carried away by a passion or temptation, has offended, and has in a way crucified anew his father Jesus Christ, who created, redeemed and preserved him; and he grieves, thinking not of God's justice but of his ineffable goodness. But suppose that son, coming to himself after his crime, instead of reflecting on his father's goodness, said to himself: "Woe is me! By my rashness I have deserved to be disinherited. Besides, the law will spare no means to arrest me, and once it has, it will apply to me the penalty it lays down for parricides!!!" This grief is a likeness of the sorrow of attrition. The sinner has it when he sees that by sin he has made himself unworthy of the heavenly inheritance and deserving of the eternal punishment of hell, for so vile a thing as sin.

Purpose of amendment is a firm and sincere resolution not to sin again. It must be universal, perpetual and effective. *Universal* means that it must extend to all sins; this is so indispensable that otherwise the purpose would not be good. *Perpetual* means that it must be for the whole of life: one must intend not to commit any sin on any other occasion of one's life. Woe to those who after confessing always go back to committing the same sins! Such conduct is a clear sign that their purpose was not good and their confession was bad, just as it is proof that the wash was not good when the clothes stay as dirty as before. *Effective* means that we must remove all occasions and proximate dangers of sinning mortally. If all Christians did this, oh, how rare sins would be! Glass is fragile, and yet, kept carefully, it lasts for centuries. Gunpowder is extremely flammable, and kept from fire it lasts incalculably long. We say the same of persons. Though fragile as glass, or flammable as gunpowder through their passions, if they flee or remove the occasions of sin, oh, no, they will not offend God, and they will keep themselves in grace!

Confession is an accusation a sinner makes of his faults to a priest in order to receive absolution. For this they must be declared as they are in the conscience, without glossing over any, without excusing them or keeping them back out of fear or shame. How many souls are damned for this reason! Those who lack the courage to declare them to their ordinary confessor (though this is a foolish cowardice) should go to the feet of another rather than keep them back. No, there is no other way: either confession or damnation.

Satisfaction is the same as performing the penance the confessor has imposed. The effect of the sacrament of Penance is to restore grace to one who lost it by sinning mortally. It makes the good works he had done before while in grace, which through sin had become as it were dead or deadened, revive, that is, become once more regarded and acceptable to God. It also increases grace in one who goes to confession while already in it. A man sentenced to death not only has his goods seized; at every step he takes he comes nearer the scaffold. So one who is in mortal sin has the good works he did before the sin seized, and at every step he takes he comes nearer the eternal torment of hell. But by means of a good confession he not only is freed from the eternal punishment, that torment, but also

the seizure is lifted, and he regains the enjoyment and use of his former good works. What signal advantages and benefits a good confession brings with it!

For this reason, my son, I should like you to receive this sacrament of Penance often. Even if your conscience does not trouble you with any grave sin, that does not matter; so much the better. In that happy case accuse yourself of some grave fault of your past life and detest it anew before God. In this way you will obtain an increase of grace and a safeguard against falling into sin. Do not imitate those who are negligent and careless of their welfare, who with the greatest apathy let a year go by without approaching this holy tribunal of grace. What would you say of someone who went a year without washing, without combing his hair, without changing his shirt, without sweeping his house? "Filthy! Indecent!…" you would exclaim. Well, if such bodily indecency and slovenliness would disgust you, how much more should it disgust you to let a year pass without trying to clean oneself of the filth of sin in this healthful bath of confession? This is especially so if one has had the misfortune to sin mortally, which with such negligence is almost unavoidable. Can you

imagine anyone who, having broken a leg or received a serious wound, waited a year before calling the surgeon? Why, then, should one not do for the soul at least what one does for the body?

Q. What is the sacrament of Penance?

A. A Sacrament instituted to forgive sins committed after Baptism.

Q. For whom is the sacrament of Penance necessary?

A. For all who have sinned mortally after Baptism.

Q. Is it very necessary for them?

A. As necessary as Baptism is for the unbaptized.

Q. What is the matter of the sacrament of Penance?

A. The acts of the penitent: confession of the mouth, sorrow of heart with purpose of amendment, and satisfaction in deed.

Q. Who is the minister?

A. The confessor; and the absolution he gives is the form.

Q. How many things are necessary to receive the sacrament of Penance well?

A. Five: examination, sorrow, purpose of amendment, confession and satisfaction.

Q. What is examination?

A. Searching the conscience, or making efforts to remember the sins committed.

Q. What must be done before the examination?

A. Ask God for light to know one's sins and help to repent of them.

Q. How is the examination to be made?

A. By going through the Commandments of the law of God and of the Church and the obligations of one's state, noting in what and how many times one has failed.

Q. Should much time be spent on the examination?

A. That depends on the time that has passed since the last confession, and on the conduct one has kept.

Q. What care should be put into the examination?

A. The care one would put into a matter of great importance.

Q. What is sorrow?

A. A feeling and grief of the soul at having offended God, with the purpose of confessing, amending and doing the penance.

Q. How many kinds of sorrow are there?

A. Two: contrition and attrition.

Q. What is sorrow of contrition?

A. A feeling and grief of the soul at having offended God solely because he is who he is, infinite goodness, with the purpose of confessing, amending and doing the penance.

Q. What is sorrow of attrition?

A. A feeling and grief of the soul at having offended God out of fear of losing the glory of heaven or of going to hell, or because of the very ugliness of sin, with the purpose of confessing, amending and doing the penance.

Q. Which is better, sorrow of contrition or of attrition?

A. That of contrition, because by itself it puts the soul in grace; that of attrition does so by means of the sacrament of Penance.

Q. Which of these sorrows is necessary for the sacrament of Penance?

A. Attrition is enough, but the safest course is to bring both.

Q. Can we have sorrow by our own strength alone?

A. No.

Q. What must we do to have it?

A. Ask God for it humbly and perseveringly, using the intercession of most holy Mary, the Guardian Angel and the other Saints; and repeat acts of sorrow.

Q. And to stir ourselves to sorrow, what shall we do on our part?

A. Think of the justice and mercy of God.

Q. Would one who received this Sacrament without sorrow obtain pardon of his sins?

A. No; he would go away with the same sins, and add a sacrilege besides.

Q. What is purpose of amendment?

A. A firm resolution not to sin again, and to repair the injury done to God and the harm caused to one's neighbor.

Q. What conditions must the purpose have to be good?

A. Three: it must be universal, perpetual and effective.

Q. What does universal mean?

A. That it must cover all sins.

Q. What does perpetual mean?

A. That it must be for the whole of life.

Q. What does effective mean?

A. That it must carry a firm resolution to keep away from the occasions and proximate dangers of sin.

Q. Would one who received this Sacrament without a true purpose of amendment obtain pardon of his sins?

A. No; he would go away with the same sins, and add a sacrilege besides.

Q. What is confession?

A. The accusation of one's sins made to an approved confessor in order to receive absolution for all of them.

Q. What sins must be confessed?

A. All those one remembers after a careful examination, with the circumstances that change their kind.

Q. Does one make a good confession who leaves some mortal sin unsaid through lack of examination, or keeps it back out of shame?

A. No; he commits a mortal sin of sacrilege.

Q. What remedy is left him to be saved?

A. To confess the sacrilege and all the sins he had at the previous confession.

Q. What should one do who has had a habit of sinning mortally?

A. Make a general confession of the whole time he has had the bad habit.

Q. Why?

A. Because falling back into the same sins without any amendment is a sign that there was no true sorrow or purpose of amendment.

Q. How are sins to be confessed?

A. Humbly and clearly: certain ones as certain, doubtful ones as doubtful, as they are in the conscience; and answering truthfully what the confessor asks.

Q. How should one confess who cannot know for certain the number of his sins?

A. It will be enough to say the number more or less, or how often he has been accustomed to sin each month, each week or each day.

Q. If after confession some unconfessed mortal sin comes to mind, what must be done?

A. Confess it, if it is not difficult, before receiving Communion.

Q. Is that sin forgotten involuntarily forgiven?

A. Yes, if one had universal sorrow for all; but it must be submitted to confession, since it was not told in the previous one.

Q. Must that forgotten sin be confessed to the same confessor?

A. It is not necessary; the penitent may go to another if he wishes.

Q. What is it a sign of to excuse oneself in confession or to lay the blame on another?

A. Of little humility and less sorrow.

Q. What will one confess who has no mortal sin since his last confession?

A. Some light sin; and to give certain matter he will accuse himself of some grave sin of his past life, even though already confessed.

Q. And if he had never in his life committed a grave sin, what should he confess?

A. The fault that seems to him ugliest, and he must form sorrow for it.

Q. What is satisfaction?

A. Accepting and doing the penance the confessor imposes.

Q. Of how many kinds is the penance?

A. Of two: medicinal and satisfactory.

Q. Which is the medicinal?

A. That which the confessor imposes so that the penitent may amend some vice.

Q. Which is the satisfactory?

A. That which the confessor imposes so that the penitent may satisfy for the faults confessed.

Q. When must the penance be done?

A. At the time the confessor orders.

Q. And when the confessor sets no time?

A. It should be done as soon as possible.

Q. When you are at the confessor's feet to confess, what should you do?

A. Make the sign of the cross and say the general Confession, bowing deeply, with my hands joined.

Q. While the priest gives you absolution, what should you do?

A. Say the Act of contrition with all fervor, and not rise until the confessor has pronounced the words of absolution.

Q. Say the Act of contrition.

A. My Lord Jesus Christ, etc. (see the First Catechism above).

Q. And after confessing, what should you do?

A. Go to a quiet place and there, humbly kneeling, thank God for having forgiven me and ask him for help not to sin again.

Q. When one confesses well, does he fully satisfy for his sins?

A. No; for by the sacrament of Penance the guilt and the pains of hell are forgiven, but not always all the pains of purgatory the sinner deserves.

Q. How, then, are the pains of purgatory remitted in this life?

A. By works of satisfaction or by indulgences.

Q. Which are works of satisfaction?

A. Mortifications, fasts, alms, prayers and other good works.

Q. What is an indulgence?

A. It is a remission of the temporal punishment of sin which the prelates of the Church grant from the merits of Jesus Christ, of most holy Mary and of the Saints.

Q. How many kinds of indulgences are there?

A. Two: plenary and partial.

Q. What is a plenary indulgence?

A. A remission of all the temporal punishment.

Q. What is a partial indulgence?

A. A remission of part of the temporal punishment.[1]

Q. What is required to gain indulgences?

A. To be in the grace of God, and to do all that the one granting them commands.

Q. Can some indulgences be applied to the souls in purgatory?

A. Yes; the Church grants some that are applicable to them.

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[1] *Indulgentiarum doctrina*.

Lesson 9. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction



Plate XXXIV. The sacrament of Extreme Unction. The five wounds of Jesus. A dying man. A priest who has anointed him. A priest making the commendation of the soul.

Do you see, my son, that sick man in the plate receiving the sacrament of Extreme Unction? Know that the love of Jesus Christ was not content with instituting the sacrament of Penance as a most effective remedy for healing the diseases of the soul. He also instituted that of Extreme Unction to arm the dying. For he knew that in that last period of life a most powerful help would be needed to come off victorious in the struggle which the evil spirit and the other enemies of the soul then wage against us with greater fury. In this Sacrament the outward senses are anointed because, as the Prophet says, during life they are the windows through which death enters our soul (Jer. 9:21), that is, sin.

The effects this Sacrament causes in the soul of the sick person who receives it with the proper disposition and at the right time are several, and I will declare some of them to you. It increases grace. It takes away the remnants of the bad past life. It strengthens the weakness and frailty that remain in the soul after sin has been forgiven, like what remains in the body after coming through a serious illness, which is called convalescence. It forgives not only venial sins, if there is sorrow for them, but also mortal ones when the sick person is unaware of them or could not confess them. It relieves and consoles the soul, filling it with great confidence in the merits of Jesus Christ; to give you to understand this, you see his five wounds pictured there. It gives

strength to resist the temptations of the devil, which at that time are very violent, because he sees that his time for seducing that soul is running out. It gives helps to

bear the anguish of death patiently. It eases not only the fear of that dreadful passage or crisis but also the intense pain death causes the body. It lessens the temporal punishment of purgatory. It prepares and disposes the soul to enter glory. And finally, if it is good for him, it also restores bodily health. Such, my son, so great and so wonderful, are the effects this Sacrament causes in the sick. That is why the Catechism of St. Pius V, composed by decree of the holy Council of Trent, says: "Those sin most grievously who, to administer holy Unction to the sick person, wait, as is commonly done, until all hope of recovery is lost and he begins to be deprived of life and senses. For it is certain," it adds, "that for him to receive the grace of the Sacrament more abundantly, it is of the greatest importance to anoint the sick person with the sacred oil while he still has the full use of reason and judgment and can receive it with faith and a more devout will." St. Liguori, in appendix 2, § 4, relates that on a certain occasion a dead man appeared and said that if he had received holy Unction before dying he would have recovered from his illness at once. But he had died because he put it off, and moreover he was sentenced to a hundred years of purgatory.

We read in history that in some Catholic towns, and even whole kingdoms, the custom was kept for a long time in former days of anointing the sick with the holy oil before giving them holy Viaticum. St. Thomas supposes that holy Unction was received before Viaticum when he says that "by Extreme Unction a man is prepared to receive the body of Christ worthily." Even in our own day, in some places in Spain, especially the small ones, it is the custom to administer the sacrament of Penance, then Viaticum, and then at once holy Unction. But in the cities and larger places the impious fashion is followed of administering this Sacrament when the sick person is more dead than alive and does not know what is happening to him. It is true that they try to justify this barbarous or impious custom by saying they do so in order not to frighten the sick person; but it is also true that there is no worse-understood compassion. Woe to the one through whose fault the sick person dies without this Sacrament, or receives it in a state in which it can hardly profit him any longer!

Those who act in this way in fact treat the sick person as impious and reprobate. In a way they give to understand that they regard him as already condemned to the torment of hell, and so they try to hide from him how near he is to being cast into it, so as not to anticipate the pain that awaits him. For if they thought him destined for heaven and worthy of eternal glory, they would try to help him be purified of those faults into which even the just often fall. Though light, these keep them from entering heaven, and they can be purified of them by means of this Sacrament. Such an omission certainly shows very little compassion for the sick person, because, as I said, it amounts to treating him as impious, reprobate and damned. This is a cruel kindness. Death does not wait on that account. And if the patient dies in sin and is damned for not having received this Sacrament, those who could have seen that he received it and did not will answer for it at God's tribunal. They will deserve to be cast into hell like Epulo in the Gospel, because he let Lazarus die of hunger. You see, then, my son, how well the poor dying man's relatives and friends would behave toward him if they obtained this means of salvation for him.

But suppose the sick person is not in sin but in the state of grace. Even so, far from wronging him by seeing that he receives holy Unction, they will do him a priceless favor. A dethroned monarch would suffer no injury from his relatives and friends if they tried by every possible means to restore him to his throne; and anyone who, for fear of adding to his distress, failed to speak to him of the means of recovering his dignity would be looked on as a false friend. So too the sick person will regard as a great favor the efforts his relatives, friends and acquaintances make to place him on the throne prepared for him in heaven. On the contrary, he will regard it as an injury if, through human fears, he is kept from receiving the necessary helps, which are the holy Sacraments. Hold this Sacrament, then, my son, in high esteem. Desire to be able to receive it, and that those of your house should receive it, and that at the right time, so that you may gain its effects in this life and glory in the next. Amen.

Q. What is the sacrament of Extreme Unction?

A. A Sacrament instituted for the spiritual and bodily relief of the sick who are in danger of death.

Q. What is the matter of this Sacrament?

A. Olive oil blessed by the Bishop.

Q. What is the form?

A. The words the priest says when he makes the holy anointings.

Q. Who is the minister?

A. The parish priest, or another priest with his leave.

Q. When should this Sacrament be received?

A. When the Christian has reached the use of reason and is sick and in danger of death.

Q. How should it be received?

A. One should try to receive it in the state of grace, with contrition and confidence.

Q. How many effects does it cause, and which?

A. Three. First, it blots out venial sins and the remnants of mortal sins already confessed. It even forgives unknown mortal sins, and those the sick person cannot confess through physical or moral incapacity. Second, it gives joy and strength to the soul to fight with Satan. Third, it gives bodily health if that is good for him.

Q. How does it give joy and strength to the soul?

A. By the increase of sanctifying grace, and by means of special helps God gives the sick person.

Q. Is it lawful to put off Extreme Unction until the sick person has lost consciousness, so as not to distress him?

A. It is not lawful, and it does the sick person great harm.

Q. Where does such conduct come from?

A. From a misunderstood kindness, from ignorance and from little faith.

Lesson 10. The Sacrament of Orders



Plate XXXV. The sacrament of Orders. The Holy Ghost pouring out his graces on the one being ordained. The Bishop in the act of conferring Orders.

My son, you know well that Popes, Bishops and priests are subject to death like other men. So, in order that the hierarchy of the Church and the sacred ministry, which are to last to the end of the world, might not be interrupted, Jesus Christ instituted the sacrament of Orders. By means of it he provides an unbroken succession of Pontiffs and priests until the consummation of the world. In the plate you will see the administration of this Sacrament by the Bishop. The dove at the very top represents the divine Spirit. The two hands signify that by the laying on of the Bishop's hands on the head of the one being ordained an abundance of grace is communicated to him. A thousand times happy is he who, *called by God, as Aaron was* (Heb. 5:4), answers his vocation and worthily administers the treasures the Lord has entrusted to him! He will be saved, and very many souls will be saved through his ministry.

It is true, my son, that God could, had he wished, have led men along the way of salvation either by himself or by an invisible ministry made up of or carried out by the Angels. But since men are generally guided by what they see, he chose to adapt himself to their nature. Accordingly he instituted a visible ministry, the priesthood, so that priests should be the ones to guide men along that way. This sacred ministry, or ecclesiastical hierarchy, is made up of ministers, priests, Bishops, and one Bishop of Bishops, who is the one we call the Sovereign Pontiff or Pope. To sanctify it further he instituted this Sacrament, which imprints a character on those ordained and empowers them for the holiest and most sacred things there are in heaven and on earth.

Oh, if you knew and understood, my son, how great and wonderful the priestly dignity is! You would be astonished, and would not know how to praise God and honor his ministers. If you understood the boundless trust God places in his priests, you would see how reasonable is the veneration that you and other well-brought-up children show them. You kiss their consecrated hands and exclaim: "Blessed be the most holy Sacrament!" or "Praised be Jesus Christ!", since they represent the one and make present the other. Could any veneration paid to the priest be excessive? St. Francis of Assisi used to say that between an Angel and a priest he would kiss the priest's hand before the Angel's. St. Anthony knelt before priests, and St. Catherine of Siena venerated their footprints. So high was the idea these Saints, enlightened by heaven, had of priests! Ah, if some men looked at priests with the eyes of faith, they would not look at them with the contempt, or at least indifference, with which unfortunately we see them do so in our day!

For, as faith teaches us, the dignity of the priest is so great that, by virtue of the words of consecration he utters, that same Jesus Christ who took human flesh in the most pure womb of the most holy Virgin takes on in his hands a real and sacramental being. He submits to the priest just as he was subject to most holy Mary and St. Joseph, as the holy Gospel tells us (Luke 2:51). So if the priest shuts him up in the tabernacle, he does not resist. If the priest exposes him to public veneration, he consents. If the priest carries him through the streets and squares, and even to the houses of the poorest, to hospitals, prisons and the plague-stricken, he approves this too. And not only has God put himself at the disposal of priests; he has also communicated and entrusted to them his power to forgive sins, handing over to them without reserve the keys of heaven. Oh wonderful dignity! Oh great and wonderful power of priests!… Ah! God has placed in their hands all his spiritual and eternal treasures. All the merits of Jesus Christ, the whole work of the sanctification and salvation of men, is entrusted to the care of priests.

My son, I should like you to reflect a little on the great benefits the public good receives from priests. Prayer is the first. Jacob saw in a dream a mysterious ladder by which Angels went up and down (Gen. 28:12), and all this was a figure of the priests of the new law, the law of grace. As mediators between God and men by virtue of their ministry, they take charge of the needs and petitions of the people. By the prayer proper to their ministry they raise them to the throne of the Most High, and make the remedy for the people's needs and a favorable answer to their petitions come down, when it is fitting, through the merits of Jesus Christ, whose ministers they are. No, my son, the prayers of priests are not like those of the people or simple faithful, which are always made in their own name, without public title or character. They are the prayers of ministers of the Religion established by Jesus Christ for our benefit: of men who pray by office and in the name of the whole Church, and who intercede as commissioned agents or plenipotentiaries of the Son of God, whose prayer his eternal Father always hears kindly. Oh, how many evils the prayers of priests prevent, and how many blessings they draw down! Out of a million examples that prove it, I will tell you only the one we read in chapter 16 of the book of Numbers. Fourteen thousand seven hundred men had already fallen victim to the dreadful fire with which God was punishing the rebellion of the Hebrews against Moses and Aaron. When Moses understood that so great a slaughter was a punishment from heaven, he said to Aaron: *Take the censer… and go quickly… to pray for them… When Aaron had done this… and standing between the dead and the living, he prayed for the people, and the plague ceased* (Num. 16:46–48). So great is the efficacy of the prayer of priests! And if it was so great under the old law, the shadow and figure of the law of grace, how much greater will its power be in the priests of the new? It is no wonder, then, that Catholic Kings and Emperors, relying on faith and experience, have turned and still turn to priests, as Moses turned to Aaron. In the troubles and needs of their kingdoms and empires, or when threatened by grave evils, they ask the priests to appease the Lord's anger by their prayers and make his mercies rain down. So noble, so holy an example, so worthy of those who in God's name direct the destinies of peoples, has not gone unimitated. So the peoples too have turned and still turn to priests whenever they wish to obtain some mercy or grace from the Lord. In this way they confess publicly and in practice that priestly prayer is of itself more effective than that of private persons, since priests pray by office, as deputed for it by Jesus Christ and by the Church. So it

is plain that even if priests had no other task than that of praying, their usefulness to the public could not be more evident.

But this usefulness, marked as it is, is slight compared with what the public good receives from priests through the sacrifices they offer for it to the eternal Father. Every religion has its sacrifices, and therefore its ministers, who under the new law are the Catholic priests. They represent Jesus Christ, in whose name they offer the eternal Father the same victim that was offered on Calvary. In return for so precious an offering they ask for the forgiveness of the people's sins; for the peace and prosperity of the Church; for the rooting out of errors and heresies; for union and concord among Christian princes; for zeal and wisdom for those who govern; for the peace of the world; and for the sanctification of all men. It is the priests who, presenting the Victim of Calvary to God every day, stay the arm of divine Justice, send the souls in purgatory their chief relief, and open the door to all graces. Peoples! All nations! See whether the benefit you receive from priests is great.

But that is not all. Besides being deputed to present prayers and sacrifices to God every day, priests are also Jesus Christ's fellow workers in the salvation of souls. They provide and distribute to the faithful the bread of the divine word. With it they civilize them and teach them the duties of a perfect citizen, and show them the one sure way to attain true happiness, spiritual and bodily, in time and in eternity. With catechisms, talks and sermons they guide minds and enlighten them with the infallible torch of faith. They teach the mysteries; they explain the one worship pleasing to God; the commandments imposed by the Lord and by the Church, which are the pattern and rule of public and private conduct; and the Sacraments to be received for the sanctification of peoples and individuals alike. By preaching, priests strengthen the just, call sinners to amendment, rouse drowsy and lethargic consciences and confound the impious. Besides winning souls for society and for heaven, they strengthen in Jesus Christ, for society and for the Church, those already won.

But where above all the benefit the public good receives from priests appears is in the administration of the holy Sacraments, especially that of Penance. By this Sacrament they draw sinners out of the tomb of guilt, of spiritual death, raising them to the life of grace and destroying error and vice. By means of this Sacrament they prevent disorders and check evils, public as well as domestic, stifling them at their birth. In this tribunal of heaven set up on earth the priests, its judges, renew forgotten friendships among the faithful, after quenching the deadly hatreds and grudges that were devouring them. In it the exact fulfilment of their respective duties is urged on and required of everyone, from the lowest of the common people to the highest in rank: their duties toward God, and those imposed on them with regard to their neighbor and themselves. In it a man is required and compelled to give society what he owes it, and not to hinder his neighbors from seeking happiness under the protection of the laws society has established. By means of this Sacrament, finally, priests labor tirelessly to sweeten the bitterness of the sorrows with which the world is strewn, to dry the tears of misfortune, and to make this vale of tears less sad, so far as the nature of things allows under the designs of

God. Would that men understood these benefits and hastened to profit from them! Would that those charged by God with the public good gave this holy ministry, as far as lies in them, its due importance! Caring less for other means of checking disorders, would that they favored all that the Church has arranged to make the administration of the Sacraments more wholesome for man as an individual and for man in society! So great, my son, and so plain is the difference between peoples who, not being Catholic, do not have the sacrament of Penance and those who frequent it, that the customs of the former always tend to degrade man, and those of the latter to make him godlike. Who, then, will not thank God for so great a good, and give priests, as its dispensers, all due honor and reverence?

Respect them, my son, and venerate them. Do so because their dignity as representatives of Jesus Christ requires it; because this is the will of our Redeemer, who, referring to the Apostles and disciples and to their successors the priests, said: *He that despiseth you, despiseth me* (Luke 10:16); and finally because of the

great benefit the public good receives from them through their ministry of prayer, sacrifice, preaching and administration of the Sacraments, as I have explained to you.

If you should learn or perhaps hear that some priest has fallen into some wretchedness or frailty, do not be surprised or scandalized at it. As there was a Judas among the first priests, the Apostles, it is no wonder that among those of our day too there should be some who forget that they must be holy. Being a priest does not stop anyone from being a descendant of Adam and, as such, subject to the same miseries and frailties as other men. But understand that because one is bad it does not follow that all the rest are. And even with regard to the bad one, I want you to know that you must pity the frailty he has shown as a man, and venerate the priestly dignity Christ has marked on him. If you see a bad priest placed at the head of a people, you must grieve and fear, and think that perhaps our sins have deserved so horrible a punishment. For holy Scripture teaches us that the greatest and most terrible scourge God sends a people is to give it bad priests. When the Lord's anger has not yet reached its height, he permits nations to take up arms against one another, the fields to be barren, and famine, desolation and death to hold sway over the earth. But when his just indignation passes all bounds, he sends the last and most dreadful of his punishments, permitting faithless ministers, stained priests and scandalous pastors to be set among men. Then it comes true that the abominations of the people are the cause of bad priests, and bad priests are the greatest punishment with which God afflicts the people. To avoid such terrible harm the Church, ever zealous for the good of the peoples and for the honorable dignity of the ministers of the altar, has established as law twelve fasts a year, three at the beginning of each of the four seasons. We call them the Ember days, and they are the time appointed for the ordination of priests. By them she obliges all the faithful to join her in begging the Lord not to punish us by giving us bad priests. Rather, may he pity our miseries and send us worthy ministers and zealous pastors to guide us through the desert of this world until we reach happily the promised land, eternal glory. Amen.

Q. What is the sacrament of Orders?

A. It is a Sacrament instituted to give ministers to the Church.

Q. Are priests, then, ministers of God and of his Church?

A. Yes; they are *the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God* (1 Cor. 4:1).

Q. What effects does the sacrament of Orders cause?

A. It gives power and grace to priests and the other ministers of the Church to do their offices well.

Q. What powers does the sacrament of Orders give priests?

A. Two very great powers.

Q. What is the first?

A. That of consecrating the body of Jesus Christ and giving it to the faithful.

Q. What is the second?

A. That of baptizing, preaching and forgiving sins.

Q. Could there be a Christian society without priests?

A. No, because there would be no one to administer the Sacraments and exercise the authority of God.

Q. Since priests are ministers of the Lord, is their dignity very great?

A. It is the greatest dignity on earth. And Jesus Christ has said that whoever hears his ministers hears him, and whoever despises them despises him.

Q. What, then, do we owe priests?

A. Respect, obedience and gratitude.

Q. Are there different grades in holy Orders?

A. Yes; there are Bishops, priests and other lower ministers.[1]

Q. Who instituted this hierarchy?

A. Jesus Christ our Lord.

Q. Does holy Orders increase grace?

A. Yes, because it is a Sacrament of the living.

Q. Does it imprint a character?

A. Yes; it imprints the character of a minister of God.

Q. What should be the purpose of embracing the clerical state?

A. The desire to promote more and more the glory of God and the salvation of souls; and for this one must be called by God to take that state.

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[1] *Ministeria quaedam.*

Lesson 11. The Sacrament of Matrimony



Plate XXXVI. The sacrament of Matrimony. "A great sacrament in Christ and in the Church" (Eph. 5:32). The parish priest and the couple being married.

If you look at the plate, my son, you will see that it shows the administration and reception of the sacrament of Matrimony. This is the indissoluble bond which spouses free of any impediment contract by words of present consent before the parish priest, or another priest authorized by him, and witnesses. It is true, my son, that if God had chosen to create in an instant all the men there are to be until the end of the world, as he created the Angels; or to create them one after another without generation, as he creates souls; or at least to form them with his own hands, as he did Adam and Eve, marriage would not be necessary. But since he willed none of that, and willed instead that the human race should be preserved and propagated by the succession of parents and children, marriage is necessary with respect to society as a whole. It does not, however, bind each person in particular, for everyone is free to marry or remain single, as pleases and suits him. So what matters to each individual is to take the state to which he feels inclined and to which God calls him. Whichever he takes, whether marriage or celibacy, he should use it as a means of attaining more easily his last end, which is the chief object we must always keep before our eyes.

My son, this world is like a great theater in which each must play his part. In a real theater the one who deserves applause is he who performs best and most perfectly the part entrusted to him, and the audience does not stop to ask whether it is an honorable part or not. If someone plays a king badly he will be hissed, and if afterwards he plays a servant well he will be applauded. In the same way, he who best fulfils his duties, whether in the single or the married state, will be the one to deserve the applause of God, who will give him his reward, though here below one state may be thought less excellent than the other. It is important, therefore, that one who is to choose a state of life should not rush into it or act from passion. He should reflect maturely on which may be more useful to him for passing this miserable life in peace and attaining his salvation more easily. So I will give you a brief account of the advantages and drawbacks of each, so that, after meditating on them before God, you may choose the one that seems best to you.

There are, as I said, two states between which one must choose: the single state, or continence; and the married state, or matrimony. The first consists in a holy purity of body and soul, as St. Paul says (1 Cor. 7:34), which is lost by any thought, word, deed or desire consented to. This state is as old as the Church herself. From her birth a great multitude of persons of every class and of both sexes consecrated their virginity to God. Since then there have never been lacking those who kept it intact, not only in deserts and cloisters but also amid the business and dangers of the world. And this will last until the consummation of the world, because Jesus Christ will raise up and ensure that there are always souls who follow him in the practice of this noble and angelic virtue. It is so pleasing to God that, when he willed to become incarnate, he chose for the purpose a most chaste Virgin. His precursor was a virgin; a virgin was the disciple he loved most and to whom he entrusted the greatest secrets; and of virgins is composed the chief choir that sings his praises without ceasing (Apoc. 14:3–4).

The holy Fathers all vie in praising this virtue as highly as they can. St. Cyprian says: "Virginity is the flower of the Church's fruits, the grace and ornament of the gifts of the spirit, the delight of nature, the perfect and incorrupt work of honor, the praise and image of God in which his immense holiness is reflected." St. Ambrose exclaims: "Oh, how great is the grace of virginity, which deserved to be chosen as the bodily temple of God, in which the fullness of the divinity should dwell!" And elsewhere he adds: "Virginity, rising above the condition of human nature, makes Angels of men; and the victory of virgin souls is even greater than that of the Angels, because the Angels live without flesh, while virgins triumph over the flesh." This is how these Fathers, among others, praise virginity, my son. It is a heavenly virtue, so hated by the world, which likes to wallow like a pig in the filth of the flesh; so esteemed by pure souls and by the Church; so admired by the Angels; so loved by Jesus; and so pleasing to God.

Writing to the Corinthians St. Paul says to them: *I would that all men were even as myself* (St. Paul was unmarried)*: but every one hath his proper gift from God; one after this manner, and another after that. But I say to the unmarried, and to the widows: It is good for them if they so continue, even as I. But if they do not contain themselves, let them marry* (1 Cor. 7:7–9), unless they have made a vow of chastity. For matrimony was instituted not only to propagate the human race but also to calm concupiscence. I said "unless they have made a vow of chastity", because while that binds, the remedy for concupiscence can be sought only in prayer and mortification. But let anyone who wishes to marry not forget the proverb: "Before you marry, look what you are doing." It warns him to think it over maturely before God, to reflect which of the two states may be better suited to his salvation, and to choose the one he would wish to have chosen at the hour of death. One who feels inclined to marriage should consider, before embracing this state, the obligations it brings with it and whether he can fulfil them; the dangers found in it and whether he will know how to avoid or overcome them. In a matter of such importance, on which temporal and eternal happiness depend, no one should trust his own lights or opinion. So he should first consult his director or confessor, or his own parents, without prejudice, commending himself earnestly to God, the most holy Virgin, the archangel St. Raphael, his holy Guardian Angel and the Saints of his devotion.

If, having taken these steps, he knows that it is God's will that he should take the married state, let him then beg God for the gift of choosing his companion rightly. For God's designs must be consulted not only on the state in general but also on the state considered in particular. God may very well want a person to marry, yet not want him to marry this or that person, but some other. So, as he consulted God on whether he wanted him in the married state or not, let him also consult him on whether he wants him married to this person or to that. Peace and union between spouses are the most important thing, since the happiness of married life consists in them. To attain them one should try, as far as possible, to have equality of age, class and condition between them. One should set one's thoughts on a person who is chaste, prudent, docile, busy with what belongs to his or her duty, God-fearing, charitable and thoroughly virtuous. These and similar qualities are the ones to look for in the person one intends to marry, and not beauty, riches, rank, or, what would be worse, the satisfaction of some brutish passion. But finding such a person cannot be achieved without first giving up every earthly aim and commending the matter to God. So it is indispensable to turn humbly to the Giver of every good, for the Holy Ghost tells us: *House and riches are given by parents: but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord* (Prov. 19:14). That marriage, and no other, will be happy which the Lord joins. The Sacrament will produce its effect, causing that grace of love and union between the spouses. It gives them strength to bear patiently the hardships, labors and troubles the state brings with it, and fills them with knowledge and prudence to instruct and guide as they should the children with whom God blesses their union. But those whom God does not join, but self-interest, beauty, brutish passion, the devil… alas! Even if they do not suffer the unhappy fate of Sara's seven husbands, who were killed by the devil on the very night of their ill-fated weddings (Tob. 3:8), they will remain alive only to suffer, and to begin in this world the hell they will afterwards continue for evermore in the next.

Woe to those who, instead of preparing to receive this sacrament of Matrimony with the proper dispositions, profane it by long courtships beforehand! They take liberties with certain things on the promise and hope that they will soon be married, and so insult the Sacrament, which they make an excuse for sinning. What a fountain of misfortunes they bring on themselves! What a seedbed of discord they prepare! Those who want to choose rightly in matters of such importance try to implore the help of God and the most holy Virgin. They abstain from sin, and before contracting marriage they make some

days of spiritual exercises with a general confession. So for them the wedding day is a great and wonderful day, sanctified by the three Sacraments they receive: cleansed and healed by Penance, holily united by Matrimony, and wonderfully assisted by the Lord in holy Communion. Jesus is invited to such weddings in an even more special way than to the wedding at Cana of Galilee. No obscene, unseemly or suggestive words

are spoken at them. Indecent actions and signs are banished from them. Dances, and whatever pleases not Jesus and Mary but the devil, have no place there. For the bride and groom, sanctified by the Sacraments received and the exercises that went before, behave like Tobias and Sara, and St. Raphael drives the devil Asmodeus from among them (Tob. 8). What holy and well-begun weddings! Oh, the fruits of such a marriage cannot fail to be well ripened, for the public good as much as for the glory of God and the benefit of the spouses. For the others, whose weddings were preceded by a thousand sins and accompanied by a thousand more on the wedding day itself, what can be hoped? Can trees worm-eaten from the day they were planted give any fruit but wild and bitter? Alas! Infidelities, separations, quarrels, scandals, unruly children, and a thousand other evils that unfortunately we see every day, to the discredit of Religion and the harm of society. These are the sorry fruits of marriages made under the auspices of the devil, because made under those of sin.

It is very easy to get married, but not to make a good marriage. So it should be thought over carefully beforehand, for this union is to last the whole life of both spouses. Besides signifying the union of Jesus Christ with the Church, as you see in the plate, which will never be separated (Eph. 5:32), it rests on natural reason itself. Reason teaches that it is the parents who must see not only to the procreation of children but also to their becoming perfect men in stature, instruction and settlement in some class of society. For who but they could take on this obligation? And how could they fulfil it completely if they were not united? And if there were no one to fulfil it… oh, who could reckon the evils that would follow? If, despite the care of parents who by common accord seek to bring up their children in a holy and sociable way, we still see so many dissolute and libertine people, what would happen if each spouse went his own way and abandoned them? And this union of the spouses must be perpetual not only for the sake of the education, support and settlement of the children, but also with regard to the spouses themselves. It is not right that a union on which the well-being of the children, of the spouses and of society itself depends should contain even the fear that one of the spouses may be abandoned. In that case love would grow cold and the door would open to whims. Foreseeing a possible break could divide the family's interests. And the fear of being abandoned in old age, after serving faithfully in youth, would lead to the crimes that society now laments in those not lawfully united. How distressing for a mother to think that after spending her freshness and vigor in bearing and feeding the children, she might see herself abandoned by the father in her old age!

Ah! This marriage contract is not like those men make on their own account, which they undo today what they did yesterday, out of fickleness or because it suits their whims or interests. No, this one has been made before God, who with his blessing shields it and withdraws it from man's jurisdiction, sanctioning its duration until the death of one of the spouses. So from the day the two spouses lawfully celebrated and consummated the marriage, God makes this union his own and forbids any breaking of it, for any cause whatever, since it is a sacred thing. Man may defend it, but never attack it: such is the intrinsic condition of the marriage contract. Perpetuity belongs to it, then, by natural and divine law. That is why Jesus Christ in the holy Gospel, to give us to understand it, did not say that such a union was human but divine, and that therefore man may not touch it: *Quod Deus conjunxit, homo non separet* \[What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder\] (Matt. 19:6). The man and the woman were free to give their consent. But as soon as they had spoken their "yes", it was taken up by God, who therefore remains sole owner and lord of it. Whichever of the spouses afterwards tried to dissolve this bond would be attacking God's property. That is why it is not said in vain: "Look on the separated spouse as already damned."

This damnation would be certain not only if one attempted to dissolve the bond, but also if a temporary or permanent separation took place not approved by the lawful authority, which can allow it in certain cases. For then the spouses would no longer love each other as they should. They would fail in the fidelity they have sworn to each other and form unlawful relationships with other persons, and adulteries would corrupt society. Adulteries!… Oh, this horrible crime, as irreligious as it is antisocial, has always been regarded, and

rightly, as one of the offenses deserving the greatest penalties. It is a theft, an infamous unfaithfulness, a beginning of injustices, a poison destructive of the peace and union of families, and an unfailing spring of scandals that undermines society at its foundations. That is why such a crime has always been regarded with horror, and laws have punished it with the greatest severity. God himself, in Deuteronomy, chapter 22, verse 22, decreed against adulterers the penalty of death by stoning. The Julian law of the Romans also decreed capital punishment against them. Lycurgus imposed on them the penalty of parricides. The Saxons burned the adulteress alive, raised a gallows over her ashes and hanged the adulterer from it; and I could cite you many other laws of this sort. And if in our times some human legislation is unfortunately negligent in punishing so great a crime, adulterers will not for that reason go unpunished. For, as the Apostle says, God will take it on himself to judge and punish this horrible offense, which men have not punished (Heb. 13:4).

My son, I have explained to you what marriage is, and what must be done and avoided to live in it holily, as well as the advantages and praises of celibacy. I have done so in order that, when you are of age to choose a state of life, you may meditate maturely on both, and ask God to make known to you in which of the two he wants you. After you have chosen, try to fulfil exactly the duties it imposes. In this way you will be happy in this world and the next, which is the wish that moves me.

Q. What is the sacrament of Matrimony?

A. It is a Sacrament instituted to sanctify the union of husband and wife.

Q. Must those who marry be instructed in Christian doctrine?

A. Yes, because they are Christians, and so that they may afterwards teach it to their children.

Q. Must they be in the grace of God?

A. Yes, because it is a Sacrament of the living, and otherwise they would commit a sacrilege.

Q. What is needed for the Sacrament to be valid?

A. The free consent of the parties, that they have no impediment, and the presence of the parish priest and two witnesses.

Q. What effects does it cause?

A. It gives grace and helps to the married so that they may live in peace and union and bring up their children well.

Q. What do the obligations of the married come down to?

A. To representing, by their union, the union of Jesus with his Church.

Q. How do they represent it?

A. By their holiness, their mutual charity, their care in bringing up their children, and their inviolable fidelity until death.

Lesson 12. The Theological Virtues



Plate XXXVII. The theological virtues. God one and three. The Law and the Sacraments. Faith, hope and charity. Good works: gold, frankincense and myrrh; the affection and devotion with which they are offered.

Do you see those three figures in the plate, my son? They symbolize the theological virtues, Faith, Hope and Charity, which are indispensably necessary for adults to be saved. That is why I have thought it very important to give you an account of each of them in particular.

That figure with bandaged eyes, holding a chalice in her right hand and a cross in her left, symbolizes *Faith*. It is a supernatural virtue infused by God into the soul, by which we believe all that God has said and revealed and the Church proposes to us as of faith. The motive or reason why we believe these things is that God, infallible truth, has said and taught them. So we must adhere to all of them, and to each one in particular, with more certainty and assurance of not deceiving ourselves or being deceived than if we saw them with our own eyes. For our eyes can after all deceive us, but God can neither deceive nor be deceived. Man will have the right to find out whether or not God taught what he is asked to believe. But once he has found out that God really said it, he can do nothing else but close his eyes in body and soul and exclaim humbly: “God said it? Then it is as he said. I adhere. I believe firmly on his infallible word. Away with doubts. Whatever is brought against it is sophistry, deceit, error. What is proposed surpasses my knowledge, it is true; but it is no less true that God’s knowledge is infinitely above mine. Away, then, with all examination. I believe with my understanding, and I adhere with all my heart.” So should the wise man reason; so should the humble man be silent. To believe in this way is not to abandon reason but to perfect it, ennoble it and make it godlike.

And how can a man make sure that God taught or revealed a truth? There is a Church, the Catholic Church, the depositary of all the truths God has willed to teach man for his present and future happiness. This Church has been honored by God himself with the gift of infallibility, by which she can neither be deceived nor deceive. Here is man's point of support. Does he want to know with certainty whether or not God said what is proposed to him? Let him go to the infallible teacher, the Catholic Church, and she will free him from all doubt and make him certain. Is it a learned man who asks and wants to know whether she is really infallible and the depositary of God's truths? Oh! She is so frank and so loyal that she will at once open her archives and show him her unimpeachable titles. Is it an ordinary man, whose talents, studies or occupations do not allow him to go into titles and details? The mere sight of the Catholic Church's uninterrupted possession of the right to teach infallibly, without deception, and the adherence and belief of all the faithful, learned or unlearned, of all centuries, in what she teaches, are sufficient guarantee for him to proceed safely and without the least fear of deceiving or being deceived. "O holy Church!" man can and should exclaim amid his wavering ideas, "I greet you with joy. In the midst of the labyrinth of this world, you alone, since you are *the pillar and ground of the truth* (1 Tim. 3:15), teach me surely how I shall attain my high end or destiny, after leaving me no doubt about my origin, as noble as it is degraded."

The virtue of Faith has five precepts, three affirmative and two negative. The first affirmative precept is to know the mysteries of faith. The second is to assent to them, adhering to these holy truths with understanding and will. The third is to confess this faith or belief outwardly. As to the first two precepts, I have nothing to point out to you, my son. You know the Christian doctrine and mysteries I have been explaining to you up to now, and I believe you are well persuaded of their truth. For I know that it is enough for you that God, who can neither err nor deceive us, has said and revealed it. And to make sure that God has said it, you have all the motives of credibility one could wish: the prophecies fulfilled, the miracles worked, the spread of the faith, the Martyrs, and others. These convince you how reasonable is the homage you pay to God in believing what you neither see nor understand, his word being enough for you. As to the third precept, outward confession of the faith, you must know that there are five cases in which it binds. 1. When you are questioned about your belief by someone with authority, such as a judge, a tyrant or another commissioned by him; if it is a mere private person, you may evade the question. 2. When the images of Jesus Christ, of the most holy Virgin and of the Saints are profaned before your eyes. 3. When someone is wavering in the faith and you feel you have the courage to confirm him in it. 4. When an adult is to receive Baptism. 5. When certain titles of canonical institution are to be received. The two negative precepts are not to dissent from the faith inwardly and not to deny it outwardly. On no account must the faith ever be denied, even if one must lose reputation, possessions or life. Nor is it enough to keep it inwardly if one denies it outwardly out of some fear, as St. Peter did in the passion of Jesus Christ. Believe, then, my son, believe all the truths of faith, without ever denying any of them inwardly or outwardly. If you believe firmly, and your faith is accompanied by good works, you will be saved; otherwise you will be damned, as Jesus Christ himself assures us in his holy Gospel (Mark 16:16).

That other figure holding an anchor in her hand symbolizes the virtue of *Hope*. With the finger she raises upward she is telling you to put your trust in God. With the anchor she shows you that on your part you must take the steps necessary to be saved, imitating sailors. When a storm rises they call on God, but they do not forget to cast the anchors, lower the sails and do all they judge useful to save themselves from shipwreck. Hope, then, that God will forgive you your sins, grant you his grace and finally give you glory through the merits of Jesus Christ. But do not forget that you must add your good works to these. So you must pray, flee occasions of sin, frequent the holy Sacraments and take great care to fulfil exactly the duties of your state. Hope, my son, hope in God, who is almighty, goodness itself and all mercy toward sinners. For you must know that, though it is certain that sins have an infinite malice and deserve the pains of hell, it is also true that Jesus Christ, suffering and dying for sinners, acquired infinite and superabundant merits to save them all. But for these merits to profit the sinner, they must be applied to him, just as an effective medicine must be

applied or taken by the sick man for him to recover. This application is made to the sinner by means of the sacrament of Penance. Take, then, this and the other medicines at the right time, and you will recover. I mean, frequent this Sacrament and that of the Eucharist, and you will see how the merits of Jesus Christ will profit you.

But I have told you already that they alone are not enough: we must add our good works. In the natural order one must first sow in order to reap, and then God by his providence gives the fitting fruits. In the same way in the order of grace the Christian must sow good works, and then God will let him gather the priceless fruit of glory. What would a farmer who sowed nothing reap in the ordinary course of things? Nothing. So in the ordinary course of grace the Christian who did no good works, or waited to do them out of season, at the hour of death, would gather no fruit of glory.

My son, do good works while God grants you time for it. Never be in sin. Put your trust in God, in the merits of Jesus Christ, in the intercession of the most holy Virgin, the Angels and the Saints, and I assure you that your hope will not be disappointed.

Charity, the third of the theological virtues, is the virtue by which we love God above all things, and our neighbor as ourselves for the love of God. We should look for an infallible sign of whether or not we love God, and here it is. Keeping and fulfilling his commandments exactly, doing all things for his greater honor and glory, and suffering everything for love of him: this is what proves without fear of error that the love of God, or charity, reigns in us (John 14:21). Alas,

my son! Try, yes, try always to love God with all your heart. He is goodness itself, and he has given us countless benefits, creating us and preserving us at every moment. If it were not for the great care with which he watches over us, we should stumble at every step and would already have lost our lives on a thousand occasions. His infinite mercy, without which no one would have been saved, has redeemed us. And finally he has remained in the most august Sacrament of the altar to be our food and to fill us with his graces and benefits. Let us love him, then, and love him much, since *he first hath loved us* (1 John 4:19).

Let us also love our neighbor for the love of God himself. We should do so because the Lord wills it, and this should be enough for us if we truly loved him. We should do so because our neighbor is the image and likeness of God, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, and because we are brothers. God so desires that we love our neighbor that he did not hesitate to make this livery of love of neighbor the badge of his disciples, by which it might be known who truly are his and who are not (John 13:35). And St. John firmly declares that if anyone says he loves God and hates his brother or neighbor, he is not telling the truth. For it is impossible that he who hates his neighbor, whom he sees, should love God, whom he does not see (1 John 4:20). For this reason the virtue of Charity is symbolized in that other figure, who carries one child in her arm and leads another by the hand. This shows that charity always takes great care for the good of the neighbor, and we know that what is done to one of these little ones is done to God (Matt. 25:40).

Having explained the theological virtues, I shall give you some notion of good works. For when you are asked how many things are necessary to be saved, you answer four: Faith, Hope, Charity and good works. Do you see, my son, that other kneeling figure, who carries a heart in her right hand and the censer in her left? She represents Religion, which prescribes to us the good works we must practice. The burning heart shows us that ours must always be on fire with love of God, and this love is proved by works, as St. Gregory says. Works will be good if they are in keeping with reason and with the law of God. This last is symbolized in the triangle, in the tables of the law and in the sacred book of the Gospels, all of which are there in the center of the plate. For the light of reason is a sharing in the eternal light, as the Prophet teaches when he asks: *Who sheweth us good things?* and answers: *The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us* (Ps. 4:6–7), which makes them known to us. The tables of the law symbolize the old law, and the book of the Gospels the law of grace. The censer the figure carries in her left hand symbolizes prayer. The incense boat on the table is

full of myrrh, symbolizing mortification. And that small open box is full of coins, the symbol of almsgiving. These, my son, are the works that are good and are called good, and they are the ones you should be busy with. But understand and know that they would not be good if you did not do them for the honor and glory of God. That is why those two hearts, the hearts of Jesus and Mary, are beneath the book of the holy Gospels. In the heart of Jesus you are to understand that God is honored, together with the humanity and divinity of Christ. In the heart of Mary you will learn the trust and devotion you owe to this Lady, the Mother of Jesus, who is Daughter of the Father, Mother of the Son and Spouse of the Holy Ghost.

Try, then, my son, to have the three theological virtues, and let them always be accompanied by good works. With this you will be happy in time and in eternity.

Q. How many are the theological virtues?

A. Three: Faith, Hope and Charity.

Q. Why are they called theological?

A. Because they come from God and have God for their object.

Lesson 13. The Cardinal Virtues



Plate XXXVIII. The cardinal virtues. 1. Prudence. 2. Justice. 3. Fortitude. 4. Temperance.

My son, the four figures in this plate represent the four cardinal virtues: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance. They are called cardinal because they are the foundation and support of the other moral virtues. They are leaning against those columns to show that the whole building of the virtues rests and depends on them.

Prudence, shown in figure 1, is a cardinal virtue because it directs reason to decide rightly in what concerns the particular acts of all the virtues. So it shows or tells us what must be done or left undone in any particular business or action in order to act uprightly. She holds a mirror in her left hand. A person uses a mirror to look at himself, to clean off the spots that disfigure him and to put on the adornments he finds lacking. In the same way Prudence is like a mirror that shows each one faithfully the faults he must correct and what he must perfect in himself. In her right hand she holds a serpent. When this reptile finds itself pursued, it abandons its whole body to save its head. So Prudence teaches the Christian to abandon everything, even life, provided he saves the faith. That is why Jesus Christ told us: *Be ye wise as serpents* (Matt. 10:16). The serpent sheds its skin each year and is renewed. A good Christian should imitate it, trying each year to leave behind his faults and to renew the promises made at Baptism. The serpent, as the most cunning and shrewd animal, moved by the evil spirit, went to Eve to deceive Adam and make him sin in the earthly paradise. So the good Christian, if he wants to obtain the grace of the new Adam, Jesus, must go to the new Eve, Mary. Prudence has three parts, says St. Thomas. The first is to find the means for carrying out the work perfectly, and it is called *counsel*. The second is to judge rightly how fit the means found are for the present circumstances of the work, and it is called *judgment*. The third is a command of reason which applies the will to carry out the work in the way it has judged it should be done, and it is called *precept* \[command\].

Justice is also a cardinal virtue, because it directs the will to give each one what is his by right. It is the basis of all the virtues that concern our neighbor. It is of two kinds: one is called *commutative* and the other *distributive*. Commutative justice secures equality of things between persons in due proportion. It is the one that must be observed in contracts, such as exchanges, purchases, sales, rentals and the like. That is why, if you notice, figure 2 holds a balance or scales in her hand, to signify that each must be given what is his or belongs to him, without harming anyone. Distributive justice deals out rewards or punishments according to each person’s merit or demerit. Insofar as it deals out rewards, such as honors, posts and pensions, according to each one’s merit, it is called *remunerative*. Insofar as it assigns the punishments due to the guilty, such as prison, exile and death, it is called *vindictive* \[punitive\] justice. That is why figure 2, which is Justice, holds in her right hand a sword, besides the balance or scales she carries in her left to show that she weighs and considers well what belongs to each. The sword gives us to understand that, as she gives the reward due to each one’s merit, so she gives the guilty the punishment deserved, once the fault or crime has been established.

My son, in this vale of tears there is never lacking something to draw reason back from acting well and keep it from going by the right road: the fatal consequence of the original disorder! To make it clearer, theologians have reduced these hindrances to two classes. In the first are placed the things that frighten, and in the second those that pervert by delighting. So reason needs two fundamental virtues: one to make it firm and constant against hard and difficult things, and one to rein it in so that it is not carried away by the attraction of pleasant things. *Fortitude* serves for the first, and *Temperance* for the second. The first gives vigor to the will to struggle against the harsh and difficult things that meet us at every step in the practice of the virtues. The second preserves and frees us from the pleasures of the senses, which too often stand against the integrity of the virtues.

That is why you will see that figure 3, which is Fortitude, holds a column in her hands. A column bears without giving way all the weight laid on it. So the person endowed with this virtue does not draw back at the sight of the dreadful evils that threaten him. He suffers them with manly courage, without letting himself be overcome by vices, and masters fear, which is a passion powerful enough to conquer our heart. With the help

of the Lord's grace and relying on this virtue of Fortitude, the holy Martyrs overcame the threats and terrors with which tyrants tried to frighten them, and gave their lives for Jesus Christ with valor and constancy.

The other cardinal virtue, which, as I told you, preserves reason from the pleasures of the senses or the attraction of pleasant things, is called *Temperance*. It consists in a habit that inclines us to moderate concupiscence, chiefly regarding the pleasures that come from food, drink and impure things, and secondarily those of the other senses. That is why you will see that figure 4, which is Temperance, holds a jug in her hands. When a jug is full it will hold no more liquor, however good or choice the one someone wants to pour into it. So the person endowed with this virtue moderates his appetites. He does not exceed in food or drink, or in anything else he may lawfully use, and never lets himself be carried away by disordered pleasure. Some pleasures are more vehement than others and so master a person more or less. But it always belongs to the virtue of Temperance to keep both kinds in check and subject them always to right reason and the law of God.

You have seen, then, my son, how useful and how necessary the cardinal virtues are. So try eagerly to acquire them, and once acquired, keep them. They will preserve your bodily and spiritual health and give you as a result a happy life in this world, and still more in the next. On the contrary, the vices opposed to them would make you unhappy in this life, and in the end an eternal hell would be the reward of your mad follies.

Q. How many are the cardinal virtues?

A. Four: Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance.

Q. Why are these virtues called cardinal?

A. Because they are the foundation of the other virtues.

Q. What is Prudence?

A. It is a virtue that teaches us the way to act well.

Q. What is Justice?

A. A virtue that inclines us to give each one what belongs to him.

Q. What is Fortitude?

A. A virtue that gives us strength to bear contradictions cheerfully, and not to give way in great trials and dangers, even of death.

Q. What is Temperance?

A. A virtue that gives us strength to avoid excessive, forbidden or dangerous pleasures of the senses.

Lesson 14. The Fruits of the Holy Ghost

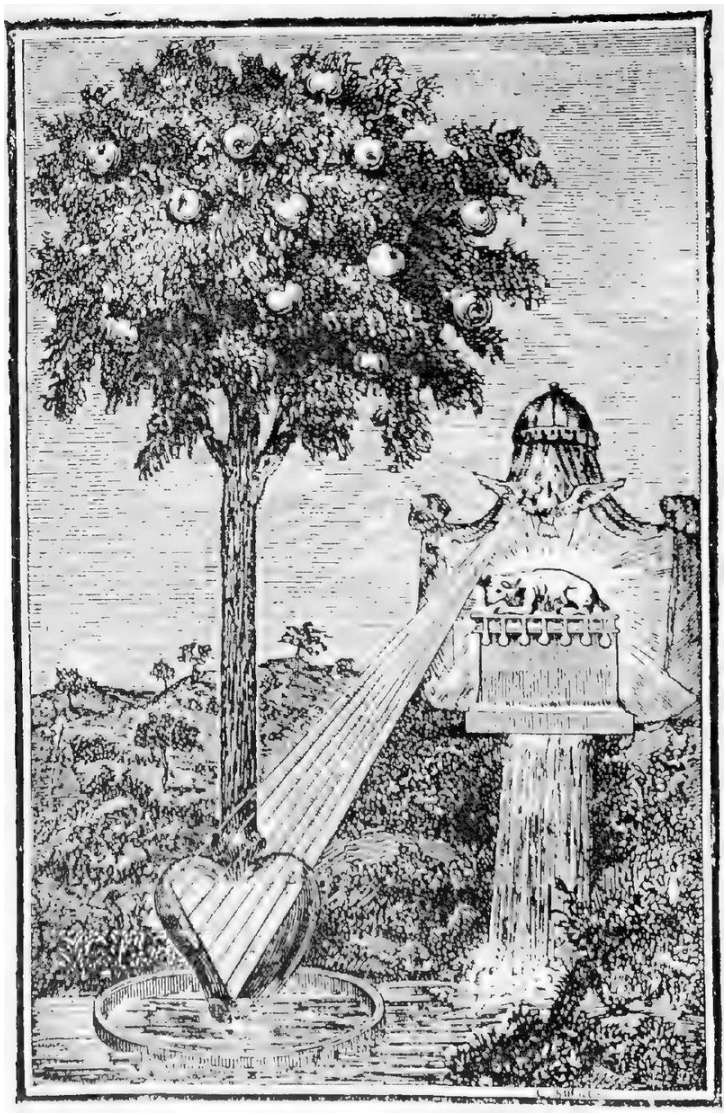

Plate XXXIX. The fruits of the Holy Ghost. The river that flows from the altar of the Lamb. A tree planted near the running waters. The Holy Ghost gives it warmth.

My son, this plate shows the throne of God and of the Lamb. St. John saw *a river of water of life* flowing from it, and beside its stream a tree bearing twelve fruits (Apoc. 22:1–2), all of which you see represented there. With this authority St. Thomas proves the twelve fruits of the Holy Ghost, which I am going to explain to you, taking this angelic master and other authors as my guide.

Do you see at the foot of the tree that heart with a triangle in the middle, a figure of the soul in its unity of substance and trinity of powers? It symbolizes a good Christian, who is like a fertile soil that repays the cultivation given it. From the heart grows a tree that bears twelve fruits. The seed it came from comes from the Holy Ghost, and so its fruits are called fruits of the Holy Ghost. You know already that man has nothing he has not received from God (1 Cor. 4:7); that by the grace of God he is what he is (1 Cor. 15:10); and that *the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us* (Rom. 5:5). Well then, that tree planted in fertile soil, watered by graces and given life by the divine Sun, the love of the Holy Ghost, must of necessity give ripe and very sweet fruits to the person who cultivates it. These fruits, as the apostle St. Paul says (Gal. 5:22–23), are the following twelve: Charity, Spiritual Joy, Peace, Patience, Long-suffering, Goodness, Benignity, Mildness, Faith, Modesty, Continency and Chastity.

I want you to know, my son, that according to St. Thomas these fruits are not habitual or permanent perfections. They are certain actual and passing movements of the soul, which come from the supernatural

virtues that dwell in it. In the exercise of those virtues they give the soul a particular relish or a very choice delight. This is what the tree signifies: the tree is constant and lasting, and its fruit is passing.

Charity, the first fruit, consists in that spiritual relish that comes from the love with which the good love God. This relish is greater or less according to the love with which they love him, for God communicates himself to them according to the disposition with which they receive him.

Joy, the second fruit, consists in an inward gladness of the soul which the good have in being friends of God and in having left off sinning. It surpasses beyond comparison all the honest

joys of the world. Among other things its cause is the hope of salvation, as St. Paul says (Rom. 12:12). It brings with it such gladness that whoever has it begins already in this world to taste beforehand the delights of glory. That is why Christ said to his disciples: *Rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven* (Luke 10:20), or, as St. John says, in *the book of life* (Apoc. 21:27).

Peace is the third fruit. It consists in that tranquility and quiet of mind with which the good live. It is the effect of a good conscience, clean of all mortal sin, and this peace is above every other calm. This tranquility is greater or less according to the cleanness of conscience, even from venial sins. Only those who live in grace enjoy this peace: *Much peace have they that love thy law* (Ps. 118:165). *There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord* (Isa. 48:22).

Patience, the fourth fruit, is that resignation and relish with which the good conform themselves entirely to the will of God in any tribulation. Sometimes it is so great that, as though beside themselves, they go in search of pains. This relish is born of the great love they have for God. This fruit shines in a special way in the Martyrs, who in the midst of pains and horrible torments leapt for joy at the love they had for Jesus, for whom they suffered. We read this too of the Apostles: *they went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus* (Acts 5:41).

Long-suffering, the fifth fruit, is a firmness or constancy of mind that the good have. They do not grow weary or distressed at the length of the trials and pains of this life, nor lose heart because the attainment of the goods of glory they hope for is delayed. Rather they desire that God's will be always done in everything and through everything.

Goodness, the sixth fruit, consists in a good will and desire the good have to do good to their neighbor. They feel a special joy whenever an occasion of practicing charity presents itself to them.

Benignity, the seventh fruit, consists in the affectionate and friendly way in which the good do good to their neighbor. They do it not by force, or unwillingly, or with a frown, but with a certain affectionate and pleasant feeling that gives them a special satisfaction.

Mildness, the eighth fruit, consists in that evenness of mind with which the good bear injuries without indignation, as masters of themselves. This gives the soul a certain satisfaction at seeing itself treated as its Redeemer was.

Faith, the ninth fruit, is the faithfulness the good keep toward God and toward men. So this fruit concerns both God and neighbor. With regard to God, faith is not considered here as a theological virtue. It is a very great and lofty moral certainty that just souls sometimes experience about some mystery of faith, and this new knowledge gives the soul an inexpressible relish or pleasure. With regard to our neighbor, it consists in a great faithfulness the just keep toward all men, so that deceit and hidden motives never have any place in them.

Modesty, the tenth fruit, is a very careful attention the just give to see that all their actions are done in due measure, without going the least bit too far in words, gestures or actions. That is why the Apostle exhorts us: *Let your modesty be known to all men* (Phil. 4:5).

Continency, the eleventh fruit, is the absolute and universal renouncing of sensual pleasures, both unlawful and lawful. Souls that have this fruit get from it a special relish that surpasses infinitely that which the voluptuous enjoy wallowing in the pleasures of the flesh. Human language has no words to express the joy of a soul endowed with continence and virginity: only one who enjoys it knows it.

Chastity, the twelfth fruit, is that inward purity the good keep according to their state, virginal, married or widowed. They abhor unseemly or disordered things and flee the occasions that could tempt them to stain their chastity. So the persons who taste this fruit enjoy such sweetness and inward joy that it is given to them alone to know it, though not to explain it. And this satisfaction grows in them, and they prize it more, whenever they happen to see the restlessness, miseries and fatal diseases of those who wallow like swine in the mire of impurity, as St. Peter says (2 Pet. 2:22). For these unhappy people are in every way hateful to God and men, unworthy of heaven and deserving of hell. The chaste, on the contrary, are the object of God's delight and of men's veneration, and have heaven almost assured.

Ah, my son! If the sweetness of these fruits of the Holy Ghost is great and inexpressible even in this world, what will it be to enjoy them there in heaven? Take courage, then. Try earnestly to obtain them, which you will no doubt achieve by living in keeping with Christian doctrine. Yes: the chaste and devout are temples of the Holy Ghost. He adorns and enriches them. And would he not do as much with you, if you dispose yourself rightly?

Q. How many are the fruits of the Holy Ghost?

A. Twelve: Charity, Joy, Peace, and the rest, as listed above.

Q. Why are they called fruits of the Holy Ghost?

A. Because they are what is most perfect in the virtues, which is the work of a special movement of the Holy Ghost.

Q. What is the fruit Charity?

A. It is that love with which the good love God.

Q. What is the fruit Joy?

A. It is that gladness the good enjoy in being friends of God and in having left sin.

Q. What is the fruit Peace?

A. It is that tranquility and quiet of mind with which the good live.

Q. What is the fruit Patience?

A. It is that resignation and relish with which the good conform themselves entirely to the will of God in any tribulation.

Q. What is the fruit Long-suffering?

A. It is that great spirit the good have, who are troubled by nothing and find contentment in nothing but God our Lord.

Q. What is the fruit Goodness?

A. It is that will and desire the good have to do good to their neighbor.

Q. What is the fruit Benignity?

A. It is that pleasantness with which the good treat all men, devoting themselves to serving them.

Q. What is the fruit Mildness?

A. It is that evenness of mind with which the good bear injuries without indignation.

Q. What is the fruit Faith?

A. It is that faithfulness the just keep toward God, believing all he has revealed, and deceiving no one.

Q. What is the fruit Modesty?

A. It is that care the good take that all their actions be done in due measure.

Q. What is the fruit Continency?

A. It is that aim the good have of restraining disordered passions.

Q. What is the fruit Chastity?

A. It is that inward purity the good keep, abhorring unseemly things and fleeing the occasions.

Lesson 15. The Gifts of the Holy Ghost

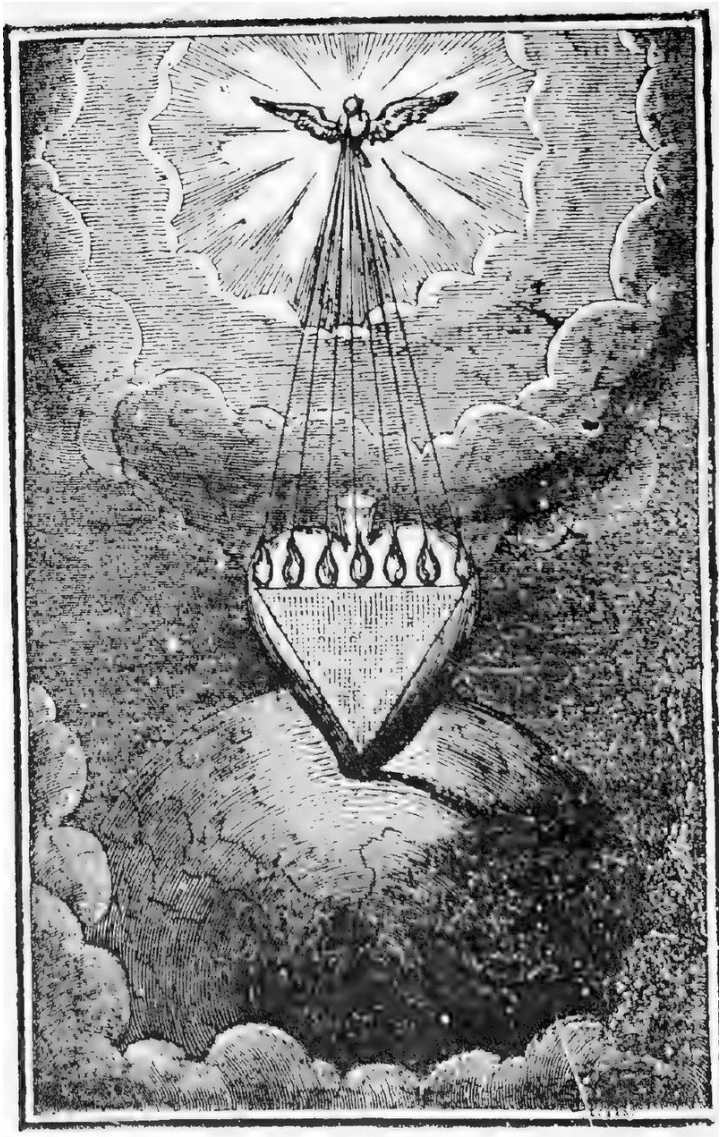

Plate XL. The gifts of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost pouring out his gifts on the soul. The world, from which the heart turns away.

This plate shows the Holy Ghost in the act of pouring out his gifts on a soul, represented by that heart rising above the earth, which is shown by that globe. You know already, my son, that a person in mortal sin is a slave of the devil, hateful to God and the Saints, and deserving of the eternal pains of hell. But you know too that if he has the good fortune to be converted, the whole scene changes in the same instant. There is special joy in heaven (Luke 15:7). God loves him as much as he hated him before. And the three divine Persons of the august Trinity, as Jesus Christ says, come and set their throne in that heart which a little before was the devil's (John 14:23). So a Christian in the grace of God is the temple of the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul declares (1 Cor. 6:19). This divine Spirit adorns the soul in grace with the jewels of the virtues and enriches it with seven most precious gifts. Because they are special presents or gifts of the love of God, they are called gifts of the Holy Ghost, to whom works of love are attributed. These are the seven gifts: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of God. They are figured in the seven rays of the plate. Insofar as they are habits or permanent dispositions, everyone in the grace of God possesses them. But not insofar as they are acts, for the Holy Ghost, despite these gifts, leaves man free to act.

My son, the gifts must not be confused with the virtues. God infuses the virtues to perfect man insofar as he is moved by reason, as St. Thomas says. But the gifts serve to dispose him for a higher perfection. They make him readier to follow God's inspirations and to fulfil his will in everything and through everything by way of love. In this way the soul is carried without the least effort, and almost compelled, according to the degree it has of these gifts, to leave the world and all earthly things. This is shown to you in the plate, in which the heart is above the world and longs only to follow the inspirations of the Holy Ghost. Iron near a magnet seems to forget its natural weight in order to follow it. In the same way the soul, disposed by these gifts, forgets its natural tendency to the things here below and turns to God as to its center and only object.

So that you may value these rich jewels, these heavenly gifts, as you should, and like Solomon prefer them to crowns and scepters (Wis. 7:8), I shall give you a short account of each of them.

Wisdom, the first gift, is a supernatural and very clear light by means of which the understanding knows divine truths, and God himself, in an ineffable way. It does so in such a way that even if all the testimonies and signs of our faith were lacking, the soul would believe them by this light alone. This light serves as a guide to order all its actions according to the law of God, with a gentleness, sweetness and inward joy that surpass all human understanding. The understanding, thus enlightened, passes on its light to the will with so great an impulse that man detaches himself from all the things of earth, judging them unworthy of his love. He consecrates that love at once to God with a clean heart, detached from every earthly affection, lamenting that he was so long in coming to know him. And embracing its object, the soul clings to it with so strong a union and perseverance that I do not hesitate to say with St. Paul that nothing in the world, not even death itself, will be able to separate it (Rom. 8:35–39).

Understanding, the second gift, is a divine light. Adorned with it, the soul's power of understanding penetrates in a wonderful way the truths of faith and the sovereign perfections of God, and understands the sense of the holy Scriptures. The Doctors of the Catholic Church and other Saints were enlightened with this gift of Understanding. Many of them, though very ignorant in the human sciences, surpassed other men in the divine. Such was St. Ignatius of Loyola, who did not hesitate to say that even if he had had no other knowledge of the mysteries of faith than what the Lord gave him at Manresa, he would gladly shed his blood to defend them. A thousand times happy the man to whom such a gift is granted! For it can be said of him, without fear of contradiction, that he is wiser than all the philosophers of the world.

Counsel, the third gift, is an enlightening of the understanding by which the Holy Ghost makes known what is to be done or left undone, and the way to act in particular cases, in order to attain perfection and eternal salvation. By means of this gift one recognizes the tricks and subtleties of self-love and the wiles of the evil spirit, who sometimes, to deceive more surely, transforms himself into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14). By this gift the divine Spirit warns us of the ambushes and snares our enemies set for us, and at the same time

gives us all that is useful for coming off victorious in the fight. This enlightening is greater or less according to the degree of union with God. Often the divine Spirit infuses into the soul so great a knowledge of what it tells itself or advises others that it is surer of it than if it saw it with its own eyes or touched it with its own hands.

Fortitude, the fourth gift, is a powerful impulse the Holy Ghost gives to man's heart to encourage and strengthen it to bear and suffer hard and difficult things for love of virtue or of God. Do not confuse this gift, my son, with fortitude the cardinal virtue. The virtue serves only to overcome difficulties hard in an ordinary degree, which often lie across the road to salvation. But Fortitude, the gift of the Holy Ghost, serves to overcome things extraordinarily hard. We read of this in some anchorites and penitents, and above all in the Martyrs. With this gift lacking and with the virtue of fortitude alone, they would not have overcome so many torments. But strengthened by it, not only robust men but also delicate women and even tender children suffered the most horrible tortures with such constancy and courage that they laughed at the tyrants themselves and at the torments, however cruel.

Knowledge, the fifth gift, is a light the Holy Ghost pours into a person's understanding. By it he forms a certain and sure judgment about the mysteries of our most holy Religion so as to believe what he ought, and with this knowledge he directs all his actions as to what he must do or leave undone to please God. This gift of Knowledge, says St. Thomas, is a sharing in God's knowledge. By it man sees clearly the reasons for believing the divine mysteries, and how just and well grounded is the homage we pay to God by faith. Without this gift one walks in darkness, exposed to fall into a thousand errors at every step. This has happened to very many who, lacking it, fell into the greatest heresies, though they were very able in all the sciences.

Piety, the sixth gift, is a ray of divine light that enlightens a person's understanding and inclines his will to honor God as his most loving Father, and to help his neighbor as the image of God himself. So by this gift he feels an inexpressible joy at seeing himself the son of so great and good a Father, redeemed with his most precious blood, born again in holy Baptism, and fed in the Eucharist with his sacred body and blood. Considering these and other works of love, he cannot help loving him in return and desiring that all men should love and revere him, seeking in everything and with burning zeal the greater honor and glory of God. And he seeks not only this glory of God but also the good of his neighbor, both because he knows God wills it and because his neighbor is an image and likeness of God himself. So he regards his neighbor's needs as his own, caring even more for him than for himself, like the good mother who forgets herself to attend to the good of her beloved children. That is why the person who has the gift of Piety, forgetting himself in a certain way, exercises himself for his neighbor's benefit in those works of Christian charity which by another name are called works of mercy.

Fear of God, the seventh gift, is a reverential affection the Holy Ghost stirs in a person's will, by which he fears to offend God and to depart from him by sinning. St. Thomas distinguishes four kinds of fear: human, servile, initial and

filial. *Human* fear is the one that makes us offend God to avoid some temporal evil; this is the fear of sinners. *Servile* fear is the one that obliges man to leave sin and do penance to escape the eternal punishment he deserves for the fault; this is useful and profitable. *Initial* fear is the one that moves man to begin to love God, partly through fear of punishment and hope of reward, and partly out of regard for the divine Majesty, which he fears to offend by sin. *Filial* fear, finally, is the one that holds man back entirely from offending God his father. He sees in him infinite reasons for respect, love and obedience, and so fears to displease him and to lose his friendship and grace. Only these last two fears, initial and filial, are gifts of the Holy Ghost, and the more perfect of them is filial fear, since it is born of perfect charity and love of God.

Ah, my son! How highly you should prize these priceless seven gifts of the Holy Ghost! If a present or gift from an earthly king is held in great esteem, how much more should you prize these sovereign gifts of the King of kings and Lord of lords? Do not imitate those unhappy, ungrateful Christians who exchange such sovereign gifts for a vile pleasure or a petty gain. As a result they are left poor and naked, unworthy of heaven and deserving of hell.

Q. How many are the gifts of the Holy Ghost?

A. Seven: Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of God.

Q. What effects do the gifts of the Holy Ghost cause?

A. They dispose us to obey him promptly and to follow the inspirations of God.

Q. How does the gift of Wisdom dispose us?

A. By giving us a higher knowledge, so that we turn away from sin and follow virtue.

Q. How does the gift of Understanding dispose us?

A. By turning the will away from evil and worldly things and guiding it to good and heavenly things.

Q. How does the gift of Counsel dispose us?

A. By directing us to give good counsel and to know how to take it.

Q. How does the gift of Fortitude dispose us?

A. By giving us strength to overcome the difficulties that arise on the road of virtue.

Q. How does the gift of Knowledge dispose us?

A. By teaching us how to escape the snares of this world, leaving what is uncertain for what is certain and sure.

Q. How does the gift of Piety dispose us?

A. By inclining us to revere God as the father of all.

Q. How does the gift of Fear of God dispose us?

A. By making us fear and hate sin because it is an offense and an injury to God our Lord.

Lesson 16. The Beatitudes



Plate XLI. The beatitudes. 1. Lazarus. 2. David bearing with Semei. 3. Jesus consoling Magdalen. 4. Jesus teaching justice to a young man. 5. The merciful Samaritan. 6. St. John the Evangelist. 7. David the peacemaker with Saul. 8. St. Paul suffering.

My son, this plate shows you the eight beatitudes that Jesus Christ taught us (Matt. 5:3–10). They are certain acts of the virtues and gifts that dispose us in a special way for heavenly beatitude, where the reward corresponding to each of them will be given, as the holy Gospel teaches us. Those who possess them are truly happy and blessed, as far as is possible in this world, as you will see from the brief explanation I am going to give you of each of them.

The first: *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* In number 1 you will find Lazarus, poor, naked and full of sores, which the dog of the rich glutton is licking (Luke 16:19–31). This poor man neither grumbles nor complains of the hardness of heart of that greedy man. Rather, entirely detached from the things of the world, he loves God alone. So when he died his soul was carried into Abraham's bosom, and when Christ opened the gates of the kingdom of heaven, he entered to possess it, because he was truly poor in spirit. As this matter is very important, I shall explain it a little more fully so that you are not confused. St. Francis de Sales divided poverty into three kinds. "First, poverty in affection and not in fact, which consists in having no attachment to what one possesses. Second, poverty in fact and not in affection, which consists in not having or possessing goods, but coveting them at the same time. Third, poverty in affection and in fact, which consists in neither desiring nor possessing temporal goods. Of these three kinds," said the Saint, "the first is excellent, and even the richest and most opulent can practice it. So

did Abraham, David and very many other Saints, who amid all their riches and good fortune were poor in affection. They were as stripped of fondness or attachment to riches as they were ready and willing to receive poverty with blessings, praises and thanks to the Lord, had he been pleased to send it to them. The second, which is poverty in fact but not in affection, is unhappy in every way. For it suffers the discomforts of poverty and besides the pain of not having what it longs for. The third, which is poverty in fact and also in affection, is the one recommended in the Gospel. It comes to us either by inheritance or by some reverse of fortune. In either case, if we bear it gladly, blessing God in that state, then we follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, his most holy Mother and his Apostles, who we know lived and were always poor." (So far the Saint, in his *Spirit*, vol. 1, part 4, ch. 11.)

You see, then, my son, that poverty of spirit, which makes blessed whoever has it, does not consist in lacking the comforts that the world's riches provide, nor in possessing honors or titles. It consists in not being attached to them. The poor man in fact should live content with God's will in his want, without envying the rich man. The rich man should use the goods God has entrusted to him as a mere steward, without clinging to them or setting his affection on them. He should always remember that he who gave them can take them away, and that the poor in fact are his brothers, whom he is obliged to help at least with what is beyond the needs of his own state. So a wealthy man can attain this beatitude by possessing his goods without affection or attachment and using them well. And a man in rags and faint with hunger may be deprived of it, because amid the want that is killing him he may not accept God's will and may have great longings for riches.

From this you see, my son, how much it matters to you not to set your affection on the things here below. Besides shutting you out of the beatitude proper to the poor in spirit, they would be a burden that would occupy you and keep you continually bent under its weight. That is why Jesus Christ said in his Gospel: *Where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also* (Matt. 6:21). St. John Chrysostom explains these words, saying that "a heart attached to earthly things and riches is incapable of understanding the truths that lead to the kingdom of heaven. It is deaf to the voice of the Lord, who declares blessed the poor in heart and in spirit." And what is said of riches must be understood of all the other things whose love forces man's heart, for all of them are included under this name of the treasure where our heart is. Let heaven be the only treasure your desires aim at, and you will be happy. Anxiety and excessive concern for earthly things are the cause of people's unhappiness. "Usually," said St. Francis de Sales, "we shall find that we are not poor positively, but only comparatively. If we desire no more than nature asks as necessary, we shall never be poor. But if, going beyond these just limits, we measure our desires by opinion and whim, we shall never be rich. To grow rich in a short time and at little cost, there is no need to pile up riches, but to lessen desires. Let us imitate sculptors, who make their works by chipping and taking away, and not painters, who make theirs by adding and putting on." Let us not, then, be overanxious about these things. Let us seek the kingdom of God by doing good works, and we shall not lack what is necessary (Matt. 6:33). And if we ever lack something, let us think that, as the doctor obliges the sick man to abstain from food in certain cases because he judges it good for his health, so too God, who knows what is good for us, deprives us of those comforts and makes us feel want, because in his high providence he sees it is useful for our spiritual health. So what matters is to have patience, and to resign ourselves and conform ourselves to his holy will. For in this way and no other we shall be blessed in this world, and afterwards eternally in the next.

The second: *Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.* Turn your attention to number 2 of the plate, my son. The figure below wearing a royal crown represents King David, and the one higher up Semei, who insults and provokes him with words and stones (2 Kings 16:5–13). The one behind David is the general Abisai. Unable to bear the insults that insolent man was heaping on his lord, he wanted to cut off his head. But the King held him back with the greatest meekness, and with heroic patience bore those injuries in remission of his sins. So, master of himself, he possessed here the land of his own heart, and afterwards the land of glory, or *of the living*, as David himself says (Ps. 26:13). You must do the same, my son. Be meek

and humble of heart in imitation of Jesus Christ and of David, and so you will find rest for your soul in this world and the next (Matt. 11:29). In this world the meek are those who win and possess people's hearts. In their meekness they bear everything, quarrel with no one, take revenge on no one, are friends of all and forgive all. And forgiven also by God, they are finally placed in glory, where they will enjoy an eternal happiness.

The third: *Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.* In number 3 is Magdalen, who weeps because they have killed the Saviour whom she loved so much. Not finding him in the tomb, she was going in search of him when Jesus Christ himself appeared to her and comforted her (John 20:11–18). Do the same, my son. Weep over the deceitful pleasures and vain amusements of the world. Weep over the follies of men who blindly hurl themselves into every temporal and eternal evil. Weep to see that by the sins committed daily Jesus Christ is crucified again. Weep to see him so little loved and so abandoned in the most holy Sacrament of the altar. Weep, and finally desire to find him, receive him and adore him in the sacred Eucharist; and do not doubt it, you will be comforted. For in this world you will receive him, and in the next you will see him eternally, like Magdalen.

The fourth: *Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.* The kneeling figure in number 4 represents a young man asking Jesus Christ what he must do to be saved. This divine Master answers him that he must keep the commandments (Matt. 19:16–17). And since these prescribe that each be given what belongs to him, you see painted up there a balance or scales, the symbol of justice; and he is just who keeps the commandments. But this keeping must be accompanied by a strong desire to fulfil them, like the desire for food and drink of the hungry and thirsty. I mean that, as they find all foods good and tasty and eat and drink eagerly, so we too must hunger and thirst to keep the commandments. Then we shall find them *sweeter than honey,* as David said (Ps. 18:11), and they will be for us *a sweet yoke and a light burden* (Matt. 11:30). Let us try, then, my son, to have this hunger and thirst for justice, that is, for the holy law. Let us fulfil it with all exactness, and the Lord will fill us here in this world with the sweetness it brings with it, and afterwards fill us with eternal joys and contentment in heaven as the pay and reward of our faithfulness.

The fifth: *Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.* Number 5 represents a man who, going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, fell among robbers, who robbed him, wounded him and left him half dead. The other figure represents a Samaritan. Though he was an enemy of the wounded man, he forgets his enmity in that case. He lifts him up, bathes his wounds with wine and oil, carries him on his own beast to the inn, and charges the innkeeper to look after him, promising to repay him on his return whatever he has spent on him (Luke 10:30–35). By this parable and charitable action Jesus Christ teaches us in his sacred Gospel how we must help our neighbors, whether friends or enemies. Happy are we if we do so! For we shall obtain mercy from God. He will have compassion on our miseries, forgive us our sins and admit us to his eternal glory. But if on the contrary we were hard of heart toward our fellow men, he would be so with us too, and would not admit us into the kingdom of heaven.

The sixth: *Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.* That figure in number 6 represents St. John the Evangelist on the island of Patmos, and the eagle is the symbol of the loftiness of the Gospel he wrote. This Apostle loved God so much, and the purity or cleanness of his heart was so singular, that he had the happy fortune of seeing him in the way that is possible here below. You too, my son, try to love God much and be clean of heart. Be chaste like St. John, and you will see God, if not as he did in this world, at least with him in heaven. But you must understand that, as the clean of heart will see God, so the impure and stained will see the devil, as St. Ambrose says: "He who keeps chastity is like an Angel; but he who is not chaste is like a devil." Be chaste, then. Love God, and you will see him, and you will be happy for all eternity in heaven.

The seventh: *Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.* Number 7 shows you David the peacemaker, seeking peace with the envious and spiteful Saul (1 Kings 24). You must do the same, my son: always try to live in peace and harmony with everyone. For union and peace are among the things most pleasing to God. When he decided to come into the world, he willed that peace should reign over the whole earth. When he was born, he had it proclaimed by the Angels *to men of good will* (Luke 2:14). And after he had risen, before ascending into heaven, he always greeted the Apostles with these words: *Pax vobis* \[Peace be to you\] (John 20:19). Love it, then, truly. Seek it at the cost of any lawful sacrifice. Live devoutly, and you will enjoy it; and through it you will be called a child of God.

The eighth: *Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* In number 8 you will see St. Paul being scourged. Three times he suffered scourging and once he was stoned, and after suffering many other persecutions he finally died a martyr (2 Cor. 11:24–25). But he bore everything with heroic patience and joy, encouraged by his knowledge that these pains here below are very slight compared with the reward reserved for us in heaven because of them (Rom. 8:18). Do the same, my son. Bear patiently the insults, jeers and persecutions of worldly people, without letting their taunts or ill treatment stop you or make you turn back on the road of justice. That is, you must never, for any fear of persecution, break the

commandments of the Lord's holy law, or give up practicing virtue. Prepare yourself to suffer, my son, if you want to be just, as you should. For a man forewarned is worth two, as the proverb says \[Spanish: *hombre prevenido vale por dos*, roughly "forewarned is forearmed"\]. And as the Father St. Gregory says, "the darts we foresee wound less, and we bear the evils of this world with greater patience if we are protected against them by the shield of foreknowledge." No, my son, whoever wants to live according to the Christian law, or to be just, will never lack persecutions. So says St. Paul in these words: *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution* (2 Tim. 3:12), as good Christians, whether from the declared enemies of Religion or from bad Christians. Jesus Christ was persecuted, and we shall be persecuted like him if we want to follow him or be his disciples, as he warned us beforehand (John 15:20). But instead of frightening us or making us give up, this should make us glad, because in that case *ours is the kingdom of heaven*. Let us not be ashamed to confess Jesus Christ before the whole world, and a day will come when he will call us and reward us before his eternal Father and all men, and place us in the heavenly homeland (Matt. 10:32).

Q. How many are the beatitudes?

A. Eight. The first, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The second, blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land.

The third, blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The fourth, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill.

The fifth, blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

The sixth, blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

The seventh, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.

The eighth, blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Q. Why are these works called beatitudes?

A. Because they are works so perfect that by them we not only merit heaven, but already begin to enjoy the delights of glory.

Q. Who are the poor in spirit?

A. Those who despise the riches and honors of this world.

Q. Who are the meek?

A. Those who restrain anger.

Q. How will the meek possess the land?

A. As masters of themselves.

Q. Who are they that mourn?

A. Those who give up the pleasures of this life, weeping over its vanities.

Q. Who are they that hunger and thirst after justice?

A. Those who earnestly desire to give each one his own and to do God's will in everything.

Q. Who are the merciful?

A. Those who help all their neighbor's needs for the love of God.

Q. Who are the clean of heart?

A. Those who avoid sin with all care.

Q. Who are the peacemakers?

A. Those who have peace within and with their neighbors.

Q. Who are they that suffer for justice?

A. Those who, for no persecution or hardship, leave the right road of virtue.

Lesson 17. The Corporal Works of Mercy

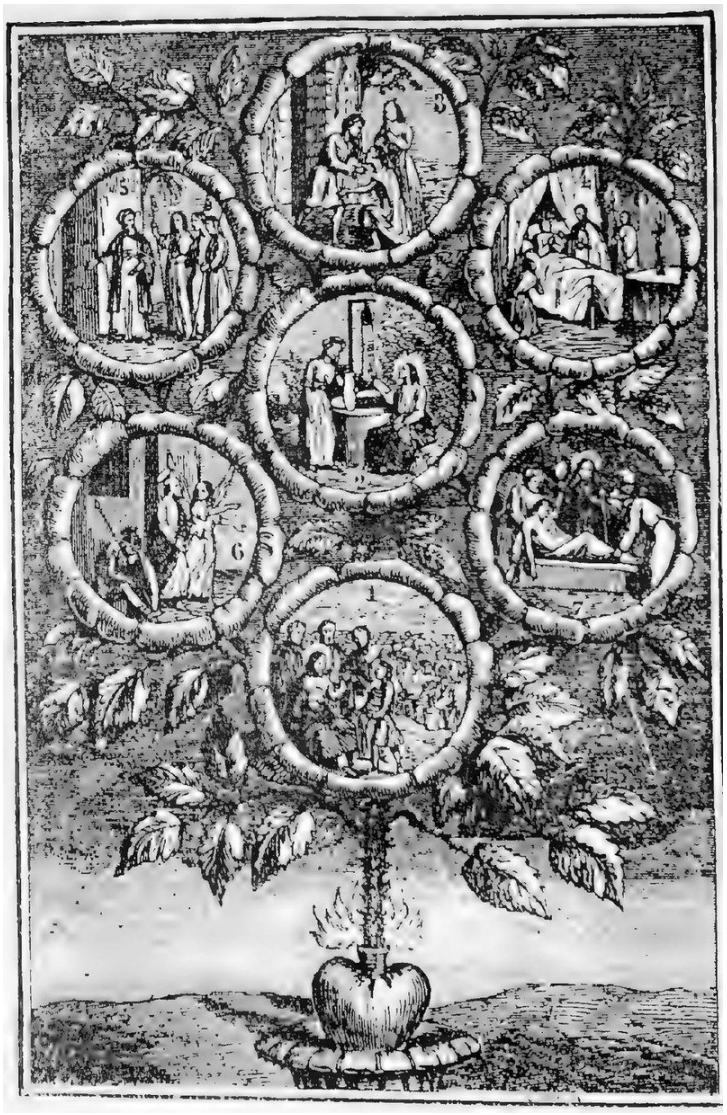

Plate XLII. The corporal works of mercy. A rose bush planted in a heart. 1. Jesus feeds the multitude in the desert. 2. Jesus asks the Samaritan woman for water. 3. Clothing the naked. 4. Viaticum for a sick man. 5. The patriarch Abraham. 6. The Angel leads St. Peter out of prison. 7. The burial of Jesus.

My son, that rose bush springing from a heart, full at once of thorns and of the loveliest and most fragrant roses, is a symbol of the human race. Since Adam sinned, the earth brings forth thistles and thorns for it, according to the sentence God pronounced against him (Gen. 3:18), and so it is full of miseries, as Job says (Job 14:1). Its being planted on a burning heart means that human miseries wound the heart of the charitable person. That heart answers generously with flames of love, and amid the thorns brings out the loveliest and most fragrant roses of Christian charity. That is why these works are called works of mercy, as if to say: miseries that wound the heart, and the heart, moved by them, does works of charity.

You must know, my son, that in consequence of the sin of our first parents, our soul and our body became subject to great misfortunes or unhappiness. So when we relieve the needs or miseries that affect our neighbor's body, these works of mercy are called corporal. Those by which we relieve the miseries that affect the soul are called spiritual. I shall give you a brief account of them. The corporal works are in the present plate; you will see the spiritual works in the next.

The first of the corporal works is *to feed the hungry*. In rose number 1 you will see Jesus Christ. He had compassion on the people who had followed him into the desert to hear his divine word and had nothing to eat. So he worked that wonder of multiplying the five loaves and two fishes, with which he fed five thousand

men, not counting women and children. After they had been fully satisfied, twelve baskets of food were left over (Matt. 14:15–21). By this wonderful deed Jesus Christ, our divine Master, teaches us that we must relieve our neighbor's needs and miseries without being held back by fear of making ourselves poor. For almsgiving, instead of being a way of bringing want on ourselves, is a way of increasing our possessions, just as spending wheat in sowing is a way of getting an abundant harvest. Jesus Christ willed to make this plain to us by making the food left over, after those people were satisfied, greater in quantity than what they had before the banquet began.

The second is *to give drink to the thirsty*. In number 2 you will also see Jesus Christ, who, tired from his journey, comes and sits by the well of Sichar, where the Samaritan woman comes to draw water. Jesus Christ asks her for a drink. She excuses herself, and Jesus Christ says to her: *If thou didst know… who he is that saith to thee, Give me to drink* (John 4:10)… as if he said: "O woman! If you knew who it is that asks you for water, ah, how differently you would behave!" Try, then, my son, to help the needy without ever excusing yourself. Remember that any poor man represents Jesus Christ. You would not be the first from whom Jesus Christ himself, in the guise of a beggar, asked an alms, as he then asked water of the Samaritan woman. Ah, would you have the heart to refuse Jesus Christ what he himself has given you? Ah, my son! A day will come, the day of judgment, when he will say to the one who has not helped the poor: "I was hungry, I was thirsty in the person of the beggars and the poor. I asked you for food and drink in them, and you refused me… You had money to spare to indulge yourself, to spend on superfluities, to dress in luxury, to amuse yourself, for everything, even for sinning, and you had none to help me… Ah! *Depart from me, you cursed, into everlasting fire!*" (Matt. 25:41–42).

The third is *to clothe the naked*. In number 3 you will see some persons doing this work of mercy. A thousand times happy are they! On the day of judgment the Lord will tell them that he accepted it as if it had been done to his own person, and in reward he will clothe them with his glory. But woe to those who spend on fashions and superfluous clothes, and have nothing with which to clothe or cover the flesh of a wretched man! Woe to those who would rather let the moth eat their clothes than help the unhappy man who, half naked, is shivering and almost frozen with cold! Woe, woe to them! When they least expect it, there will happen to them what happened to the rich glutton of whom the Gospel tells us. Because he let poor Lazarus die of hunger while he himself feasted splendidly and dressed in purple, he was buried in the place of torments, in hell (Luke 16:19–24). Do not imitate them, my son. Imitate rather St. Francis of Assisi, who helped the poor so much; St. Thomas of Villanova, who even as a child gave them his very clothes, besides other things. Imitate St. Martin and other Saints, and when you die you will hear Jesus Christ say to you with a smile: *Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom* (Matt. 25:34).

The fourth is *to visit the sick and prisoners*. In number 4 you will find a sick man whom Jesus Christ visits by means of the sacred Viaticum administered by a priest. In imitation of Jesus Christ you too, my son, must try to visit the sick. For this divine Saviour, as we read in the sacred Gospel, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and speech to the dumb. He visited the pool, and even raised the dead. And his love, not satisfied with this, instituted the most holy Sacrament, to remain, visit and comfort the sick as viaticum, and to give them strength to undertake the great journey of eternity. He so desires Christians to practice this work of mercy that he will reward them for it as if he had received it himself. Imitate him, I repeat, my son. Visit, comfort and assist the sick as far as you can. If they are poor, so much the better, even if it is in a hospital; and as a reward God will give you glory.

But it is not only the sick who should move us to compassion and mercy, but also poor prisoners. Firstly, it is not always real crimes that have brought them to so unhappy a state, but often slanders or mere suspicions. Secondly, even if they are really guilty, they do not cease for that to be our neighbors and images of God. So they have a claim on our good offices: to give them food they cannot get for themselves, or to bring them to penance and to bear their temporal sentence with Christian resignation so as to avoid the eternal one. We

should consider that their state could have been ours if God had not held us by his hand. And finally, Jesus Christ does not disdain to visit them in the Sacrament when, repentant, they have wept over their crime at the feet of one of his ministers. He gives himself to them as viaticum before they go to the scaffold, if public justice condemns them to capital punishment. He does so to make that shameful and bitter moment gentler for them, and afterwards to bring them from the scaffold to heavenly glory. Imitate Jesus Christ, then, my son. Visit them charitably. Set aside what is human in the criminal and love what is divine in him. See that what is done for these unhappy people Jesus Christ also receives as done to his own person. Besides giving you some temporal reward for it, at the hour of your death you will deserve to hear from his sacred lips: *I was in prison, and you came to me* (Matt. 25:36). And so: "Come, blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom, enter and reign with me eternally."

The fifth is *to harbor the pilgrim*. Number 5 shows the patriarch Abraham giving lodging to some pilgrims whom he thought to be men, and who were really Angels of the Lord (Gen. 18). God so valued this work of mercy in Abraham that for it he promised him nothing less than to make him the father of a numerous offspring and to lavish on him an abundance of spiritual and temporal goods. So God rewards works of charity, which are so pleasing to him and to the Angels! The people of the village of Emmaus, too, thought it was a man, a pilgrim, to whom they gave lodging, and in reality it was the risen Jesus Christ himself (Luke 24:13–31). The same happened to St. Gregory, who thought he was giving hospitality to some poor pilgrims and found they were Angels. Happy, yes, are those who busy themselves in such works of charity! For God will give them too an eternal lodging in his heavenly palace.

The sixth is *to ransom the captive*. In number 6 you will see an Angel leading the apostle St. Peter out of the prison in which Herod held him (Acts 12:6–10). My son, imitate the Angels. Do all you can to set free the imprisoned and captive. Use all the lawful means you can to get them out of so unhappy a state. If you do not succeed, try to comfort them, pray to God for them that he may give them freedom, and exhort them meanwhile to bear their captivity in a spirit of penance. And you must ransom not only bodily captives but also, and with greater reason, spiritual ones: those who through mortal sin are under the slavery and tyranny of Satan. Warn them, exhort them and pray to God for them, that they may leave so unhappy and degrading a state as soon as possible. Do it, my son, and I assure you that the crown of immortal glory you will merit will be great. For you will imitate Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven to earth to redeem and save us all.

The seventh is *to bury the dead for the love of God*. In number 7 you will see Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus burying the dead Jesus Christ (John 19:38–42). Oh, how pleasing to God and to the most holy Virgin such an act of charity must have been! Do as much for your neighbor, my son. Follow the example of those two holy disciples of Jesus and of Tobias (Tob. 1:20–21; 12:12), and as God rewarded them for such works of mercy, so he will give you an abundant reward for them. Do not think from this, my son, that I want you to take up the trade of gravedigger, for I know there will be someone to do it. But I do earnestly ask you to see that the dead are accompanied and buried with the charity and Christian piety due to a body that was the dwelling of a soul redeemed by Jesus Christ, and that is destined to rise one day for glory, if it died in the Lord, as we must believe of a Christian. And one of the most fitting ways of practicing this work of mercy is to receive the holy Eucharist often, with a heart cleansed and renewed by a holy confession. In this way you will imitate Joseph of Arimathea, who gave Jesus his tomb. You too will give him yours if you receive him worthily in holy Communion. For although Jesus is alive in the Sacrament of the altar, he is shown to you there as dead and wishing to be buried in your heart.

My son, I should not have spoken to you sufficiently about these works of mercy if I did not warn you that, to merit eternal life, they must be accompanied by two things. The first is that in doing them we always set before ourselves a right end, or right intention. The second is to be in the grace of God. The right end or intention must be always to please God, or to do it for his greater honor and glory. If we did it out of vanity, to be admired and praised like the Pharisees, we should merit nothing for heaven, for men would have given

us our reward in this world, and a paltry one indeed! (Matt. 6:2). Nor will these works profit for heaven those who do them in a state of mortal sin. They will merit some temporal goods, yes, but not spiritual goods in justice. Yet I will not for that reason fail to urge such persons to do them too, to implore the divine mercy and obtain holy grace. Try, then, my son, try to have a right intention in all things, and not to be in mortal sin for a single instant. Always do all the good works you can. For, done in the way I have explained, they will merit for you the praise of God before all men on the day of judgment, and the crown of glory in heaven. Amen.

Q. How many are the works of mercy?

A. Fourteen: seven corporal and seven spiritual. The corporal are these:

The first, to feed the hungry.

The second, to give drink to the thirsty.

The third, to clothe the naked.

The fourth, to visit the sick and prisoners.

The fifth, to harbor the pilgrim.

The sixth, to ransom the captive.

The seventh, to bury the dead.

The seven spiritual are these:

The first, to teach the ignorant.

The second, to give good counsel to one who needs it.

The third, to correct one who errs.

The fourth, to forgive injuries.

The fifth, to comfort the sorrowful.

The sixth, to bear patiently the failings of our neighbor.

The seventh, to pray to God for the living and the dead.

Q. Why are these works called works of mercy?

A. Because by them we relieve with charity the miseries of our neighbor.

Q. Are we obliged to practice these works of mercy?

A. Yes, and often under pain of mortal sin.

Lesson 18. The Spiritual Works of Mercy

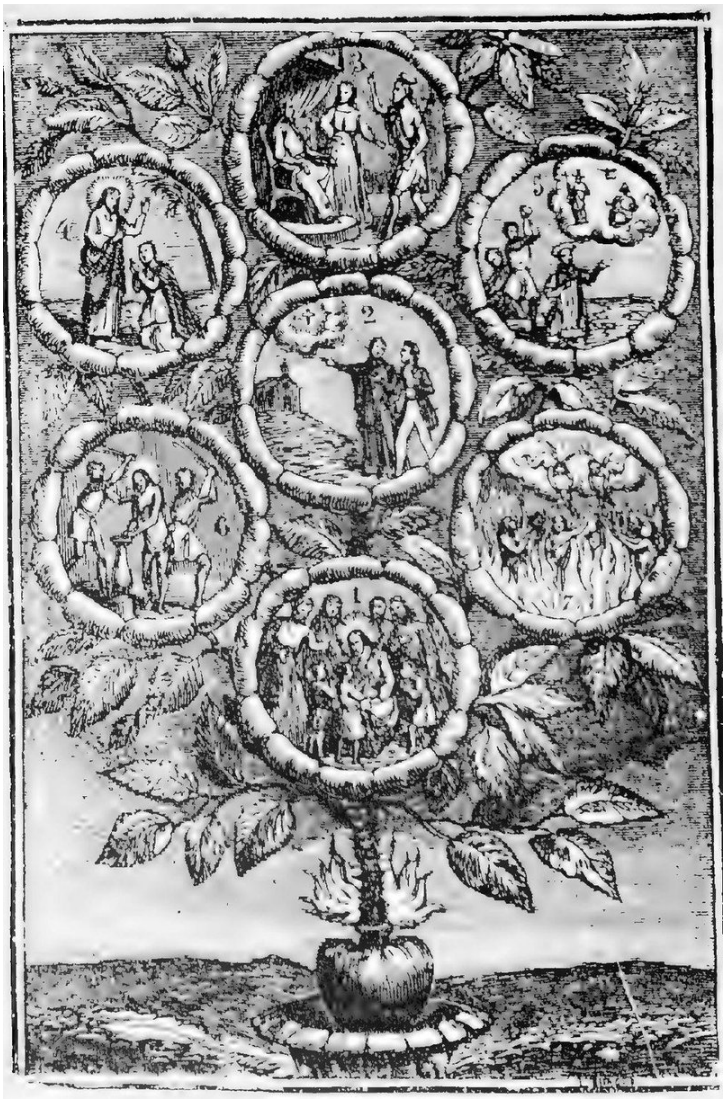

Plate XLIII. The spiritual works of mercy. 1. Jesus teaching. 2. Counsel to a young man. 3. St. John correcting Herod. 4. Jesus comforts the ruler. 5. St. Stephen forgives those who kill him. 6. Jesus suffers. 7. Souls taken out of purgatory.

My son, now that the corporal works of mercy have been explained, order requires that we go on to explain the spiritual works. These far exceed the corporal works, as the soul exceeds the body. And if the corporal works, despite their inferiority, are so praised and rewarded by God, as the holy Gospel shows, how much greater must be the praise and reward he has in store for the spiritual works? So you must know them, and that is why I have decided to make them visible to you by means of this plate, which I shall now explain.

The first of these works of mercy is *to teach the ignorant*. In number 1 you see Jesus our divine Master caressing and blessing the children, and taking the occasion to teach them what they must know (Mark 10:13–16). This divine Master did not think this occupation unworthy of his person; rather he delighted in it, as being proper to his mission. Can we, then, disdain to busy ourselves in it? If, in imitation of Jesus Christ, we teach Christian doctrine to those who do not know it, shall we not do a work of mercy very pleasing to him? Try, my son, to learn well all that you are taught about your salvation, and when you know it, do as much for those who do not. It is with children especially that you must practice this most excellent work of charity, trying at the same time to see that they are gathered in and do not run wild. For Jesus Christ, who counts as done to his own person what is done to one of the little ones, will reward you as if you had taught and sheltered him himself. You must also take great care not to scandalize any child. For Jesus Christ himself says that *he that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better for him that a*

millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea (Matt. 18:6). So great an evil is scandal, and so much does he hate and punish it! Never, my son, never must we do or say anything that could be an occasion of sin. On the contrary, let us try to live so that our conduct is a continual teaching and practical instruction for the little ones, so that they may afterwards practice it. For that proverb is very true: "What do the young practice? What they see in their elders."

The second is *to give good counsel to one who needs it*. In number 2 you will see a holy man guiding a young man with his counsels. By pointing out to him the cross before him and that oratory or little chapel of the most holy Virgin, he gives him to understand that if he wants to be saved he must be devoted to Jesus and Mary. Prudent and wise counsel indeed! Happy will be the one who follows and practices it. Put it into practice, my son, and give it to others too. I promise you that those who are guided by it will be happy eternally in heaven.

The third is *to correct one who errs*. The seated figure in number 3 represents Herod, the woman beside him Herodias, and the one opposite St. John the Baptist, who is correcting that King for living scandalously with that woman (Mark 6:17–18). You must do the same, and so must everyone: correct one who errs, even if he is a superior. Jesus Christ commands it (Matt. 18:15). Do you not see how St. John corrects Herod though he is a king? But note, my son, that this must be done with much charity and prudence, without failing in respect if he is a superior, and with the manners of a man full of mercy, not with those that overflow with gall. One must seek the amendment of the one who errs, the avoidance of new errors, the salvation of that unhappy person and the glory of God, and in no way revenge. One must look for a suitable place and time to correct, and never do it in public if it can be done in private. The exception is when the offense and error was committed in public and it is judged fitting to correct at once, if only to prevent scandal. But it is especially when you hear blasphemy against the adorable names of God, of Jesus and of Mary that you should try to correct the unhappy man who was so shameless. Do so if you judge prudently that your correction will have good effect and that greater evils will not follow from it. Otherwise, on this occasion as with any other error, it is better to keep silent and show disapproval of what was badly done and said by your face. Or be content with saying: "Ave Maria purísima" \[Hail Mary most pure\], or "Praised be Jesus Christ", "Blessed be God", and so on, and pray to God for them, as the members of the Society of Mary do.

The fourth is *to comfort the sorrowful*. Number 4 shows you Jesus comforting the ruler who was much afflicted by the illness of a son in his house (John 4:46–53).[1] Learn from Jesus to comfort the sorrowful, and he will comfort you in this exile and vale of tears. For he is the God of all comfort (2 Cor. 1:3), and afterwards he will admit you into heaven, where there is no sorrow, pain or weeping, but eternal happiness (Apoc. 21:4).

The fifth is *to forgive injuries*. Number 5 shows St. Stephen being stoned. Raising his eyes to heaven, he sees the most holy Trinity. Notice up there Jesus Christ at the right hand of God the Father almighty, standing as if to help St. Stephen (Acts 7:55). This Saint calls on God, not asking for vengeance against his enemies, or that God should strike them dead like Nadab and Abiu (Lev. 10:1–2), or that the earth should open and swallow them like Dathan, Core and Abiron (Num. 16:31–33). He asks instead that God forgive them the sin they are committing (Acts 7:59). In this he follows the example of Jesus Christ, who, nailed to the cross, prayed for those who crucified him (Luke 23:34). Imitate Jesus Christ and St. Stephen, my son. Forgive those who injure you. Forgive them always and with all your heart, and ask God to convert them, and never ask for or desire revenge. If you do so, God will forgive you. Otherwise you would never be forgiven by him (Matt. 6:14–15).

The sixth is *to bear patiently the failings of our neighbor*. In number 6 you will see Jesus being scourged… Oh, with what patience he bears such terrible blows!… He suffers in body, he suffers in honor, and despite his innocence he does not open his mouth to complain. Here, my son, is the one from whom you must learn to bear patiently the failings of your neighbor, however troublesome he may be to you. Do so even when you

are innocent and he acts with malice, even when he wounds you in body, in property and in honor. In such cases look at Jesus at the pillar, and if you consider his scourging attentively… ah, will you be able to complain? Will you know how?…

The seventh is *to pray to God for the living and the dead*. No day must pass, my son, without your asking God and the most holy Virgin to grant you the graces you need. But you must not make this prayer only for yourself. Pray also for your neighbors, for the conversion of sinners, for the perseverance of the just and for the holy souls. Imitate Jesus, who in the garden of Gethsemani prayed three times. The first time, according to St. Augustine, he prayed for the conversion of sinners; the second for the perseverance of the just; and the third for the holy souls in purgatory: *Tertio oravit pro animabus purgatorii* \[The third time he prayed for the souls in purgatory\]. Call on the intercession of most holy Mary. So that you may understand how much her mediation is worth, in number 7 you will see the Angels coming down over the flames of purgatory to bring souls out of them, carrying scapulars and rosaries. This also shows the relief the faithful obtain for the souls by prayer and devout practices.

This word purgatory is not much to the taste today of some who boast of being enlightened, while, because they always walk in darkness, they stumble at every step. So that you, my son, may know how to despise the sarcasms and blasphemies of the ungodly, you must know that all that is said against it is the devil's invention. This common enemy of men follows here the same tactics as besiegers of a town they mean to take by hunger. They not only stop food from being brought in but also pursue those who could supply it. So the accursed one not only lays siege to purgatory, keeping the holy souls from receiving suffrages. He also pursues with the army of the ungodly the faithful who could supply them with alms, prayers and other good works. With the weapons of ridicule, jeers, sarcasm and others of the same kind, the ungodly try to kill their faith. For he knows very well that once faith is extinguished, and charity with it, the souls expiating their sins there will be left without relief in their pains. In this way he kills two birds with one stone, harming both the living and the dead. That is why it is no wonder that the heresy of denying the existence of purgatory has become fashionable.

Do not forget, my son, that when a person commits a mortal sin, he deserves to be punished eternally in hell for it. But when it is duly confessed, that eternal punishment is changed into a temporal one, longer or shorter according to the greater or less sorrow he brought to confession. This punishment must without fail be purged either in this world or in the next, and that is why the place where it is done takes the name of purgatory. A comparison will make it clearer to you. Suppose a subject has committed a crime that deserves the death penalty. Before paying for it on the scaffold, he comes humbly before the monarch to ask pardon. The authority, moved to compassion by his humble confession of the crime, remits the capital punishment and changes it into a temporal one, such as prison or exile, leaving him free to buy it off with money, by himself or through another. So if the criminal pays the sum fixed, whether by himself or through a third party, he will be free at once. Now let us come to our case. The person who by mortal sin had deserved eternal punishment, but because he confessed it duly had it changed into a temporal one, must pay it in this world or in the prison of purgatory. He received this favor from God with the power of redeeming this punishment either by himself, through satisfactory works or indulgences while he lives, or after his death through the alms, prayers, good works and indulgences of the faithful. For in purgatory, being already in a state where it can no longer merit, the soul cannot redeem it by itself. This being so, you will understand, my son, that if that person did not pay or satisfy that punishment himself in this world, and the faithful do not satisfy it for him after his death, he will have no remedy but to pay it in purgatory until the term fixed by divine justice is ended.

From what I have said about the guilt of mortal sin forgiven or changed by means of the sacrament of Penance, you may already have come to see the necessity of the existence of purgatory. Yet I want to make it still clearer to you from the guilt of venial sins. You naturally know, my son, that a just judge must punish

the guilty according to the gravity of his offense. Since God is a most just judge, who *will judge justices* (Ps. 74:3), would he not do as much with us who are guilty? Guilty, yes; for who can boast of not sinning? The faults may be light, if you like. But it is beyond doubt that they keep us from entering heaven, since *there shall not enter into it any thing defiled* (Apoc. 21:27). In that case, where will the soul go that carries some light stain? Not to hell, for God's justice would not be just if it punished with equal pains one who committed light faults and one who committed enormous ones. No more would a judge be just who punished in the same way a son who through frailty failed in due respect to his father and one who murdered him in a rage. And let no one tell us that the greater or less intensity of the pains is enough to distinguish the offenses. For besides the difference in intensity there must be a difference in duration. If the punishment were eternal for every kind of offense, though more or less intense, it would then be infinite, and therefore unjust because out of proportion to the offense. So the punishment for venial sins must be temporal. Its payment is what is called purgatory; therefore purgatory exists.

Those who have not made satisfaction in this world must go there to make it. For it would not be just that they should go straight to heaven from the bed of this life's pleasures, while many others are laid in the bed of pain. Add to this that some die suddenly without being able to do penance. Others die in their sleep, without having made inward acts of sorrow for their faults or acts of love of God. All this proves the necessity of the existence of that place called purgatory. Besides, you know already that this is a dogma of faith, and that we all have the obligation to help our neighbors who are being purged there. So do all you can for the dead, my son, as chaste Joseph did for his father (Gen. 50:1–10), and Judas Machabeus for his comrades in arms (2 Mach. 12:43–46). As Tobias to his son, so I to you, my son, recommend this work of spiritual charity (Tob. 4:18); and do not doubt it, God will reward you abundantly for it in this world and the next.

If you want to see the existence of purgatory proved at greater length, and to learn the means of practicing this spiritual work of mercy, read my little book entitled *Socorro a los difuntos* \[Help for the Dead\], which I recommend to you in a special way.

Q. What is the soul?

A. An immortal spirit, created by God in his image and likeness.

Q. How many are the powers of the soul?

A. Three: Memory, Understanding and Will.

Q. Why has God given us understanding?

A. So that we may know him, and think of him and of the things of his service.

Q. Why memory?

A. So that we may remember his law and the benefits we have received.

Q. Why will and free will?

A. So that we may love him, and do with merit what he commands us.

Q. How many are the bodily senses?

A. Five: sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch.

Q. Why has God given us the senses?

A. So that with them we may serve him in all things.

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[1] Latin *regulus*.

Lesson 19. The Last Things, or Four Last Ends of Man



Plate XLIV. The last things, or four last ends of man. 1. The death of the sinner and that of the just man. 2. Jesus judges the sinner's soul. 3. Hell: despair, obstinacy and eternity. 4. Glory.

In that plate, my son, you will see represented the last things of man: Death, Judgment, Hell and Glory. It is by remembering them always and in all our works that sin will be avoided, as the Holy Ghost teaches us: *In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin* (Ecclus. 7:40). You cannot look on them as things that do not concern you. For we all have to pass through them, or at least through one of them, speaking of the last two. And do not think the day is very far off: it is nearer than we think.

The first is *Death*. In number 1 is the image of death, armed with her scythe to strike the fatal blow at these two dying men, because their hour has come. That hourglass beside her represents time. Its sand, slipping down without stopping, tells us that our life is passing and wearing away at every moment. When it is spent, the hour strikes, and… farewell, present life… to eternity!!!

Death is one and the same, or indifferent, in itself. I mean that in itself it is neither good nor bad, as St. John Chrysostom explains. But it is good or bad according as the dying man has lived well or ill. For the proverb says: *talis vita, finis ita* \[as the life, so the end\]: death will be as life has been. Look at the plate. Do you see these two dying men? The first kept the commandments of the law of God. He meditated on the life, passion and death of Jesus Christ, received the holy Sacraments often, was very charitable and most devoted to most

holy Mary. That is why, as you see, he has the rosary on his breast and the name of this good Mother painted at the head of his bed. That is why he dies most contented and joyful, as you can observe. The priest is encouraging him, and he, embracing the cross of Jesus, gives up his soul gladly to his Creator. See how the Angels carry it to heaven. See too down here how the devil goes off in despair, because he has not been able to have him damned. Quite the contrary happens with that other man. The priest exhorts him and says

that he should put his trust in the intercession of most holy Mary and in the merits of Jesus Christ. But this wretched man always resisted God's inspirations, and now he resists and despises the voice of the zealous minister. The unhappy man never thought of anything but piling up money and satisfying his brutish appetites. So at the hour of death one devil shows him a purse of money, and another shows him the portrait of the woman who shared his lusts, as the instruments and snares of his damnation. Before, he thought only of eating and drinking daintily, of dressing in luxury and effeminacy, of amusing himself at theaters, dances and the other follies of the world. But alas!… Death comes, and like another rich glutton of the Gospel he is seized by the devils and buried in hell, while the other, like Lazarus, is carried by the Angels to heaven (Luke 16:22). And what I tell you of these two, my son, you must understand and apply to yourself, to me and to all mortals. For either the happy death of the just man or the unhappy death of the wicked awaits us all.

That we must all die is most certain… It is a truth of faith that experience makes plain every day. But are the when, the how and the where as certain? Oh, this uncertainty makes one tremble! When shall I die? Ah, perhaps in the flower of my days, for more die in youth than reach old age. I know my days are numbered and are passing continually like the sand of the hourglass. They may already be ended, but I neither see nor know it. And if they really were ended, my life in this world would end this very instant. How will it come? Another riddle… I do not know whether it will be by illness, a bullet, a stab, poison or a fall. I do not even know whether I shall have time to receive the holy Sacraments. Where shall I die? I do not know this any more than the other. I do not know whether it will be at home or away, at sea or on land. I know where I was born, but not where I shall die. I know I must die once only; but whether death will give me time to prepare is hidden from me. That is why Jesus Christ so earnestly charges us to be always prepared, because death will come when we least expect it (Matt. 24:44).

The second is *Judgment*. In the plate on page 136 you saw an image of the general judgment, and in number 2 of this one you have an image of the particular judgment. The man you see stretched out here is the corpse of a sinner who has just died. The kneeling figure represents his soul, which is before the supreme judge Jesus Christ. He holds the cross in one hand to make it see the ingratitude with which it has repaid the benefit of the redemption, and in the other thunderbolts to hurl against this ungrateful and sinful soul. The figure on the right represents the Guardian Angel, who is striving to save it. The one on the left is the devil, who, as St. Basil says, is first an accomplice and afterwards the chief accuser. These others are more devils, ready to carry the soul off to hell as soon as the divine Judge has given the sentence of damnation.

All of us, my son, shall appear, or be brought, before the judgment seat of Christ. There our works will be examined, and we shall be given reward or punishment according to what the trial shows. *For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the proper things of the body, according as he hath done, whether it be good or evil*, says St. Paul (2 Cor. 5:10). This appearing, as well as the examination and sentence, will take place twice, on different occasions. Once when each of us dies, and this is called the *particular judgment*. And again at the end of the world, when all are together in body and soul, and this is called the *general judgment*. The first will be hidden, the second public. The first will take place where the body lies, the second in the valley of Josaphat (Joel 3:2). In the first man will be considered and judged as an individual, in the second as a member of the great human family. In the first only the person concerned will know the lot that has fallen to him; in the second all other men will know it too. In the first only the soul, in the second soul and body will receive their due. In the first only the individual will know how justly he has been rewarded or punished. In the second the whole of mankind will know it, for in it God

will give public testimony of the uprightness and justice with which he has rewarded the good and punished the wicked. This publicity will bring glory and honor to the just and confusion and shame to the wicked. Ah, my son, if we kept these two judgments before us, would we have the heart to sin? If we considered that the one who is to judge us is that God who knows all things, a judge so upright that he is no respecter of persons, and whom it is impossible to bribe or deceive!… In that terrible and inescapable moment neither riches, nor honors, nor beauty, nor friends, nor relations will be of any use to us. Good works are the only thing that will speak in our favor. If anyone trembles at having to sit examinations before men, ah, with how much more reason should we tremble to think of the examination and judgment we must undergo before God! There we shall be questioned on all the actions, thoughts, words and omissions of our life. And if we come out badly from the examination, we shall be failed for ever!!!

My son, I should like you always to keep before you this counsel of St. Basil: "If you are ever tempted to sin, remember that dreadful judgment Christ will hold, and with this bridle you will hold back your soul." Would that, like St. Jerome, you remembered the judgment and did what he says: "Whether I eat or drink, whether I study or do anything else, it always seems to me that that terrible trumpet is sounding in my ears, saying: Arise, ye dead, and come to judgment!" See my little book entitled *Reflexiones que hace…* \[Reflections that…\].

The third is *Hell*. In number 3, my son, you will see some unhappy souls cast into hell. Heaped together with other damned souls, they increase one another's pains by their heat, crowding and stench. Do you see, my son, those three unhappy ones? One stands for obstinacy, another for despair, and the third for the eternity of the pains of the damned in hell. Do you see the one in despair, holding his head in his hands? Do you see this one gripping a dagger so tightly in his fist? He signifies the obstinacy of the damned. The unhappy one with that monster on top of him gives you to understand what a dreadful thing the terrible weight of eternity is.

That God punishes those who die in mortal sin is a truth of faith, shown in many places of holy Scripture. Jesus Christ affirms it several times in the holy Gospel, and to make more impression he gives some examples of it. Natural reason alone is in a way enough to know this truth, as is seen in the pagans, who had an idea of it, though imperfect and wrongly applied. And in truth, is there, or can there be, a well-governed nation in which virtue is not rewarded and crime punished? In all of them crosses of distinction and honor and other decorations have been invented to reward, as well as prisons and punishments to punish. And in the kingdom of God, the source of all justice, should there not be as much, and with still greater uprightness? Now in this world God leaves us free to act well or to act badly. But a day will come when he will call us to account. If we have acted well, he will give us the reward in heaven. But if we have acted badly, he will punish us in hell, which is *the place of torments*, as the holy Gospel teaches us (Luke 16:28).

These pains and torments of hell are, and must be, eternal. God teaches us this in various places of sacred Scripture (Matt. 25:46), and natural reason in its own way says the same. For it shows us that the punishment must be proportionate to the fault or offense. So, since mortal sin is infinite, as an offense against an infinite God, it deserves an infinite punishment. As the punishment cannot be infinite in intensity, nor in quantity or quality, it must be sought in duration, and this is what we call the eternal pains of hell. Besides, while the sinner lived in this world, Jesus Christ, by a stroke of his mercy, offered him an infinite price, his merits, to pay the infinite penalty incurred by sin, and so be saved. Has the ungrateful soul despised them? Has it chosen to be damned? Then let it remain deprived of the redemption. Since it will continue obstinate in its sin for all eternity, God's punishments too will be eternal, and he will say to it, as it is written: "You shall know that I am a God who knows how to punish." And truly it is very just that God should make his justice shine by punishment and rigor in those who would not let his mercy shine by humbling themselves and begging pardon.

So that you may see more clearly the reason and justice with which God acts in punishing the obstinate with eternal pains, I will put to you the following comparison. Suppose a son, instead of obeying his father, took

up a stick or a dagger and threatened him with it. Would the father act justly if he would not forgive such a son as long as he did not drop the stick or dagger and humbly ask his pardon? You will say yes, will you not? Well then, the soul of one who dies in mortal sin will remain God's enemy for an eternity, without ever humbling itself or asking his pardon. For it has reached its end and is in a state in which it cannot change its will. Will God be just in not forgiving it either? You will say yes again. You see, then, that since God is eternal and the soul is eternal, and its obstinacy is eternal, the punishment too must be, and indeed will be, eternal. Ah, my son, God deliver us from falling into those so terrible and eternal pains!… If now you cannot bear a live coal in your hand, or hold your finger in a candle flame for any length of time, how will you be able to bear the coals and flames of hell for a whole eternity? Now a snake or a wild beast frightens you, and the picture of a devil makes you shudder with fear. Ah, what would be the terror and fear that the sight and presence of the devils and the other damned would cause you in hell!…

The fourth is *Glory*, shown in number 4 of the plate. Do you see, my son, how the Angels are carrying to heaven the soul of that man who has just died in the grace of God? What rejoicing! What happiness! And this for ever!!!… As it is of faith that the wicked will suffer eternally in hell, so it is also of faith that the just will enjoy eternal glory. Cornelius a Lapide, on chapter 7, verse 40, of Ecclesiasticus, says that the great Simeon Stylites left only one written sermon. Besides the letters or characters, it contained two drawings or hieroglyphs. In one were symbolized the anguish of a sinful soul at the hour of death, when it is seized by the devils and cast into the eternal pains of hell. In the other was the joy of a holy soul when it sees itself carried to heaven by the Angels. And he always preached on these points from the pillar on which he lived for seventy years, doing the most rigorous penance. Fix your thoughts, my son, on that eternal happiness prepared for you if you live as a Christian. It is such and so great that St. Paul tells us that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him* (1 Cor. 2:9): the joys and delights that will overflow in the paradise of glory. So love God, my son, and love him truly. Be sure that what I cannot explain to you now you will know by experience there in glory, which I wish you.

Q. How many are the last things, or last ends, of man?

A. Four: Death, Judgment, Hell and Glory.

Q. Why are they called last ends?

A. Because they are the last thing at which we must arrive.

Q. What is it to die?

A. For the soul to be separated from the body.

Q. Can we know at what hour we shall die?

A. By natural means, no.

Q. What do we mean by judgment?

A. Appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive from him the reward or punishment due to our works.

Q. How many judgments are there?

A. Two: particular and general.

Q. What is the particular judgment?

A. The judgment that Christ our Lord makes of each man in particular as soon as he has died.

Q. What is the general judgment?

A. The judgment that Christ our Lord will make of all men at the end of the world.

Q. In the general judgment, will God change the sentence he gave us in the particular judgment?

A. No.

Q. Then why will he subject us to a general judgment?

A. Among other reasons, for the public display of his justice.

Q. Shall we all have to appear in the general judgment?

A. Yes, all without exception.

Q. How shall we appear at the last judgment?

A. Risen in our own bodies.

Q. Will the bodies of the blessed who in life were lame, blind or the like rise with the same defects?

A. Not at all; they will rise most perfect.

Q. How will the wicked rise?

A. Horrible, ugly and abominable.

Q. What will be the cause of the beauty of the good and the ugliness of the wicked?

A. Grace in the one and sin in the other.

Q. And when the judgment is over, what will become of the good?

A. They will go to heaven in body and soul.

Q. And what will become of the wicked?

A. They will be cast into hell in body and soul.

Q. What is hell?

A. A prison, the most terrible and horrible, full of fire and occupied by the devils, where those who die in mortal sin are tormented according to their faults.

Q. What is the glory of heaven?

A. It is a most perfect place or state, in which the just see and enjoy God and possess all goods and happiness, without any mixture of evil and for all eternity.

Q. How many are the endowments of souls in heaven?

A. Three: vision, comprehension and fruition.

Q. In what does vision consist?

A. In seeing God clearly, as the reward of faith.

Q. In what does comprehension consist?

A. In possessing God, the supreme Good, as the reward of hope.

Q. In what does fruition consist?

A. In a supreme joy and gladness the soul feels in seeing and possessing God eternally, as the reward of charity.

Q. Will the bodies of the blessed also have some glory in heaven?

A. Yes, and very great.

Q. In what will this glory consist?

A. In four endowments: impassibility, subtlety, agility and clarity.

Q. In what will the endowment of impassibility consist?

A. In this, that the bodies of the blessed will not be able to suffer any harm or pain.

Q. In what will the endowment of subtlety consist?

A. In this, that the bodies of the blessed will be able to enter any place, however closed it may be.

Q. In what will the endowment of agility consist?

A. In this, that the bodies of the blessed will be able to pass from one place to another with the greatest ease and speed.

Q. In what will the endowment of clarity consist?

A. In this, that the bodies of the blessed will be more resplendent than the sun itself.

Q. Will the glory of the blessed in heaven be equal in all?

A. No; each will have it according to his merits.

Q. Will those who have less glory envy those who have more?

A. No; rather they will rejoice at it.

Lesson 20. The Evangelical Counsels



Plate XLV. The evangelical counsels. 1. Jesus, Mary, Joseph and St. Francis. 2. The Presentation of the Virgin. 3. Jesus with the cross, and others following him.

If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments (Matt. 19:17). This, my son, is the answer Jesus Christ gave to a young man who had asked him: *Good master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?* But there are so many obstacles or hindrances in this world that keep one from following steadily the way of the holy commandments, as the prophet David says. So people try to remove or take away these obstacles by practicing the evangelical counsels: voluntary Poverty, perpetual Chastity and perfect Obedience. The obstacles that stand against the keeping of God's law and the attaining of perfection in this life are, according to St. John, *the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life* (1 John 2:16). That is, the love of pleasures, the love of gain and the love of honors. And since the perfection and foundation of the law consists in loving God with all one's heart, with all one's soul, with all one's mind and with all one's strength, we must try to put away the things that hinder this love. The first is greed for outward goods, and this hindrance is removed by voluntary Poverty. The second is the desire for sensual pleasures, which is curbed by perpetual Chastity. And the third is the disorder of our will, which is corrected by perfect Obedience. These virtues or counsels, to whose observance some bind themselves even by solemn vow, are what I shall explain to you in this lesson with the plate.

The first counsel is *voluntary Poverty*, as you see in number 1, which shows Jesus with the most holy Virgin, St. Joseph and St. Francis of Assisi. Of Jesus it is written that he *began to do and to teach* (Acts 1:1), doing before teaching, and here you will see a wonderful way of practicing poverty. Though he is King of heaven

and earth and Lord of all things, he is born poor in a manger and dies utterly poor on a cross, after living for thirty-three years without many things. There were times when he had no money to pay the tribute (Matt. 17:26), nor *where to lay his head* (Matt. 8:20). He was poorer than the little animals and birds, which do not lack shelter or a place to rest. While he practiced this virtue of poverty in a heroic degree, he taught it in his sermons. He kept it always so much in view that it was the first virtue he taught in that wonderful sermon on the mount, when he said: *Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

The essence of this counsel or virtue consists in being poor in spirit, that is, in having no attachment to the riches of the world even when they abound, as the Prophet teaches us: *If riches abound, set not your heart upon them* (Ps. 61:11). But this is as hard as walking among honey without some sticking to us, or as stepping into the fire without being burned. That cannot be done except by a wonder, as happened with the bush Moses saw (Exod. 3:2) and with the children of Babylon (Dan. 3). For this reason, though Jesus Christ answered the young man who asked what he must do to be saved, "Keep the commandments", when he heard him ask about what was more perfect he told him: *If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor… and come follow me* (Matt. 19:21). This teaching of the Redeemer, and the example he gave of this virtue, were so deeply printed on the hearts of the first Christians that among many of them there was no "yours" or "mine", but *all things were common unto them* (Acts 4:32). And not a few of those who embraced the Christian religion willingly sold their possessions and handed the price to the Apostles so that they might share it out among the poor. St. Cyprian, St. Basil, St. Jerome and others say that in the early Church many of the faithful made a vow of poverty. St. Francis of Assisi distinguished himself above all in the practice of it and of the other evangelical counsels, and that is why he is placed in the plate.

The second is *perpetual Chastity*. In number 2 of the plate is the most holy Virgin, who at the age of three was taken to the temple, where she could better keep the angelic virtue of chastity. Knowing how pleasing it is to God, she made a vow to keep it all her life. God himself showed how highly he valued chastity when, wishing to come down from heaven to earth, he arranged that his Precursor should be chaste and chose for his mother a most chaste Virgin. The disciple he loved most earned this preference by his pure chastity. And he himself, made man, was so chaste in words and works that Jewish malice never charged him with the least fault against this virtue. He not only recommended it and urged us to follow it by his works and good example, but also by his words (Matt. 19:12). In imitation of him the Apostles and holy Fathers have done the same, and their example and teaching have produced in the Church of Jesus Christ a great multitude of lilies of purity and chastity of every sex and condition. Be pure and chaste too, my son, and you will see God. Otherwise, if you were impure, you would see only the devil and would be like him, as St. Ambrose says: "He who keeps chastity is an Angel; but he who loses it is a devil."

The third is *perfect Obedience*. Number 3 of the plate shows Jesus Christ carrying his cross up the mountain of perfection. He is the model and pattern of all who follow this and the other two evangelical counsels. Up at the very top is the eternal Father, who has all his delight in his beloved Son, who does his most holy will in everything and through everything. All of us, if we want to be saved, must do the same, each according to his state. The faithful in general do so by obeying the precepts of the Lord and of holy Church. Religious bound by solemn vow do so by obeying their respective superiors in all that concerns the holy rule. In this way we shall follow what Jesus Christ tells us: *Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven* (Matt. 7:21). If we want to go after him, we must deny ourselves according to our own state, take up our cross and follow him (Matt. 16:24), as the figures in the plate teach you. Do you see how they carry it, how they suffer and obey, how they go forward and climb the mountain of perfection and eternal glory? In this they imitate Jesus Christ, who was always obedient, not only to his eternal Father but also to his Mother and St. Joseph: *et erat subditus illis* \[and he was subject to them\] (Luke 2:51). And he did not stop there. He even obeyed the Jews in the most repugnant things, and to give us a great example he finally obeyed by dying, nailed to a cross, no

less. And that is why his Father has so exalted him (Phil. 2:8–9). Happy are those who obey in imitation of Jesus Christ! But woe to those who fail in the obedience to which they are bound! However high they may be, they will fall like Lucifer and like those rebels you see in the plate, who fall into the precipice because of their disobedience. Do not imitate them, my son. Rather, always obey your elders and superiors. Never want to do your own will, and remember that saying of St. Bernard: "If there were no self-will, there would be no hell, for there would be no sins." Reflect on these evangelical counsels. For if you follow or embrace them, you will go after Jesus Christ, and so you will be perfect, and God will give you eternal glory. Amen.

Lesson 21 and Last. A Summary of the Mysteries Explained in the Catechism, and the Days on Which the Holy Catholic Church Celebrates Them

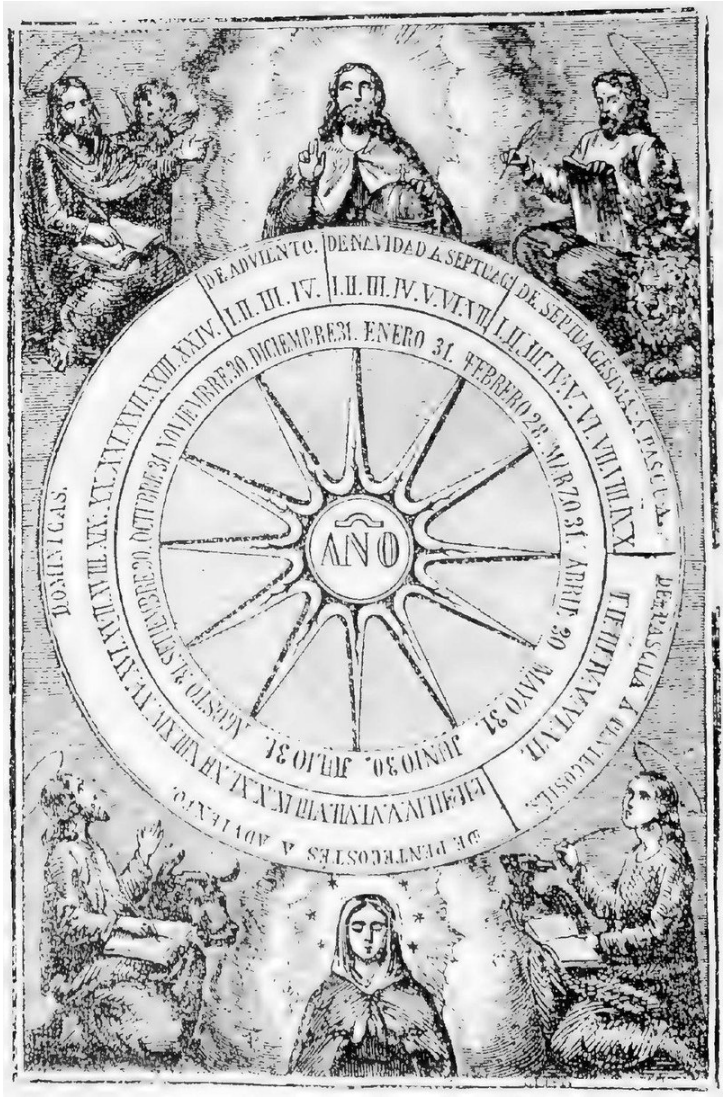

Plate XLVI. Summary. The months and Sundays of the year. Jesus and Mary. The four Evangelists.

Dear child, up to now I have spoken to you about the mysteries of our most holy Christian religion, following the order of the Catechism. Now I shall explain to you, though briefly, how our holy mother the Catholic Church deals with them in the course of the year, setting them before us to consider. She does so that we may be grateful for the very great graces God has granted us, know how to profit by the merits Jesus Christ has gained for us, follow his Gospel, and imitate his virtues, as well as those practiced by the most holy Virgin and the other Saints.

The year, as you see in the plate, has twelve months: January, February, March, April, May, June, July, August, September, October, November and December. Of these some have thirty days, others thirty-one, and February twenty-eight, except in the year we call leap year, when it has twenty-nine. Seven days make a week, and they are called Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday.

Sunday is a feast day on which we may not work, as I explained to you when dealing with the commandments. Apart from that day one may work on the others, unless it is one of those on which the feast of some special mystery or Saint is celebrated. The Church commands that such days be kept holy by resting from work and hearing holy Mass. On them we give thanks to God for that benefit, consider the wonders, and imitate the virtues that shine out and are recalled to us in the mystery or Saint we are celebrating.

The chief mysteries and feasts of Jesus Christ that the Church celebrates in the course of the year are these:

On the twenty-fifth of March, the Incarnation of the Son of God in the most pure and virginal womb of most holy Mary, by the work of the Holy Ghost, as I explained to you in the seventh lesson of the Creed.

On the twenty-fifth of December, the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, explained in the same lesson.

On the first of January, the Circumcision of the Saviour, when he was given the name of Jesus: see the plate and its explanation above.

On the sixth of January, the Epiphany, or the adoration of the Kings; the baptism of the Redeemer by St. John the Baptist; and the changing of water into wine at the wedding of Cana of Galilee.

On Good Friday the passion and death of the Redeemer are commemorated: see the plate and its explanation above.

On the following Sunday the Easter of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is celebrated, as explained with the plate above.

The Thursday forty days after the Resurrection is the day of the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven: see the plate explained above.

The Sunday ten days after the Ascension, and seven weeks after the Resurrection, is the feast of the Coming of the Holy Ghost, as explained with the plate above.

The Sunday immediately after this Pentecost is the feast of the most holy Trinity, a mystery I have explained to you with the plate above.

On the following Thursday, four days after the feast of the most holy Trinity, the feast of the Institution of the most holy Sacrament is celebrated. This solemnity properly belongs to Holy Thursday. But because the Church is then so occupied in considering the mysteries of the Redeemer's passion, it has been moved to that day: see the plate and its explanation above.

On the third of May the Finding of the holy Cross is celebrated, and on the fourteenth of September its Exaltation, as explained with the plate above.

Feasts of Most Holy Mary

The chief feasts of most holy Mary that holy Church celebrates are these:

The Immaculate Conception of most holy Mary, on the eighth of December.

Her Nativity, on the eighth of September.

Her Presentation in the temple at the age of three, on the twenty-first of November.

The Espousals of most holy Mary with St. Joseph, on the twenty-third of January.

The Annunciation, or Incarnation of the Son of God in the virginal womb of most holy Mary by the work of the Holy Ghost, as explained with the plate above, on the twenty-fifth of March.

The Purification of most holy Mary, Mother of God, and the Presentation of her Son in the temple, on the second of February.

The Sorrows of the most holy Virgin, on the Friday of Passion week and on the third Sunday of September.

The Assumption into heaven, on the fifteenth of August.

There are some others, such as the feasts of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, of the Rosary, of Mercy, of Guadalupe, and so on.

On the other feast days some Saint is commemorated, as is seen in the calendar.

You see that the chief feasts of the year are those of Jesus and of most holy Mary. That is why they are in the plate as the two axes of the sphere. You will also notice in it the four Evangelists, for on all the feasts and Sundays of the year holy Church makes use of their divine writings. Perhaps you will ask me why they are accompanied by these figures. I answer that it is because of their writings themselves. As St. Jerome explains, St. Matthew, speaking of Christ as man, begins to write: *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.* St. Mark begins with the prophecy of Malachias and Isaias. St. Luke begins with the priesthood of Zachary. The first has the look of a man, because of the genealogy. The second has that of a lion, because of the voice of one crying in the desert: *Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.* The third has that of an ox, because of the priesthood. St. John, like an eagle, flies upward until he reaches the eternal Father, saying: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

In the year there are fifty-two Sundays, divided into five classes: those of Advent; from Christmas to Septuagesima; from there to Easter; from Easter to Pentecost; and from Pentecost to Advent. The Sundays of Advent, those from Septuagesima to Easter, and those from Easter to Pentecost are always the same in number. But the Sundays from Christmas to Septuagesima and from Pentecost to Advent share the rest between them. Each of these two classes has more or fewer according to the date on which Easter is celebrated. Easter must always be celebrated on the Sunday nearest to the full moon of March, and since this Sunday follows the epacts of the moon, the number of these Sundays rises or falls. But as I said, these two classes share them between them. So when there are more Sundays from Christmas to Septuagesima, there are fewer from Pentecost to Advent; and on the contrary, when there are more of the latter, there are fewer of the former.

On all the Sundays of the year holy Church, desiring the good of our souls, explains the holy Gospel to us in order to root out vices and foster good conduct. The Gospel is the same heavenly doctrine Jesus Christ taught, which we must practice to be saved. For he is the way we must follow if we do not want to go astray. He is the truth itself, and as such we must believe him, trying always to keep him in our hearts, if we want to live in him who is the life (John 14:6) and whose words give eternal life (John 6:69). Whoever believes in him with a living faith, that is, a faith quickened by good works, will live eternally in the heavenly homeland. But whoever does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:16). So, my son, try to listen with attention and devotion to the divine word proclaimed in the holy Gospel by your parish priest and other Catholic preachers. In this you will show that you are of God, as Jesus Christ himself says: *He that is of God, heareth the words of God* (John 8:47). Hear it, then, and practice what it tells you, and so you will attain the eternal glory I so much wish for you. Amen.

End of the Catechism.

Note. As soon as a Christian is well grounded in this Catechism, he should read: the *Compendio histórico de la Religión* \[Historical Compendium of Religion\] by D. José Pintón; the *Catechism of Perseverance* by

Gaume; *La Instrucción de la Juventud* \[The Instruction of Youth\]; the *Introduction to the Devout Life* by St. Francis de Sales; and *The Glories of Mary* by St. Alphonsus Liguori.

Plan of the Catechism

\[The original prints a table of contents with page numbers. It is given here as an outline, since this edition has its own Contents.\]

Preamble. Man. Being a Christian. The sign of the Christian.

Faith. The Creed.

Hope. The Our Father. The Hail Mary.

Charity. The commandments of the law of God. The commandments of the Church.

Sins. The capital vices. Sins against the Holy Ghost. Sins that cry to heaven for vengeance. Sins of which many make themselves guilty.

Good works. The Sacraments. The theological virtues. The cardinal virtues. The fruits of the Holy Ghost. The gifts of the Holy Ghost. The beatitudes. The works of mercy. The powers of the soul. The bodily senses. The last things. The evangelical counsels. Summary.

Turn away from evil and do good: seek after peace and pursue it (Ps. 33:15).

Acts of Faith, Hope and Charity

To gain the indulgences granted by the Supreme Pontiffs Benedict XIII and Benedict XIV.

Act of faith in general. My God, I firmly believe that you are present here, that you see me and hear me. I believe too all the truths your holy Church commands us to believe, because you have revealed them, you who are the God of truth, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Act of faith in particular. I believe especially, my God, that in the mystery of the most holy Trinity there is only one God, though there are three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. I believe that the second divine Person, that is, the Son, became man to suffer and die in order to save and redeem us. Finally I believe, my God, that you will call me to account for all my thoughts, words and works. You will make me happy in heaven if I die in your friendship and grace, or unhappy in hell if I die in mortal sin.

Act of hope. My God, I hope that by your infinite mercy and by the merits of Jesus Christ you will forgive me my sins, give me your grace, and afterwards in heaven the eternal glory for which you created me.

Act of charity. My God, I love you with all my heart, because you are my God, infinitely good and lovable, and also because you have created me and every day granted me so many benefits. I should like to love you with that fervent love with which so many just men and penitents love you on earth and so many blessed in heaven. Also for love of you, O my God, I love my neighbor as myself.

Practice

Which parents should take care to teach their little children each day, and which is entrusted above all to mothers.

There are many parents so careless in bringing up their children that they seem not to believe these are persons God has put in their care. As soon as the children get up, they begin to run about the house, the streets and the squares like puppies, without having made the sign of the cross or done any of the exercises proper to Christians. To remedy this fault, fathers and mothers, I set down here what you should teach your

little ones.

Morning Exercise

While you dress your children, teach them to say: *Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.*

1. My Lord and God, in whom I believe and hope, I adore you and love you with all my heart. I thank you for having created me, redeemed me, made me a Christian and preserved me this night. I offer and consecrate to your honor and glory all my thoughts, words, works and labors. I humbly ask your pardon for my sins, and I am sorry from the depths of my heart for having offended you. By the merits of Jesus Christ and of the most holy Virgin, I beg you to give me grace not to offend you again. *Here say an Our Father and the Creed to the most holy Trinity.*

Then turn to most holy Mary, saying:

2. O Virgin and Mother of God! I give myself to you as your child. In honor and glory of your purity I offer you my soul and body, my powers and senses, and I beg you to obtain for me the grace never to commit any sin. Amen, Jesus. *Three Hail Marys.*

3. Holy Angel, under whose protection and keeping God in his infinite goodness has placed me, enlighten me, defend me, rule me and guide me. Amen, Jesus. *An Our Father and a Hail Mary.*

4. My holy Patron, protect me and help me this day. Make me turn away from evil and practice your virtues. Amen, Jesus. *Two Our Fathers and Hail Marys, one for the Saint and the other for the souls in purgatory.*

5. When the child is dressed, make the sign of the cross over him, and lastly say to him: *May the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, come upon you and remain with you always. Amen.*

I must point out to mothers that children are not obliged to go to Mass until the age of seven, or the age of discretion. Some mothers want to take their children to church after they are four, though not before, since younger children tend to cry, shout and distract others. Such mothers should see that the children stay quiet and silent at their side the whole time. They should by no means let them wander about or make a noise. They should not give them rosaries, which they only play with. To keep them occupied, have them say the Our Father and Hail Mary five times in memory of the five wounds of Jesus Christ, counting on their fingers.

Before meals have him say: *Pour out, my God, your holy blessing on us and on this food we are about to take, to keep us in your holy service.* An Our Father and a Hail Mary.

After meals have him give thanks, saying: *We thank you, Lord, for the food with which you have favored us. Grant that we may use it holily.* An Our Father and a Hail Mary.

When the clock strikes the hour have him say a Hail Mary.

Evening Exercise

My Lord and God, in whom I believe and hope, I adore you and love you with all my heart. I thank you for having created me, redeemed me, made me a Christian and preserved me this day. Give me grace to know my sins and repent of them. *Here pause a short while to examine whether you have failed in anything during the day, and finally say the Act of Contrition given earlier in this book.*

Then say an Our Father and the Creed to the most holy Trinity, as in the morning exercise. Say likewise "O Virgin and Mother of God", and the rest, with the three Hail Marys, and the same as was said to the Guardian Angel, the holy Patron and the souls.

Finally make the sign of the cross and say: To you, my God, I commend myself; to you, most holy Virgin, my Mother; to you, holy Angel my guardian; to all of you, men and women Saints of the heavenly homeland:

help me and protect me this night. Amen, Jesus.

It would be very useful, besides signing the children with holy water, to sprinkle the bed and the room with it. That is why all true Christians keep a little holy-water stoup beside the head of the bed.

Barcelona, May 21, 1860. Let it be reprinted. Dr. Juan de Palau y Soler, Vicar General and Governor.

To the greater glory of God.