St. Anthony Mary Claret

DIALOGUES ON PRAYER

Diálogos sobre la oración

From the Spanish of the edition of 1864

English translation

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

---

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About this translation · 3
Dialogues on Prayer · 3
First Dialogue: On the Necessity of Prayer · 3
Second Dialogue: What Prayer Is, Its Parts and Its Practice · 5
Explanation of the Six Talents of Prayer (extract from El colegial instruido) · 9
One Talent: Vocal Prayer · 9
Two Talents: Mental Prayer or Meditation · 10
Three Talents: The Prayer of Acts of Virtue · 10
Four Talents: Contemplation · 11
Five Talents: Mixed Prayer, on the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus Christ, and on God's Presence in His Rational and Irrational Creatures and in All Things That Have Being · 11
Six Talents: Union · 12

About this translation

Translated from the *Diálogos sobre la oración* (the second dialogue published 1850, the first added in 1864), with the *Explicación de los seis talentos de oración* from *El colegial instruido*, vol. I (Barcelona, 1860) — this last an extract.

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.

Dialogues on Prayer

First Dialogue: On the Necessity of Prayer

—Is prayer very necessary?

—It is, and greatly so; and that is why Jesus Christ, by his example and his words, so earnestly urges us to practise it, telling us: "We ought always to pray";[1] "Pray that you may not enter into temptation";[2] and St. Thomas,[3] on those words of the Gospel, *Jesus having been baptized and being at prayer, heaven was opened*,[4] says that for the baptized the road that leads to heaven stands open, but that to enter they need continual prayer. For although it is true that by Baptism our sins are forgiven, it is also true that after Baptism there remains the *fomes* of sin, that is, the inclination to evil, which stirs us inwardly to sin \[*fomes*: literally "tinder"\]; and, besides, the world and the devil incite us to it outwardly. That is why, I repeat, the Gospel just cited says pointedly that, Jesus having been baptized and being at prayer, heaven was opened: so that the faithful may understand that prayer is necessary for them after Baptism.

—Besides these authorities, which I find so convincing, could you give me some reasons?

—I will gladly give them. The first reason is that God, who knows what is good for us, has so disposed it; the second is that man may thus be humble and give no room to pride, which is the beginning of all sin; the third is that he may go to God with faith and confidence like a loving child who runs to his loving and tender father; and that is why he says to him: *Our Father, who art in heaven*.[5] Hence in prayer humility, faith, hope, charity, religion and other virtues are exercised.

—Since prayer is so expressly commanded and at the same time so necessary, why do people not pray more?

—This comes sometimes from man's pride, sometimes from his ignorance and disordered passions, and sometimes also from Satan, who makes every possible effort to hinder prayer.

—Why does Satan hinder prayer?

—Because of the ambition he has; and for that very reason he cannot look on with indifference while man prays. He knows that prayer is to man what the soul is to the body and what water is to the earth.[6] He knows that it is the key of heaven. He knows, in short, that prayer is to man what arms are to the soldier; and just as the soldier without arms is lost, so too the Christian is defeated without the holy weapon of prayer.

—And the holy Fathers, what do they think and say of prayer?

—They say: If you wish to overcome temptations and tribulations, be a man of prayer.

If you wish to trample on evil attachments, be a man of prayer.

If you wish to know the wiles of Satan and conquer him completely, be a man of prayer.

If you wish to live joyfully amid the sorrows, labours and afflictions of this exile and valley of tears, be a man of prayer.

If you wish to advance on the way of the spirit and not let yourself be swept along by the current of the passions, be a man of prayer.

If you wish to scare away and drive far from you the flies of evil thoughts, be a man of prayer.

If you wish your understanding to be filled with holy thoughts and your heart with great and effective desires of perfection and with fervent affections of devotion, be a man of prayer.

If you wish to have a manly spirit and a steadfast courage in the service of God, be a man of prayer.

If you wish to root out all vices and acquire all virtues, be a man of prayer.

Finally, if you wish to rise to contemplation and to the closest union with God, be a man of prayer; for in prayer one receives the anointing of the Holy Spirit, which enlightens the understanding, and by the exercise of prayer one acquires contemplation and a taste for heavenly things.

—In what esteem have the prelates of the Church held prayer?

—In the highest esteem that can be had; and it is something so loved and practised by them that they prefer it to the other functions of their sacred ministry, in imitation of the apostles, whose successors they are, who said: "We will devote ourselves continually to prayer and to preaching."[7]

—This prayer, which the prelates have so prized and practised, have they sought and required it of the faithful, especially of those who follow the ecclesiastical career?

—Yes, sir. That is why young men who follow the ecclesiastical career are educated in the seminaries, which are the seedbeds of good clerics \[*semilleros*, a play on *seminario*, "seminary," and "seedbed"\], where they are instructed in learning and virtue, and especially in mental and vocal prayer, since these are the weapons of their warfare; and just as soldiers are trained in the handling of arms, so these men are trained, and must be trained, in the exercise of prayer.[8]

—With what strictness did St. Charles Borromeo, archbishop of Milan, handle this matter of prayer?

—With the greatest strictness possible; and he did well, because a priest without prayer cannot possibly be a good priest. So when a young man presented himself for examination before ordination, the first thing he asked him was what prayer is, how many kinds of prayer there are, how he made it, what fruits he drew from it, and so on; and if he did not answer the questions on this matter of prayer well, he dismissed him without appeal, however learned and outstanding he might be in the other subjects.

—Could you cite other examples for me?

—I can cite a great many, and among them I will present to you Monsieur Alain, bishop of Cahors, who died in the year 1659 with a great reputation for holiness because of his zeal, his devotion to Most Holy Mary and his love of prayer. This holy bishop himself directed the spiritual exercises that young men must make before being ordained; above all he recommended mental prayer to them, without which, he said, a priest cannot be saved. On one occasion, after giving them as many as eight exhortations on the same subject to show them the excellence and fruits of mental prayer, he declared that henceforth he would not confer orders on anyone who did not first promise him to make a fixed time of mental prayer every day of his life, barring legitimate excuses; and, having drawn up a formula of this promise, he had all who presented themselves for ordination sign it.[9]

—Could you cite more recent examples?

—Yes, I can cite the Most Illustrious Dr. Don Pablo de Jesús Corcuera, bishop of Vich, who died in the year 1835. That great prelate saw to it that the students made mental prayer every day; moreover, every year he made the spiritual exercises with the students in the seminary church and himself presided over all the acts of those exercises; and when the students were examined and admitted to orders, they went back into retreat

again, in this way: for tonsure, ten days; for minor orders, ten days; for the subdiaconate, twenty days; for the diaconate, thirty days; and for the priesthood, forty days. These exercises for orders were held in the episcopal palace itself, and he also attended during the last ten days.

—Is mental prayer something belonging exclusively to clerics, or does it belong also to all the faithful, men and women?

—It belongs to all; and so to all and to each one I say what St. Bonaventure said to a sister of his: "I beg you and I command you, with all the force I can, to take prayer as your principal exercise; let nothing else please you but prayer, since nothing else ought to please you so much as being and conversing with God, which is precisely what is done in prayer."

Second Dialogue: What Prayer Is, Its Parts and Its Practice

—What is prayer?

—It is a raising of the spirit to God, asking him for graces and favours and the forgiveness of sins.

—How many kinds of prayer are there?

—Two: mental and vocal.

—What is mental prayer?

—It is the prayer made with the three powers of the soul: remembering God, his benefits and the truths he has taught us, with the memory; meditating and reasoning, with the understanding; and, with the will, abhorring what is evil, loving what is good and uniting oneself to the supreme Good; asking and beseeching the Lord for the graces one needs and resolving to do on one's own part whatever one can to attain one's end; always accompanying these operations of the understanding and the will with intention and attention, not only when fulfilling the precepts to pray, but also when praying voluntarily.

—What is vocal prayer?

—It is an affective and outward speaking with God, accompanied by intention and attention.

—What do you say of those who, when they recite their prayers or make their vocal prayer, take no care of this attention, but rather let themselves be voluntarily distracted by other things?

—I say that such people do not have prayer, but a phantom of prayer, which is the same as a body without a soul, which is called dead: such is vocal prayer if it is not accompanied by attention, that is, by mental prayer.

—Of what parts does mental prayer or meditation consist?

—Of three, namely: preparation, the body of the meditation, and conclusion.

—What branches does the preparation have?

—Three, which are called remote, proximate and immediate preparation.

—In what does remote preparation consist?

—In purity of conscience and uprightness of intention, resolving to amend one's faults, to acquire the virtues and to imitate Jesus Christ, the Most Holy Virgin and the saints.

—In what does proximate preparation consist?

—In reading at night the meditation that is to be made in the first hour of the following day; in rising promptly at the appointed hour; in keeping silence; in thinking of nothing other than the meditation to be made, preparing one's soul with humility, confidence and love.

—In what does immediate preparation consist?

—In placing oneself in the presence of God, believing in him and adoring him with all humility, holding oneself unworthy to be in his divine presence; regarding oneself as incapable of praying, and therefore asking God himself for the necessary grace, making use of the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin and of the angels and saints.

—Besides these three branches of the preparation, what must be done before entering into the meditation?

—The composition of place. When the meditation is on things perceptible to the senses, it consists in imagining oneself, as though one were present, in the very place where all the events of the meditation are happening: what St. Ignatius calls the first prelude.[1] And when the meditation is on something incorporeal and invisible, for example on sins, the composition of place may be made by imagining that we see our soul shut up in this corruptible body as in a prison, and man as an exile in this valley of tears, in the company of brute beasts; or it will be enough to bring to mind the virtue or vice to be meditated on, reducing it to two or three points. For example: 1st, the obligation or necessity of practising it or fleeing from it; 2nd, what its acts are; 3rd, the means that can make its practice, or flight from it, easier.

—What more is to be done?

—The second prelude,[2] which consists in asking particularly for the grace to imitate or attain that particular virtue which is seen to shine most in that meditation, asking for light to know its usefulness, the means to obtain it and the acts in which one must exercise it.

—What branches does the body of the meditation have?

—Three, namely: consideration, affections and resolutions.

—How is the consideration to be made or held?

—With the powers of the soul, especially with the memory, recalling the object on which one wishes to reflect; and with the understanding one will reason, applying the senses by means of the imagination to the persons of the mystery or meditation, to the words they say and the actions they do; or, if the subject is invisible, to the points of which we spoke above.[3]

—What means will you use so as not to be distracted, and rather to stir the imagination and spur the understanding to reason?

—I will use questions. For example, I will ask myself: Who is this who suffers? What does he suffer? For whom does he suffer? For what does he suffer?… What is this? Why is this? These questions will call forth answers in me, which will form a most fruitful seedbed of wholesome reflections, and will bring to my mind authorities, comparisons, similes and examples from Jesus, from Most Holy Mary and from the saints.

—What is the second branch of the trunk or body of the meditation?

—The affections.

—How are the affections of the meditation formed?

—In this way: the understanding, instructed and convinced by the consideration, moves the will, and the will pours itself out in affections of repentance and contrition for sins, of love for virtue and hatred of vice, of sorrow and compassion for the sufferings of Jesus Christ and of his most holy Mother, of wonder, love, thanksgiving, joy, and so on.

—On which should more time be spent, on the consideration or on the affections?

—On the affections, because they are to be regarded as the object and proximate end of the meditation; so much so that when the will is already holily occupied with the affections, the understanding should stop

reasoning, just as one who is looking for something stops looking for it as soon as he has found it.

—What is the third branch of the trunk or body of the meditation?

—The resolutions.

—How are the resolutions made?

—In this way: the will, moved and soaked in holy affections, abhorring what is evil and loving and desiring what is good, resolves and determines to choose the means it knows to be best suited to attain its end, which must be to uproot faults or vices and to plant virtues.

—Besides these three branches that make up the body of the meditation, on what should one who wishes to draw fruit from prayer chiefly be occupied?

—On supplication.

—In what does supplication consist?

—In asking God for the graces, help and favours that one needs or desires to obtain for oneself or for others.

—Show me how supplication is the most important thing in prayer and why it should chiefly claim the attention of one who prays.

—To show it better, I will use a comparison. There is a poor man so wretched that he has nothing to eat or to clothe himself with. He knows his misery, and he also knows a very compassionate and charitable gentleman, and he knows that, if he asks him, he will help him; so he resolves to present himself to that merciful gentleman and, finally, begs him in a humble voice and, with pitiful words, briefly sets out his miseries and needs to him, trusting that he will help him. Now I make the application: the supposed poor man is each one of us, who, by meditating, comes to know his own misery and the mercy and charity of God. That is why St. Francis of Assisi said: "Who are You, and who am I?"[4] and St. Augustine adds: *Noverim me, noverim te*: "Lord, grant that I may know myself and that I may know You."[5] From this he goes on to take the necessary steps, omitting no means of attaining his end. And just as the poor man asks, so too must man ask, sure that he will obtain, since God himself has said: *Petite et accipietis*, "Ask and you shall receive";[6] and in the end he obtains.

—For whom, besides himself, should one ask?

—For everyone; but especially for the conversion of sinners, for the perseverance of the just and for the blessed souls in purgatory.[7]

—What is the third part of prayer?

—The conclusion.

—What branches does the conclusion have?

—Five, namely: thanksgiving, offering, petition, the nosegay and the examen.

—What does thanksgiving mean?

—Giving thanks to God for having borne with me in his divine presence and for having granted me so many favours in prayer.[8]

—What does offering mean?

—Offering to God the resolutions that have been made in the meditation, and also oneself and all one's affairs.

—What does petition mean?

—That one must ask God for graces to be able to carry out the resolutions formed in the meditation.

—In what does the nosegay consist?

—In taking a maxim from the meditation itself and keeping it always present during the day \[*ramillete*, "little bouquet": the "spiritual nosegay" of St. Francis de Sales\].

—How is the examen of the meditation to be made?

—By examining or searching out how the meditation and prayer went, so as to continue it in the same way in future if it went well, and to amend it if it went badly; and also to note briefly whether the Lord has communicated some special grace.[9]

—Please tell me: how is meditation or mental prayer to be made in practice?

—In this way:

Practice of Mental Prayer

1st. "Let us place ourselves in the presence of God, firmly believing that he is present here and that he is looking at us and observing us."

I firmly believe, my God, that by reason of your immensity you are in every place; that you are here before me, within me, in the midst of my heart, seeing the most hidden thoughts and affections of my soul, and that I cannot hide from your divine eyes.

2nd. "Let us humble ourselves before his divine Majesty and adore him prostrate on the ground, in body and in spirit, acknowledging ourselves unworthy to be in his divine presence" \[*ante su divino acatamiento*, literally "before his divine regard," an old courtly phrase for standing in a sovereign's presence\].

Who am I, my God, before You? Ah, wretch that I am! How clearly I see that I am a pure nothing, and yet I dare to place myself in your divine presence! Forgive me, Lord, my boldness, for you well see the extreme need I have of You. Here I come as a sick man to the physician, that you may heal me; as a sinner to the Holy One, that you may sanctify me; and as a poor man and beggar to the rich, that you may fill me with your divine gifts. I adore You, my God, with the deepest submission, as my only sovereign Lord, confessing in all truth that I am not worthy of these priceless benefits.

3rd. "Let us ask him for grace to make this prayer well, purely for his glory and for our salvation, begging for this end the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin, of our holy guardian angel and of the saints to whom we have particular devotion."

I beg You, my God, to give me grace to make this meditation fruitfully, for your glory and the good of my soul. Give me holy knowledge in the understanding and fervent affections in the will. Grant that I may diligently cast off distractions about evil and irrelevant things and be always attentive to what I ought to consider, and make me take practical resolutions on what matters most to me. And for this same end I pray You, Most Holy Virgin, Mother and refuge of sinners, my guardian angel and the saints of my devotion, to intercede for me and obtain for me these graces, so that I may draw much fruit from this prayer.

Here the composition of place is made, God is asked to grant us the particular grace or fruit that we seek to draw, and the point of the meditation is read; and the second part begins, which is called the body of the meditation, and the whole appointed time is spent on it; and lastly one ends with the following

Conclusion

1st. "Let us give thanks to God for the good thoughts and affections that he has deigned to communicate to us in this meditation."

I give You thanks, my God, for the patience you have had and the favour you have done me in bearing with me in your presence in this meditation, and also for the good thoughts, affections and resolutions that you have communicated to me in it; for I regard it all as having come from You, from whom every good descends.

2nd. "Let us offer him the resolutions we have made, in union with the merits of Christ our Lord."

I offer You, Lord, the resolutions made in this meditation, in union with the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord and your Son, so that they may thus be pleasing to you, and that you may preserve them from the snares of the malignant enemies.

3rd. "Let us ask him for grace to put them into effect, begging for this end the intercession of the Most Holy Virgin, of our holy guardian angel and of the saints of our devotion."

I beg You, my Good, to give me grace to put them into effect and to be faithful to what I have resolved in your presence; for which end I beg You, Most Holy Virgin, Mother and refuge of sinners, my guardian angel and the saints of my devotion, to intercede for me and obtain for me this grace.

"When the prayer is over, it is good to make a short examen of it, to see how we have behaved and to make it better another time; and afterwards to write down the resolutions, which one will try to make practical, coming down to particulars as far as possible. And of the affections one has experienced in prayer, one will take one, which may be the one that pleased one most, and as a spiritual nosegay will present it to God frequently and savour it all day long."

---

[10] Lk 18:1.

[11] Mt 26:41; Mk 14:38; Lk 22:40.

[12] *Summa theol.* III, q. 39, a. 5: "*Necessaria est jugis oratio*" \["continual prayer is necessary"\].

[13] Lk 3:21.

[14] Mt 6:9.

[15] *El colegial instruido* \[LR, Barcelona 1860\] vol. 1, p. 48.

[16] Acts 6:4.

[17] Cf. *El colegial instruido* \[LR, Barcelona 1860\] vol. 1, pp. 48–141.

[18] The same in *El colegial instruido* (LR, Barcelona 1860) vol. 1, p. 57.

[1] Cf. St. Ignatius of Loyola, *Obras completas* \[BAC, Madrid ³1977\] pp. 221–222.

[2] St. Ignatius calls it the "second preamble" (cf. ibid., p. 222).

[3] Cf. ibid., pp. 9–10.

[4] Cf. Ribadeneira, P., *Flos sanctorum* (Madrid 1761) vol. 3, p. 186.

[5] *Soliloquies* I, 1, c. 1, n. 1 (BAC, Madrid 1950) vol. 1, p. 544.

[6] Mt 7:7; Lk 11:9.

[7] Cf. *Aut.* no. 264.

[8] Cf. ibid., p. 14.

[9] Cf. ibid., pp. 15–16.

Explanation of the Six Talents of Prayer (extract from El colegial instruido)

One Talent: Vocal Prayer

It is good to know the talents of prayer that each one has received from God, so as to trade with them \[an allusion to the parable of the talents, Mt 25:14–30\].

The gift of prayer that is like one talent is vocal prayer. That soul is known to have this talent which meditates while it speaks, and, as soon as it stops speaking or praying aloud \[*rezar*, to say set prayers\], no

longer knows how to meditate and is distracted by other things.

Practice. This person who has received this gift from God will be content with him and will make the most of this gift in the following way. Every day, for a quarter of an hour or half an hour or longer, at home, in church or in some other place, kneeling, or standing, or walking, or working, as opportunity allows, with faith and humility he will say the Our Father, and on each word he will pause a longer or shorter time, according as he is able to pause. Just as the bee pauses on each flower as long as it finds something to suck to form the comb of wax and honey, so too the soul will pause on each word as long as it finds something to draw from it for the greater glory of God and for its own good and its neighbour's. A good gardener's wife used to pray it in this way, and that is why it is called "the gardener-woman's Our Father" \[*el padrenuestro de la hortelana,* a traditional Spanish name for this slow, word-by-word way of praying\].

This kind of vocal prayer looks to the time the person is able to pray, not to the words he must say; so that if he cannot remain in prayer for more than half an hour, even if he spent a quarter of an hour on each word, he would be doing well.

What has been said of the Our Father is to be understood equally of the Hail Mary, the Salve \[*Hail, Holy Queen*\], the Creed, the commandments, the sacraments and the Last Things \[*novísimos*: death, judgment, hell and heaven\].

This way of prayer has many advantages. 1st. It is within reach of the learned and the unlearned, even of those who cannot read, and no book is needed. 2nd. It helps people to get used to thinking while they say the rosary and the other vocal prayers they are bound to by obligation or devotion. 3rd. It also serves to make, or make up for, the meditation on a day when one does not manage to make it well. Then one prays very slowly during the appointed time, or else one reads the book of meditations word by word, like the hen, which, when it drinks, dips its beak in the water, takes a little sip, raises its head, and so goes on repeating the operation until it has had its fill. The soul must imitate the hen in meditation, so that it is not distracted and does not miserably waste its time. This is done when the understanding does not know how to meditate or reason.

Two Talents: Mental Prayer or Meditation

The gift of prayer that is like two talents is meditation. We have already explained what meditation is, which is precisely the subject of this book. It is the road or royal highway \[*carretera real,* the king's main road, as opposed to by-paths\] by which all people must make their way to heaven, and only in special cases will they be led by other roads. We have said that meditation is made with the powers of the soul, memory, understanding and will, applying besides, by means of the imagination, the bodily senses to the object of the meditation, as though we saw, heard, tasted and touched what we are meditating on. The matter of meditations should be the Last Things, and especially the life, passion and death of Jesus Christ, our divine Redeemer. Each one, when placed in meditation, must recall those words that God said to Moses: *Look, and make it according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.*[1] The one who meditates must behave like one who is learning to draw or write, who takes a look at the original and then goes on copying on the paper. So he will take a look at the original, which is Jesus Christ, and will go on copying his virtues.[2]

Three Talents: The Prayer of Acts of Virtue

The gift of prayer that is like three talents is the prayer of acts of virtue. The end of meditation is acts of virtue; and so one who receives this precious gift finds himself at the end of meditation almost without passing through the means. In time of prayer, then, let him dwell on the virtues, since God places him there; let him make acts of faith, of hope, of charity, of humility and of resignation to the will of God; let him exercise himself well in those virtues which he knows will serve him most during the day. Let him do as soldiers do, who drill in the handling of arms, and when they have to attack the enemy they do it well; and

besides, being well drilled, they carry out military manoeuvres with dash. Let the Christian, who is a soldier of the Church Militant, do likewise.

Four Talents: Contemplation

The gift of contemplation is like four talents, and that soul has this gift which knows how to contemplate the attributes of God, his goodness, his beauty, his wisdom, his omnipotence, his justice, his mercy. Souls that have this precious gift from God love him much, because they know him better than others who do not have it; and God, in proportion as he is known, is loved.

Five Talents: Mixed Prayer, on the Divinity and Humanity of Jesus Christ, and on God's Presence in His Rational and Irrational Creatures and in All Things That Have Being

The gift of mixed prayer is like five talents. This mixed prayer consists in meditating and pondering well what Jesus Christ, true God and true man, did and suffered, and in contemplating the divinity in the humanity.

It is also mixed prayer to contemplate God in all things, by essence, by presence and by power, recognizing that all the beauty, loveliness, holiness and perfection that we see in them is a participation of God.

One who has this gift looks on others with the greatest respect and reverence, putting himself after all and sinking into the depth of his own nothingness and of his sins.

One who has this precious gift of prayer knows that God is in the soul of the just man, justifying it and giving it life by grace, as the Archangel said to Most Holy Mary: *Ave, gratia plena, Dominus tecum*;[1] but the just man hardly knows his happiness. But there is another degree, and then he does know it: it is when God is in the soul of the just man through some special consolation or feeling.

At times the soul of the just man has a joy so great that it seems to him to melt, now in tears of tenderness, now in tears of sorrow for having sinned and offended God, whom he knows to be so good a father, and whom he has repaid with such ingratitude that he is dying of grief. This grief drives him to seek out and embrace the harshest penances, and, by punishing himself, he is somewhat consoled.

God, in the soul of the just man, does what fire does, which gives light, gives heat and turns the fuel into fire, melts metals and calcines stones; for these same effects are caused by the fire that Jesus came to cast upon the earth.[2]

Not infrequently this love does in the just man what the sun does, which, besides giving light and heat, makes visible the motes in the air of the room it enters and the specks in the water of a glass tumbler. It makes him know the infinite distance between God and man; and that is why he asks continually, like St. Augustine, who said: "Lord, that I may know myself and that I may know You,"[3] and like St. Francis of Assisi, who asked: "Who are You, who am I?"[4]

The just man, with this light, knows something of the beauty of God, his goodness, his omnipotence and the other divine attributes, and at the same time he knows the ugliness, the malice, the vileness and the other human miseries; he knows his own in particular, and looks on them as having a special malice above those of others; and so, with this knowledge, he puts himself after all men and even after the very devils, as St. Michael of the Saints used to say; and he desires nothing but humiliations, contempt and sufferings.[5]

Through the knowledge he has of God, he desires to be consumed in his honour, as incense is consumed in smoke upon the live coals; and like St. Teresa of Jesus he asks with great insistence: "Lord, to suffer or to die"; and like St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi: "To suffer, not to die, so as to be able to suffer more";[6] and like

St. John of the Cross: "Lord, to suffer and to be despised for love of you."

Six Talents: Union

The gift of the prayer of union is like six talents; this is the richest gift, for it possesses God himself in a very special way, as Jesus Christ says: "Whoever loves me will keep my teaching, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling within him";[1] and since the soul of the just man loves God, it is in God, and the two are so united that it says with St. Paul: "I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me."[2] From this holy union comes that interior peace and quiet which the soul experiences that contemplates and loves like Mary and works like Martha,[3] but without anxiety or blameworthy fretting. The soul in this union is so content and thinks itself so happy that it seems to it that nothing will ever separate it from its beloved; and so it says, with all the energy that its firm resolve and enthusiasm can suggest, the words of the apostle St. Paul: "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or hunger, or nakedness, or peril, or persecution, or the sword?… For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall ever be able to separate us from the love of God, which is grounded in Christ Jesus our Lord."[4]

---

[5] Ex 25:40.

[6] Cf. *Aut.* no. 56; letter to D. José Caixal, 28 May 1847: *EC* I, p. 219.

[7] Lk 1:28.

[8] Cf. Lk 12:49.

[9] St. Augustine, *Soliloquies* I, 1, c. 1, n. 1 (BAC, Madrid 1950) vol. 1, p. 544.

[10] Cf. Ribadeneira, P., *Flos sanctorum* (Madrid 1761) vol. 3, p. 186.

[11] 24 April 1862: *EC* II, pp. 466–467.

[12] Cf. Croisset, J., *Año cristiano*, May, day 25 \[Barcelona 1853\] p. 482.

[1] Jn 14:23.

[2] Gal 2:20.

[3] Cf. Lk 10:38–42.

[4] Rom 8:35–39.