St. Anthony Mary Claret

RETREATS AND CONFERENCES FOR THE CLERGY

Ejercicios y conferencias al clero

From the Spanish of Claret's notes and of the Barcelona edition of 1857

English translation

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

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About this translation

Translated from the notes and outlines of his retreats to the clergy of Cuba (Claret published no retreat of his own), the meditations transcribed by Fr. Antonio Barjau, chapter 8 of the *Reglas del instituto de los clérigos seglares que viven en comunidad* (Barcelona, 1864) — **an extract**, the rest of the Rule is not translated — and the *Conferencias de San Vicente de Paúl para los señores eclesiásticos* (Barcelona, 1857), complete.

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

Retreats to the Clergy of Cuba

II. Guidelines

Method for making the Holy Exercises with fruit:

Meditate much and read little.

There will be five hours of meditation each day, namely: in the morning, from six to seven, from half past eight to half past nine, and from half past ten to half past eleven; in the afternoon, from three to four and from six to seven.

After each hour of meditation, a quarter of an hour will be spent examining that meditation, and the chief things that happened in the meditation will be noted in a notebook.

The remaining hours of the day are usually spent as follows: in the first days one examines one's conscience in order to make a general confession, and one also reflects on the ruling passion or inclination of the person. In this way, with the light and grace he has gained, he spends the last days forming and writing down resolutions and purposes.

What is to be done when the ten days of Exercises are over:

When the ten days of exercises are over, we will stay a few days more and occupy ourselves in holding a conference on mystical theology and in the following things:

1. All will say or celebrate Mass with uniformity, devotion and gravity, according to the rubrics, because this serves to draw people.

2. Each one will at times deliver the same sermon or piece of sermon, so that we may become uniform in delivery and gesture, according to the rule of Granada in his *Ecclesiastical Rhetoric* and St. Liguori in his *Selva*.[1] *Omne verbum sit conditum* \[let every word be seasoned\][2]; and indeed, if the divine word comes from a heart on fire and seasoned with this salt, it will work wonders.

3. Uniformity in the manner of administering the sacrament of Penance will be sought, and therefore discussed. For this the discourse of St. Leonard of Port Maurice will be read, and above all the *Manual for Missionaries* will be kept in view in the paragraphs most relevant to these times.

4. The subjects they are to write on while at home will be settled, and they will be advised of the style they should adopt in the present circumstances and the books they may use.

III. Outlines of the Meditations

Preparation for the Exercises, year 1855

Noli negligere gratiam quae est in te: 1 Tim 4:14.\ Do not neglect the grace you received.\ Explanation of grace.\ Need for cooperation.\ Parable of the talents. Look at the Saints.\ Woe to him who hides, who

sleeps...!\ Foolish virgins. Lazarus, *Si dormit salvus erit* \[if he sleeps he will recover\].\ *Dixit Jesus manifeste: Lazarus mortuus est* \[Jesus said plainly: Lazarus is dead\].\ Three things above all must be looked at:

1. Faults that have been committed. Comparison: the broom, the razor, dirty, torn clothes. House with leaks, ship, damage; weeds.

2. Strength that weakens: water that grows cold; clock weights. The consumptive. Pharisee: I am not like...

3. Example that must be given...

Way of making the Exercises well. 1. Silence. 2. Occupation. 3. Notes.

Humility

Quid est homo quia magnificas eum: Job 7:17 \[What is man, that you make so much of him?\]\ *Discite a me*: Mt 11:29 \[Learn from me\].\ Summary of yesterday.\ Humility of the understanding and of the will.\ What it consists in. Example of Silvanus.\ He has nothing; he is dust and misery.\ What he has is lent: a statue.\ He is less than nothing because of his faults.\ As to nature: what were you? what are you?\ We have sin, the devil: Thom., St. John Chrys.\ According to nature. Before, nothing. Now, nothing. Sins committed. Sins forgiven. Venial sins.\ According to grace. Creation. Being. Faculties.\ Divine concurrence.\ Sanctifying grace and its value.\ Enlightenment. Holy movement \[of the will\].\ The faults.

Patience

Beatus vir qui suffert tentationem: Jas 1:12 \[Blessed is the man who endures temptation\].\ Summary of yesterday.\ The proof of humility is patience.\ Necessity. Cross of Jesus; of the good thief and of the bad. *Patientia vobis necessaria est, ut voluntatem Dei facientes, reportetis repromissionem*: Heb 10:36 \[You have need of patience, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise\].\ You are a sinner. Hers. \[abbreviation in the manuscript\] Nebuchadnezzar. Prodigal son. Comparisons: iron, fire, squeezes the eyes.\ You are lukewarm. He puts aloes, thorns. Muddy.\ You are just. *Son homo* \[sic in the outline\], press, hammer, file.\ The tree exposed to the wind sends down deep roots.\ Bread. Wine. Oil.\ Abraham, Isaac. Tobit. Job. David.\ Seneca said that God does as Maci. Cap. Pad. \[abbreviations in the manuscript\].\ Question of Abbot Moses to Zachary. Trampled cowl.\ Examples of J. C. poor; persecutions; calumnies...\ Manner: Keep silent. Do not excuse oneself. Do not run away.\ Degrees: 1. Willingly. 2. With joy. 3. Giving thanks to God and to the wrongdoers. 4. Excusing their intention. 5. Praying for them.

Meekness

Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde: Mt 11:29 \[Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart\].

1. Clemency belongs to superiors. Const. Theodosius. Meekness, to everyone.

2. By meekness one is rational. Reason and figure. What is lost by anger. What Galen did as a boy.

3. By meekness one is Christian. It is the virtue of J. C. What happened to a Christian in Alexandria. J. C.'s rebuke to St. Bridget. Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess...

4. By meekness a man is spiritual. The cloud keeps one from seeing the sun. So does anger. So Elisha. He who received Communion... Look at Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David.

5. It softens the anger of others. Jacob with Esau. Abigail and David. St. John Chrysostom. Elephant and lamb. Case of the Philosopher who gave money.

6. Means: 1. Look at Jesus. 2. One's own faults. St. Marina.

Chastity

Haec est voluntas Dei sanctificatio vestra ut abstineatis a...: 1 Thess 4:3 \[This is the will of God, your sanctification, that you abstain from...\].\ Chastity sanctifies us.\ It makes us like the angels.\ It unites us with God. The one we see. *Beati* \[Blessed\].\ Means. 1. Keep away from women, because they are fire. *Quid resucitan muertos?* \[sic, half Latin, half Spanish: "Why do they raise the dead?"\]. Look at Samson, David and Solomon.\ *Sola fuga est remedium* \[flight is the only remedy\]. Like fire and straw. Water and earth.\ Evil with horror: e.g. losses, pains, insults.\ Evil with pleasure: e.g. lust, gluttony, gambling, theft.\ St. Basil says: these are harder, because one loves them.\ 2. Mortification.\ 3. Humility. Example of the old monk.\ 4. Prayer, or asking it of God.

Mortification

Bona est oratio cum jejunio: Tob 12:8 \[Prayer is good with fasting\].\ Mortification shuts the door to wickedness and opens it to prayer. *Myrrha et thus* \[myrrh and frankincense\].\ Comparison of the skin, the pen, the log, the tied dog.\ Need for mortification. Before, man was upright, and now he is like a beast that goes badly.\ *Qui vult post me venire...*: Mt 16:24 \[If anyone will come after me...\].\ External mortification. Sight. Hearing. Speech and taste. Smell and touch.\ Internal mortification. Affections, says St. John Climacus.

1. Riches.

2. Honors.

3. Relatives.

4. Will.

Charity

Caritas Dei diffusa est in cordibus nostris per Spiritum sanctum qui datus est nobis: Rom 5:5 \[The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us\].

1. What charity is. Love God and neighbor. He who loves is in affection what the beloved is in effect. Love of friendship: e.g. Young monk. Love of concupiscence: e.g. Nurse and mother.

2. Prerogatives: 1. Members of God's household by grace, what \[they will be\] afterwards by glory. Friend, gods. 2. Without charity, nothing avails. *Nihil sum* \[I am nothing\]. With charity, all the virtues. *Caritas patiens...* \[Charity is patient...\].

Means. 1. Desire and ask for it.\ 2. Mortify self-love: 1) in grave things; 2) in slight things.\ 3. Meditation: God is lovable because he is Holy, Mighty, Rich, Wise... God is loving, by his natural benefits: creation, preservation, etc. Supernatural. Redemption.\ Acts: 1. Love of complacency. 2. Love of preference. 3. Love of benevolence. Love of contrition.\ Charity is to the impious \[*imp\[ío\]s*\] as life is to children and the sick.

Devotion to Most Holy Mary

Qui me invenerit inveniet vitam, et hauriet salutem a Domino: Prov 8:35 \[He who finds me finds life, and shall draw salvation from the Lord\].

1. By nature, and by command, and needs.

2. It is a sign of predestination, a sign on the forehead. *Inveniet vitam gratiae et gloriae* \[he shall find the life of grace and of glory\]: à Lapide. Eve, mother of the living. Mary, Mother of Jesus, *vita* \[life\]. The Virgin can obtain graces for us: 1. She is Mother of God. 2. God has promised it to her. The Virgin wills it, because of how much she loves us.

3. She obtains perfection: 1) on the part of Jesus; 2) of the... It is proved by facts. The most perfect Saints are the most devoted to Mary.

4. She overcomes obstacles or enemies. *Inimicitias ponam* \[I will put enmities\]. *Si Maria pro nobis, quis contra nos?* \[If Mary is for us, who is against us?\]

5. Homage. 1. Negative. 2. Positive: Interior. Exterior.

6. Means: 1. Esteem of her merits. 2. Of her person.

7. Manner. That one direct one's fasts, prayers and other homage so that the Virgin may obtain for him the amendment of some vice or the gaining of a virtue. 2. In time of temptation. 3. Great confidence of the son with his Mother. 4. Perseverance in devotions and homage.

Charity toward Neighbor

Hoc est praeceptum meum, ut diligatis invicem sicut dilexi vos: Jn 15:12 \[This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you\].

1. By precept. Mt 7:12; Jn 15:17.

2. New precept: he united it: as if to himself.

3. At the hour of death, St. Aug.'s explanation.

4. Rewards he will give on the day of Judgment. Case of St. John of God's leper.

5. Spiritual: 1) thing; 2) to whom; 3) act, says St. Th. Will of God. A divine thing. Vocation from God. You imitate the Son of God. St. Francis. St. Ignatius.

Perseverance

Homage. Son, give me your heart. The heart, the sinner's poisoned cup. Flies of venial sin.\ Homage. Ps. Virtues, not like the bat.

Distribution of Time

Morning.

| **Hour** | |:----------|:----------| 5 | Rise. | 5:30 | Begin. Reading and Prayer. | 6:45 | Mass, Gospel and little hours. | 8 | Breakfast. | 9 | Reading and penitential psalms. | 11 | Reading, meditation, and conferences on the rubrics of the Office, Mass and confessions. | 1 | Dinner. | 2 | Siesta. | 3 | Vespers and Matins. | 4:30 | Meditation and talk. | 7 | Reading and Way of the Cross. | 8 | Supper. | 8:30 | Rosary and end. | 9 | Retire. |

Reading:\ In the morning, Calatayud.\ In the afternoon, *The Trumpet of Ezekiel* \[by Palafox\].\ At table, the life of the Saints.

Notices

1. When the reading at dinner is over, they will be allowed to talk and smoke a little tobacco until 2. Likewise at supper, until 8:30. At other times silence will be kept.

2. In the other periods silence and recollection will be kept. They will occupy themselves in making some brief notes, examining their conscience, and making the general confession that all should try to make in these days.

3. If someone cannot attend some exercise because he is hearing confessions, this will be overlooked, but not for any other reason; and even for this he will try to make it as little as possible. But no one will miss the talk.

IV. Meditations Transcribed by Father Antonio Barjau

Priestly Dignity

"*Omnis pontifex ex hominibus assumptus, pro hominibus constituitur in iis quae sunt ad Deum ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis*, Hebrews, ch. 5, v. 1 \[Every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in the things that pertain to God, that he may offer gifts and sacrifices for sins\].

"Summary of yesterday...

"What the priest is with respect to his dignity; what he is with respect to men; what he must strive for.

"What gratitude would a stone not show if God raised it from that being to that of a plant? And a plant, if it became an animal? And an animal, if it became rational? We, then, by an effect of God's goodness, have passed from nothing to being his Ministers, chosen from among men to mediate between man and God... *Videte ne in vacuum gratiam Dei recipiatis* \[See that you do not receive the grace of God in vain\].

"Act so that you can say with the Apostle: *Gratia Dei in me vacua non fuit* \[The grace of God in me has not been void\]... We must consider the priest not only under this aspect, but also because the priest represents the people, the nation, &c.; and we must have compassion on men when we see the wrath of heaven falling upon them... The Flood, Sodom; as Moses did when he saw that terrible plague that was destroying his people: he said to the priest Aaron, Take the censer, stand between the living and the dead, and pray to the Lord. He did so, and the plague ceased. If this was so in the old law, what will it be in the new? In the old there were only figures; in the new, the reality. In the new the priest speaks, and his words are sealed with the blood of J. C. and with the authority of J. C. himself. How many evils, then, we can and must avert...!

"In what way? By praying much and by good example we shall make the people trust in us; and when the tribulation that is threatening them falls upon them, they will look for us and seek us out, and so God will be appeased through us... The second verse says: *Qui condolere possit iis qui ignorant et errant: quoniam et ipse circumdatus est infirmitate* \[Who can have compassion on the ignorant and erring, because he himself also is beset with weakness\]. The priest says the Divine Office aloud for two reasons: first, so that it may give him a holy enthusiasm; second, so that the people may see that he is conversing with his God and draw from this reasons for confidence, seeing his mouth overflow with that torrent of praise with which his heart is full.

"We must also try to be very devoted to Most Holy Mary, &c... *Gaude Maria Virgo*, &c..."

Humility

"*Discite a me quia mitis sum et humilis corde et invenietis requiem animabus vestris* \[Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest for your souls\]...

"Summary of yesterday...

"The present age keeps pace with the individual; and the individual, considered today at every age, is a web of vices and errors. Pride rules them; they want to walk above the road, or higher than their destiny: *super viam* \[above the way\]; so Lucifer: *ero similis Altissimo* \[I will be like the Most High\]. This evil of the age goes so far that men recognize no God but themselves: self-worship.

"There are errors of the understanding and errors of the will. The first are hard to dispel; but as light dispels the darkness of night, so the light of doctrine dispels the darkness or errors of the understanding. It has always been hard indeed to dispel the errors of the will, because for the will there is no superior, and because, if it acknowledged God's sovereign dominion, it would have to pay him homage \[*rendirle vasallaje*, literally "render him vassalage"\]: *dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus* \[the fool has said in his heart: there is no God\]. And given over to his passions, he makes a god of his body, giving it what it craves, as the Apostle

says: *Quorum deus venter est* \[whose god is their belly\]; and he leaves his soul under the rule of pride. This is the present age.

"What remedy must we seek? Humility, that is, *humilitas*, as St. Bernard says, by being humble: 1. because we are rational; 2. because we are sinners; 3. because we are disciples of J. C.; 4. because we are dispensers of his graces and proclaimers of his Gospel.

"1. Being rational, what can we attribute to ourselves? Nothing, because what we are we owe to God. Are we priests? It is not by our choosing: *non vos me elegistis, sed ego elegi vos* \[you have not chosen me, but I have chosen you\]. Do we have some special talent? Nothing is ours. *Gratia Dei sum id quod sum* \[By the grace of God I am what I am\], said the Apostle...

"2. Being sinners, we have nothing but reasons for confusion, seeing that by sin we have disfigured that so perfect work of God's hands. For this reason, since the Church was to be founded on humility, J. C. set Peter as its head, who had sinned, and not St. John, so that, remembering his fault, he might humble himself, &c.

"3. Being disciples of J. C., what else must we do but imitate our Master? Look from the manger to the cross... *absit ergo mihi gloriari nisi in cruce D. N. J. C.* \[far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ\].

"4. If we are proclaimers of his Gospel, we would be so in vain if we did not have the virtues we must teach; rightly would they say to us: *medice, cura te ipsum* \[physician, heal yourself\]. Let us act so that, if we do not dare to say with the Apostle *imitatores mei estote sicut et ego Christi* \[be imitators of me, as I am of Christ\], we may say it at least with our works. This is how we can in some way attack the terrible plague of pride, a vice now general.

"Men recognize no king, no Popes, no Bishops, no authority of any kind. It is the age of the crowned locusts with women's faces of which the Apocalypse speaks. They run swiftly, they fly, they spread everywhere, filling the whole world with pestilence. So we see that those virtues that were once recognized in certain provinces are no longer there. Pride absorbs everything; for it there are no distances; everything is shared through these steamers, railways, &c.; it infects everything. So we come to the end of the world. The upheaval began through pride, and it seems it will end through pride. From the Mount of Olives the Master of humility ascended into heaven... In that same place the antichrist, the master of pride, will be cast down.

"Let us, then, try to be humble like St. Aloysius Gonzaga. Though he was of one of the leading families, he went begging alms; and asked why he did this, he answered: Either people know it or they do not. If they do not know it, it does no harm; and if they know it, they may be edified by it. St. Francis Borgia was once struck by a door, and the doctor treating him said: Your Lordship \[*Usía*\] has received a very great wound. To this the Saint answered: You have given me a worse wound with your 'Your Lordship' \[a play on the honorific *Usía*\]...

"Let us think that we are in the world as in a theater. Each one plays his part, but without believing that he is what he represents... If a child were dressed in a great coat covered with gold braid and told he was a king, he would still be ashamed to appear in it in public. We must do the same... So J. C. commands us: *Nisi efficiamini sicut parvuli*, &c. \[Unless you become like little children\]. The Apostles too, infected by the general contagion, asked J. C. for the best place in the kingdom of heaven; and J. C. rebuked them and told them that whoever wants to be the greatest must be the servant of the others: *si quis voluerit inter vos major fieri sit vester minister* \[whoever would be greater among you, let him be your servant\]..."

The Presence of God

Ambula coram me et esto perfectus: Gen 17:1 \[Walk before me and be perfect\].

"Summary of the previous \[talk\].

"St. Liguori says that cheerfulness is to a missionary what wings are to a bird, etc. What chiefly produces true cheerfulness is the presence of God. Yes, great is the importance of this presence:

1. because it keeps us from all evils;

2. because it furnishes us with all the virtues;

3. because it unites us with God.

"1. We have many testimonies to these truths. For if the wicked would not dare commit a sin in public, how will one who has this presence of God dare commit it? It is not possible. So you will see that St. Paphnutius won over that woman called Thaïs. When she solicited him to sin, he said to her: Let us go to the square. She answered: No, so they will not see us. Then the Saint: *Si non coram mundo, quomodo coram Deo?* \[If not before the world, how before God?\] St. Ephrem escaped in a similar case. We see in Holy Scripture the story of chaste Joseph... The chaste Susanna..., etc.

"2. Also for practicing the virtues. See the ancient Patriarchs, Abraham... Moses... etc.

"3. And finally, that it unites us with God is proved thus: whoever has all the virtues has charity; *atqui* \[but\] this is the virtue that unites us with God... *ergo* \[therefore\]... That is why St. Augustine says: tell me what you love and I will tell you what you are. Do you love the earth? You are earthly. Do you love God? I would almost, almost say that you are God: *Dii estis omnes et filii Excelsi* \[You are all gods and sons of the Most High\]. Whoever is near the bonfire shares in its glow, its heat, etc.; and even if he is cold iron, he becomes a live coal. *Ita* \[so\] he who is in the presence of God.

"And if all Christians must have this presence of God, what of priests, who, like the moon, are set between the sun of justice and the earth, to receive light from the one and pass on to the other its influences and its light? What would happen if the moon turned its face from the sun? It would be left in darkness, and having no light, it could not pass any on. *Ita* the priest. And the worst of it is that, just as when night falls, for want of this presence all temptations attack, etc. So the presence of God is necessary for perfection, etcetera. There is much more to say, but *intelligenti pauca* \[a word to the wise\]; let us go to the practice.

"The Masters of the spiritual life point out 4 ways:

"1. Fixing on a scene from the life or passion of J. C., like St. Anthony, St. Cajetan, St. Aloysius, etc. This is somewhat difficult, because, as it belongs to the imagination, it easily tires.

"2. Seeing God in oneself, e.g. God became man, as I am, and looking as in a mirror at the virtues of Jesus and copying them in practice. This is nobler; it belongs to the understanding...

"3. Seeing oneself surrounded by God, like the fish in the water, the little bird in the air, etc.; and so trying to serve him in everything, etc. This is nobler, because it belongs to the will. But the most heroic way is:

"4. To do as St. Catherine did. On the advice of J. C. himself, she built herself a little cell in her heart and often said to herself: *Deus cordis mei* \[God of my heart\]. This is the most pleasing to God, because it imitates him most closely. It combines the active way with the unitive, Martha and Mary, and it is the way in which he is best served. We must never complain because we are in the midst of our neighbors' affairs, caring for their salvation, and so seem not to care for ourselves. Let us do as St. Catherine did, make the little cell, and in the midst of the world's traffic we shall be in the presence of God. To seek to withdraw in this way in order to serve God better is a delusion, a temptation. It happened to a monk called Leo that while he had great affairs on his hands he kept very well in the presence of God. He begged to be relieved of so many affairs; the Prior did so, and behold, the poor monk lost everything, and afterwards he had neither presence of God nor affairs. So we must never complain, but strive for the little cell, etc., etc. *Gaude Maria Virgo*, etc."

[1] DE LIGUORI, A. M., *Selva di Materie Predicabili*, Del Predicare (Bassano 1833), vol. I, pp. 158–162.

[2] Cf. Col 4:6.

Secular Clergy Living in Community: On the Excellence of Common Life. The Dangers and Harms of the Isolated Life

1. There is not, and cannot be, more than one true God. But this God is triune; he has three persons. This God is the Most Holy Trinity, uncreated charity, indivisible society, the origin, source and model of all friendship and concord. It is this good God, one and three, whom the clergy intend to honor who, gathered in common life and having all one heart and one soul in imitation of the first Christians, desire to serve the Lord with all perfection, and also to honor Jesus Christ by following his example and practicing his evangelical counsels.

2. Two (clergy) are better than one, because they have the advantage of their company.[1] And, as the commentators and holy Fathers say, if they are two, they feel for each other and help each other, they rejoice, they work gladly, and by their work they grow rich; and the one carries the other like a good brother. This word *frater* \[brother\] means *fere alter* \[almost another self\].[2]

3. Man is social. And for two or more clergy to live together is a powerful safeguard against greed and against lust and other evils.

4. By the words "two are better" we understand three, four and more, since the gathering and charity of many is sweeter and more useful than the solitary life of the anchorite. That life is not for everyone, nor in keeping with the common and natural law, but only for the perfect, who are already well trained in the cenobitic life, as St. Jerome, St. Thomas and others say.[3]

5. Those who live together have the advantage of company[4], and great indeed are the benefits it brings, if the company is good and all work together like the members of the human body. Those who live in company help one another with counsel, conversation, example, prayer and protection; one leaves the other heir to his example, virtues, books, learning and riches. If they are two or more, together they undertake and carry through works that one alone would not dare to undertake, and if he began them, could not finish. That is why we see that out in the world merchants form trading companies[5]. As a rule these begin in the name of God and end in the name of Satan, because, since their object is money and not charity, they awaken greed, ambition, fraud and injustice, and in consequence quarrels and enmities. But gatherings whose basis is unselfishness, whose object is the holy service of God, and whose means is charity, persevere until eternal life. Nothing is sweeter than friendship and charity, says St. Dionysius.[6] The companions we live with are like eyes with which we see what we must do; like hands with which we do what we ought; and like souls that spur us on to fulfill our duties: *Quam bonum et quam jucundum habitare fratres in unum!* \[How good and how pleasant it is for brothers to dwell together in unity!\][7]

The Hebrews drew this proverb from the words of the holy Scriptures: *Unus vir, nullus vir. Aut societas aut mors.*[8] \[One man is no man. Either fellowship or death.\] A man alone is nothing. If he does not live in fellowship, he perishes without remedy. A man alone, if he is young, lacks prudence; if he is old, he lacks strength. Join the two, and you will have both things in each.

6. If one should fall, the other will hold him up. Woe to him who is alone, for when he falls he has no one to lift him up.[9] *Vae soli* \[woe to him who is alone\]: this lament is not a threat but a foresight of the misfortune that will befall him. That is why it says *when* he falls, giving us to understand that he will infallibly fall.

7. Religious were strictly forbidden to go out of the convent alone. St. Thomas called the religious who went out alone a solitary demon.[10] The man who goes about alone is exposed to the snares of devils and of men, to insults and calumnies, and gives cause for suspicion.

8. When he falls, being alone, he will have no one to lift him up. Rather, there will be many who rejoice at his fall, who laugh, who busy themselves with it in their conversation; he will be the object of their gossip,

exaggerations and calumnies, and there will not be one to give him the hand of counsel. They will talk much about him when he is absent, and in his presence they will all be dumb.

9. And if they sleep together, they will warm each other: how shall one alone be warm?[11] Heat and fire are the type of true union and friendship. Sleeping together means living together, and it symbolizes the comfort and help a friend gives a friend, especially if he finds him weak and afflicted. The symbols and causes of weakness and affliction are night, darkness, cold and wakefulness; just as, on the contrary, the symbols and causes of strength and joy are day, light, warmth and sound sleep. So it means that the friend who burns with the fire of charity and joy passes on his feelings to the friend who needs them.[12]

10. So great is man's need of company that the Creator himself wished to hint it to him in his very body. He gave him two eyes, two ears, two hands and two feet, so that he might have perfect sight, perfect hearing, perfect action and a good gait.[13] But he gave him only one heart, so that he might love his neighbor and join him to himself by true affection, and the two might love God with all their soul and with all their strength.

11. And if someone prevails against one, the two will withstand him.[14] Solomon shows the great goods man draws from social life, and the many harms to which one who leads an isolated life is exposed. He shows it with three very clear examples. The first is that if one falls, he is held up by the other. The second is that if two live together, the one will warm the other. And third, that if someone rises up against one, he will resist him with his companion's help. With the first example he shows man's need of a companion to rise up; with the second, to keep himself; and with the third, to defend himself.[15]

12. These three services the good companion and friend renders; and Solomon confirms these truths with another comparison: A threefold cord is not easily broken.[16] Rope-makers work in threes: first they join three threads into one, then three of these into another, etc., etc.; and so a very fine and very strong rope results. One thread alone is very easy to break, but with its companions it is very hard. A man by himself is very easily overcome, but helped by his companions, not easily.[17]

Scilurus the Scythian, before he died, gathered all his sons to give them a piece of advice that was like his testament. Since they were all warriors, he had them make a bundle of darts, well joined and bound together. He ordered one of them to break it, and however hard he tried, he could do nothing. The others tried in the same way, and they too failed. Then the old man said: Untie the darts and take them one by one. They did so, and at once they broke them all with the greatest ease. When the sons had finished, the father made the application, saying: You see, my sons, what will happen to you. If you take care to live together and in harmony, as these darts were bound together, you will be invincible. But if there are dissensions among you and you separate and isolate yourselves from one another, you will be as easily overcome as you have easily broken these same darts.[18] This example can and should be applied to the clergy, so that they live two or three together and do not lead an isolated life.

13. Another example, more eloquent and effective, was given to us clergy, his sons, by our Father Jesus Christ, more powerful than the one Scilurus gave his sons. For he said: As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.[19] If you love me, keep my commandments. He who keeps my commandments, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him. If anyone loves me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him.[20]

14. A new commandment I give you, that you love one another as I have loved you; and by this they will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.[21] This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.[22] These things I command you, that you love one another.[23]

St. Thomas says: *Amans est in amato* \[the lover is in the beloved\]. Therefore, if we clergy love one another as Jesus Christ commands us, we will like being with one another and leading a common life, and we will not go about in this isolation.

15. Moreover, if we live a common life, gathering two, three or more, our prayers will infallibly obtain from the Eternal Father all that we ask, because we shall find ourselves accompanied by Jesus, who has said: Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.[24]

16. We will close all we have said so far with the words Jesus Christ spoke to a doctor of the law: *Hoc fac, et vives*. Do this, and you shall live.[25] Yes, beloved cleric, do what is prescribed in this Rule, and we give you our word that you will live in this world in grace and in the next in glory, which is what we so much desire for you. Farewell \[*Vale*\].

ANTHONY MARY,\ Archbishop of Trajanopolis

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[1] Eccl 4:9.

[2] A LAPIDE, C., *Commentarius in Ecclesiasten* (Antwerp 1680), p. 151, B.

[3] A LAPIDE, C., op. cit., p. 151, D.

[4] Eccl 4:9.

[5] A LAPIDE, C., op. cit., p. 151, B.

[6] Ibid., p. 152, B.

[7] Ps 132 \[133\]:1.

[8] A LAPIDE, C., op. cit., p. 152, B.

[9] Eccl 4:10.

[10] A LAPIDE, C., op. cit., p. 154, B.

[11] Eccl 4:11.

[12] A LAPIDE, C., op. cit., p. 155, C.

[13] Ibid., p. 156, B.

[14] Eccl 4:12.

[15] A LAPIDE, C., op. cit., p. 153, D.

[16] Eccl 4:12.

[17] A LAPIDE, C., op. cit., p. 157, C.

[18] Ibid., p. 157, A. The example is taken from Plutarch, *Apophthegmata*.

[19] Jn 15:9.

[20] Jn 14:15.

[21] Jn 13:34.

[22] Jn 15:12.

[23] Jn 15:17.

[24] Mt 18:20.

[25] Lk 10:28.

The Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul for Ecclesiastics, with Some Regulations (1857)

Title Page

CONFERENCES OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL for ECCLESIASTICS, WITH SOME REGULATIONS, WRITTEN BY HIS EXCELLENCY AND MOST ILLUSTRIOUS LORDSHIP THE ARCHBISHOP OF SANTIAGO DE CUBA. With the approval of the Ordinary. BARCELONA: LIBRERÍA RELIGIOSA. PRINTING HOUSE OF PABLO RIERA, calle de Robador, nos. 24 and 26. 1857.

Notice

In this booklet I have put the History of the Conferences of St. Vincent, the method by which they were held, and the plan of life the priests kept. Then I have put two sets of regulations, one for the literary conferences

and the other for the spiritual or mystical ones, so that all priests, both the fervent who always aspire to perfection and the less perfect, may find here their respective method, and all may have conferences; which is what I so much desire because of the great good they bring to the clerical state and to the Church.

History of the Conferences of St. Vincent

God Our Lord, who is all goodness and mercy toward men, sometimes uses these same men as instruments to dispense graces to them. For this he made use of St. Vincent de Paul, whom he chose for his high ends. He went before him with heavenly blessings and endowed him with all the lights he needed to attain the purpose for which his divine Providence destined him.

Vincent, as a good servant faithful to the Lord's graces, carried out with the greatest care all that was required of him. He had already begun the work of the holy Missions; he had already given spiritual exercises to ordinands, when God willed to entrust him with another charge that was to be of no less consequence than the two before: the Conferences to the Clergy.

As divine Providence disposes all things sweetly, with this sweetness it disposed the Conferences to the Clergy as its own work, and it happened in this way. Vincent was very pleased to see the good result the exercises for ordinands had produced, and for that reason he gave continual and fervent thanks to God. Day and night he pondered and meditated on what he could do to preserve that sacred fire the Holy Spirit had deigned to kindle in the hearts of those young and fervent priests. He understood very well the weakness and inconstancy of the human will, especially that of the young. He feared, therefore, and rightly, that since they had of necessity to return to live in the midst of a perverse and corrupt world, as the Apostle calls it, their first fervor would little by little grow lukewarm, and perhaps they would even lose the grace they had received so abundantly in the holy exercises they had just made in order to receive sacred orders.

So well-founded a fear kept his spirit continually stirred, seeking and searching out means to forewarn and strengthen those young men in such a way that neither their own weakness nor the corruption of the age could blot out or even alter the holy resolutions and purposes they had conceived in the exercises. While his mind was fixed on this idea, and he was commending the matter to God, behold, one of those young and fervent priests who had made the exercises came to him. He said he had come to propose that Vincent would deign to form a kind of union of the ecclesiastics recently exercised and ordained priests, since they all wanted to live according to the holiness their vocation demands. For this, he thought, it would be very fitting for Vincent to gather them all from time to time to confer and discuss the virtues they ought to have and the functions priests must carry out in the sacred ministry.

Vincent regarded the proposal as a gift from heaven. At once he remembered the good effect that spiritual conferences had produced among those ancient Fathers of the deserts of Egypt, as Cassian relates in his *Collations*.[1] Those Fathers used conferences as a very useful means of strengthening themselves against the attacks of invisible enemies and advancing on the road to perfection. So Vincent judged that, just as conferences had been so useful and profitable to those who lived in the desert, they would be no less useful, if not necessary, to young priests who must live in the midst of the world. Nevertheless he commended it to God. He consulted the Archbishop of Paris, who approved it with great pleasure and satisfaction.

The idea approved, Vincent considered how to put it into effect. To this end he spoke to each of those good priests individually, telling them of the idea of gathering them in order to speak to them and encourage them more and more in the service of God Our Lord. He found them all very eager and ready to obey whatever he commanded, for the greater glory of God and the good of souls.

So they agreed on the day and hour when they were to meet, at Saint-Lazare. At the first meeting he explained to them more particularly the chief aim he had in view in those Conferences. He spoke to them of their need to preserve and cultivate the holy dispositions God had infused in them and the graces they had

received in holy ordination. He exhorted them as strongly as he could to give themselves to his divine Majesty and to continue throughout their lives what they had begun with the Lord's grace, until the work was completed, so that it could never be said of any of them: *Iste homo coepit aedificare, et non potuit consummare* \[This man began to build, and was not able to finish\].[2] He told them further that, having been honored with the priestly character and raised to a truly holy state that consecrated them wholly to the service of God, none of them should ever deserve to have applied to him the prophet Jeremiah's lament: *Obscuratum est aurum, mutatus est color optimus, dispersi sunt lapides sanctuarii in capite omnium platearum* \[How is the gold become dim, the finest color changed, the stones of the sanctuary scattered at the head of every street\].[3] All this comes true especially when those whom Jesus Christ chose as ministers of his Church grow lukewarm in charity and fall away from the perfection that should go with their state. Yes, this is what is called the gold growing dim and losing the fine, bright color it had. The stones of the sanctuary, unhinged and scattered through the squares and crossroads, are those priests who, forgetful of their sacred duties, abandon their occupations, and, idle and wandering, go visiting and strolling at all hours and everywhere, making themselves as contemptible as the stones of the street by the disorder of their lives.

Then he gave them to understand that his aim was not to separate them entirely from the world and put them in the cloister. Rather, living as before in their own houses or with their parents, they should all be united by a bond of mutual and fraternal charity, by uniformity in the practice of the virtues, and by carrying out their ecclesiastical occupations under one same order and rule. Thus forewarned and strengthened against the corruption of the age, they would at the same time prepare and train themselves for the perfect fulfillment of the sacred duties of the high ministry to which the Lord had raised them; so that what the Prophet says might be applied to them: *Stellae dederunt lumen in custodiis suis... vocatae sunt, et dixerunt, adsumus; et luxerunt ei cum jucunditate, qui fecit illas* \[The stars gave light in their watches... they were called, and they said, Here we are; and with cheerfulness they shone forth to him that made them\] (Baruch 3:34–35). That is, he impressed on them that they should be like bright stars in the Church of God, shedding the light of their good example from the bosom of their families, and living in a continual readiness to go and work in whatever place and post they were assigned, so that Jesus Christ, the author of their priesthood, might be known, served and loved.

All those good priests were very pleased with what the glorious Vincent had said, and at once they set a day for beginning the conferences. It was Tuesday of each week, as being the day on which they were least occupied. They then asked Vincent to set the subject to be treated on the first day, and Vincent gave them as the theme of the first conference: *On the ecclesiastical spirit*, which he divided into three points: 1. The reasons why it matters for clerics to have this ecclesiastical spirit. 2. What this spirit consists in. 3. The means of acquiring, preserving and perfecting oneself in this spirit.

On the appointed Tuesday, 16 July 1633, the first conference began, and they continued ever after on every Tuesday, on the point or subject Vincent set, which always concerned some virtue or function proper and fitting to the ecclesiastical state. The manner of speaking in these conferences was to be humble, simple and familiar, as their director Vincent had taught them by his exhortations and example. For he had a quite particular gift for speaking of the virtues and of all matters of piety with a special power and grace. His style was simple, without any display, but vigorous and full of feeling. As a rule, when he had to treat these things, he did not set himself to study books. He only prepared by meditating a little before God in prayer, from which he drew great lights, which he then passed on to the others with admirable grace and singular feeling. All his discourses were based on certain principles drawn from Holy Scripture, particularly the examples and words of Jesus Christ in the holy Gospel, which he penetrated and relished in a special way.

When in the conferences the others explained their point, Vincent added hardly anything to what they had said. As a rule what he did was to reinforce some good thought or word another had let fall, giving it new force with the vigor and gift that set him apart, of treating the most common and ordinary things in so

extraordinary a way and with such expression that it pierced the hearts of all who heard him. All the members of the conference tried to imitate this style of humility, simplicity and sincerity, so that in these conferences no one studied to make fine speeches in order to appear eloquent, or to have his talent and learning admired. They sought only the greater glory of God, the good of souls, and their own humiliation and confusion.

Nevertheless, St. Vincent charged the ecclesiastics of the conference to prepare themselves by study on the subjects to be treated in it, but in such a way that it should be more by way of prayer than of study; unless the subject to be treated required particular application, especially when it concerned ecclesiastical offices and posts, or similar matters.

And so that God Our Lord might pour out more graces on that gathering of ecclesiastics, St. Vincent thought it fitting to draw up a rule according to which the meetings and conferences should be held. The rule was contained in these articles:

1. The ecclesiastics who desire to preserve the good sentiments God Our Lord deigned to grant them during the exercises for ordination have resolved, with the advice and permission of the Archbishop of Paris, to meet and hold conferences in the house of Saint-Lazare, to honor the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, his eternal priesthood, his holy family, Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and to imitate, by practicing it, his love for the poor. For this reason they purpose to strive to conform their life to his, and to seek the glory of God in the ecclesiastical state, in their families, and among the poor; not only in the towns, but also in the countryside and the mountains, according to each one's opportunity and devotion.

2. Only ecclesiastics in sacred orders will be admitted to this union or Congregation; and even these only after long inquiry into their life and conduct, and after they have made the spiritual exercises, which they should repeat each year, if possible.

3. They will meet on Tuesday of each week to confer on the subjects that have been set for them, which will ordinarily be the virtues and the duties proper to their ministry.

4. Finally, they will regard themselves as united among themselves by Our Lord Jesus Christ as by a new bond of his divine love, so as to keep them perfectly united to him; and for this reason they will try to bind themselves ever more closely to one another by means of this love. To this end they will visit and console one another in their afflictions and illnesses; and when one dies, the others will attend his funeral. Each of the priests will apply three Masses for the repose of his soul, and those who are not yet priests will offer Holy Communion for him.

They also prescribed for themselves a prudent and praiseworthy distribution of time, to spend the day better. That is, they decided by common agreement that they would rise at a set hour, after taking sufficient rest; that every day they would make at least half an hour of mental prayer; that they would celebrate holy Mass and afterwards read a chapter of the New Testament on their knees, with head uncovered, accompanying this reading with three interior acts: first, to adore the truths contained in the chapter read; second, to enter into the sentiment of those same truths; and third, to resolve to practice what they teach. Lastly, they decided that they would apply themselves to the study suited to their condition; that before dinner they would give themselves to a short interior recollection, or make a brief particular examen; that after dinner, or in the afternoon, they would read some spiritual book; and the rest of the time they would spend either in study or in other exercises suited to their state.

This, in substance, is the rule of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, which was kept with all scrupulousness. When these conferences began, few ecclesiastics attended them; but soon their number grew so much that in a short time some two hundred and thirty were meeting at the conferences in Paris, most of them doctors of the Sorbonne and men of the first rank, both by birth and by talent. Hence a great number of

archbishops, bishops, vicars general, archdeacons, canons and parish priests came out of those conferences and fed the flock of Our Lord Jesus Christ with great fervor in their dioceses and churches. So it came about that the flower of the clergy in virtue and learning were the ones who made up the conferences, not only in Paris, where they began, but also in the other dioceses to which they quickly spread. God alone knows and can know the good the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul have done, are doing and will do.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM, ET BEATAE MARIAE SEMPER VIRGINIS HONOREM. AMEN. \[To the greater glory of God, and the honor of the Blessed Mary ever Virgin. Amen.\]

Regulations for the Literary Conferences of the Clergy

Great are the benefits that come from the literary Conferences of the Clergy; everyone agrees on this. Reason dictates it and experience is proving it. If soldiers, said a very zealous priest, hold their drills, assemblies, rehearsals and mock battles, why should not we, who are soldiers of the Church militant, who must always be fighting the enemies of the soul, the world, the devil and the flesh, with the sword of knowledge, why should not we too have our rehearsals, our exercises and conferences? These and other reflections made by several priests have moved them to undertake the Conferences, and they have begged me to give them in writing the rules by which they should be governed, so as to keep order and advance more and more in their undertaking. I have very gladly agreed, both to satisfy their noble aims and because of the desire I have always had, and have, that the clergy should advance in the sciences. One of the most suitable means of advancing is without doubt the conferences, as I know from some years of experience.

Regulations

Chapter 1. In every city, town, village and place where two or more priests can meet, conferences may be held.

Ch. 2. Those who attend them must be priests, or at least in sacred orders.

Ch. 3. These conferences will be held once each week, on Thursday if possible, or on the day the director of the conference appoints. Care will be taken that they are always on the same day, unless that day should be a feast or otherwise occupied, in which case it will be held on another day of the same week.

Ch. 4. The director or president will be the worthiest priest, or the one the superior appoints, or whom they themselves elect, according to circumstances.

Ch. 5. The director will choose a secretary who, besides being intelligent, has a clear and sonorous voice, so that all who attend may hear him well.

Ch. 6. The director will set the hour and decide the place where the conferences are to be held.

Ch. 7. For the present the Conferences will cover only ascetical theology, liturgy, and sacred moral theology.

Ch. 8. The first Thursday of each month will be on ascetical theology, the second on liturgy, and the rest on moral theology. In time they may also be on dogmatic theology, sacred Scripture, canon law, history, etc.

Ch. 9. All conferences will begin in this way. When the members are gathered at the appointed hour and place, all will kneel, and the director will begin with the antiphon, versicles and collect of the Holy Spirit, then praying three Hail Marys. When the conference is over, three Hail Marys will be prayed again.

Ch. 10. For the conference on ascetical theology, which will be the first of each month, the secretary will read the book the director appoints. This may be the *Crisol de sacerdotes* \[*Crucible of Priests*\] or the *Selva* of St. Liguori,[1] or another like them. The reading will last about twenty minutes. Then, for the same length of time, one of the meditations suited to the priestly state will be read; for this they may use the *Manual of Pious Meditations* of the House of the Mission, the little book entitled *Jesus to the Heart of the Priest*, or

another. Finally, for the same length of time, Scaramelli[2] will be read, or another author who, like him, treats of the virtues. When the reading is over, the director will put cases bearing on the subject; or else the others will put their doubts, or whatever they think it fitting to confer on concerning the virtue, point or subject that has been read.

Ch. 11. The second conference of each month will be on liturgy. It begins in the same way as the first. Then the secretary will read the book entitled *Sala, on the Rubrics*, or the Ritual, etc. While the reading lasts, the director may interrupt it if he sees that it would be good to draw the attention of those present to some point worthy of it, or if he sees that some special observation needs to be made on what is being read. When the reading is over, which will last about three quarters of an hour, they will pass to practice. The director will put practical cases, or make observations and ask questions, or hold rehearsals of the celebration of Mass, the administration of the sacraments, etc., according to what the reading has been.

Ch. 12. The other conferences of the month will be on moral theology, always beginning in the same way. Then the secretary will read the textbook author the director appoints. The reading, which may be Lárraga, Boit, etc., will also last three quarters of an hour, the director meanwhile making his observations if he thinks fit; and the remaining time will be spent on practical cases or on observations he will make himself, or the others present will make. In this way those present do not grow tired, and they advance more by conferring together than by having one of them give a long and brilliant dissertation, as experience shows.

Ch. 13. All who attend must be punctual at the appointed hour, for those who arrive late, and those who leave before the exercise is over, do two harms at once: they do not profit themselves, and they hinder the others.

Ch. 14. In these conferences passion must never, ever be allowed any part. Only instruction, edification and charity are to have entry into them. Therefore, when one speaks, all the rest must listen, and the president will never, ever allow two to speak at once. If what the speaker says does not seem right to someone, he will ask permission to give his opinion, and not say it privately to the man beside him. The president will watch that no one falls into this fault of talking with those at one's side, a fault easily committed and very harmful. The president will also see to it that all, or most, of the conference can give their opinion, and not one alone, for those who talk most are not always those who judge best. There are some dumb oxen, like St. Thomas \[Aquinas, nicknamed "the dumb ox" by his fellow students\], who speak little and understand much and well, and it would be a pity not to give room to words full of wisdom because the useless words of the talker take up the time.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM, ET BEATAE MARIAE SEMPER VIRGINIS HONOREM. AMEN.

Regulations for the Spiritual Conferences of the Clergy

Chapter I. Of the Object and Members of the Conferences

Article 1. These conferences, under the invocation of the glorious St. Vincent de Paul and of St. Michael, have as their object the greater honor and glory of God and of the most sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, the perfection and salvation of the members, and the salvation of their neighbors.

Art. 2. These conferences will be made up of priests and of those in sacred orders, and they will be the most virtuous and zealous among the clergy, who continually aspire to perfection, according to the counsel of Jesus Christ: *Estote perfecti, sicut Pater vester caelestis perfectus est* \[Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect\].[1]

Art. 3. Associations of thirteen will be formed, a president and twelve members, in memory of Jesus and the twelve Apostles. One that reaches this number will be called a complete association, and one that does not, an incomplete association. Two members will be enough to begin an incomplete association.

Art. 4. In each association there will be a president, a vice-president and a secretary, who will be elected by the members themselves by majority vote.

Art. 5. In the elections or votes, care must be taken that the president and vice-president are men who are learned, prudent and zealous. Once named, they will not be allowed to resign. Care will also be taken, in naming the secretary, that the choice falls on a person with a loud, clear voice, so that he may be heard in the readings he will have to do.

Art. 6. When two or more associations have been organized, there will be a director, named by the presidents alone. He will watch over the presidents and associations, seeking their preservation, progress and perfection, and for this he will use all the means his prudence, charity and zeal suggest.

Art. 7. When there are many associations in a large town, they may meet in the same conferences.

Chapter II. Of the Duties of the Members

Article 1. Each member will make the spiritual exercises each year, either with the others or alone, as opportunity allows.

Art. 2. Each month he will have a day of greater recollection, and on this day he will read the resolutions he wrote during the spiritual exercises.

Art. 3. Each week he will go to confession at least once \[*se reconciliará*, literally "will be reconciled," the usual term for a short confession\], and will attend the conferences.

Art. 4. Each day he will devoutly pray the Divine Office.

He will devoutly celebrate holy Mass, taking no less than twenty-five minutes and no more than thirty, preparing beforehand and giving thanks afterwards.

He will make at least half an hour of mental prayer, using the *Meditations* of Fr. Luis de la Puente,[2] or of another commendable author.

Each day he will read at least one chapter of the *Spiritual Exercises* of Rodríguez,[3] or of another spiritual book.

Each day he will read four chapters of the Holy Bible, two in the morning and two in the afternoon, so as to be able to read it all through each year.

The rest of the day he will spend in carrying out his sacred ministry and in study, thus avoiding idleness, which every good priest must always flee.

Each day in the morning he will make the offering of his works to the Lord, and at midday and at night he will make the examen.

He will always wear the cassock \[*hábitos talares*, ankle-length clerical dress\], and will walk with modesty and gravity.

When passing through the streets and squares, he will speak very little, even with his companion. He will not be quick to let his eyes wander. He will keep circumspection, always walking in the presence of God and making frequent ejaculatory prayers.

With all his heart he will love God, keeping his holy law and the evangelical counsels.

He will have great devotion to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. He will recall his most holy passion, and every day he will make the visit to the Most Blessed Sacrament.

He will have much devotion to the most chaste Heart of Mary; and he will be devoted not only to Mary, but also to St. Joseph, to St. Vincent, to the saint of his name, and to the holy Angels, especially St. Michael,

praying for this every day a part of the Rosary and other prayers.

He will also see to it, as far as he can, that the sacred vestments are clean and the church well kept, and in it he will always keep silence and devotion.

He will pray for the dead and, as far as he can, give alms to the poor \[*los pobrecitos*, an affectionate diminutive: "the poor little ones"\].

With all possible zeal he will seek the salvation of his neighbors, and so he will be a lover of catechizing, preaching, hearing confessions and administering the other sacraments.

Finally, he will always be ready and prepared to go wherever he is sent, promptly and gladly.

Chapter III. Subject Matter of the Conferences

Article 1. Every eight days a conference will be held, on Tuesday of each week. It is left to the prudence of the president to set the hour, and to increase the number of conferences in each association according to the need for them and the members' opportunity to attend.

Art. 2. The conference will begin with the antiphon, versicles and collect of the Holy Spirit; three Hail Marys will be prayed to the Most Holy Virgin, and an Our Father to St. Michael and St. Vincent.

Art. 3. Each conference will have two parts. The first will be spiritual and will look to the individual perfection of each member; the second, to the perfect carrying out of the sacred ministry for the greater glory of God and the salvation of neighbors.

Art. 4. In each conference the first thing done at the beginning will be to give an account of how the respective duties and the tasks given for those days have been fulfilled. Then the one appointed will treat of the virtue assigned to him at the previous conference. The president will confirm what has been explained or read, or exhort to its practice; and finally the tasks will be assigned until the next conference, naming the virtue to be treated and who is to present it. For this he will give him the page of the *Manual of Pious Meditations*, and it will be enough for him to read that meditation. To the others he will say what they are to do, where and how.

Art. 5. This first part, in which the virtue is treated, will be common to all the conferences. But the second, which will deal with the ministry, will be divided into two parts: rubrics and moral theology. The first two conferences will be on the rubrics of the Office and of the Mass, and the rest of the month on moral theology.

Art. 6. In the conference on rubrics they will use the book of Don Bernardo Sala for low and solemn Mass,[4] going on to practice. When some extraordinary or little-used function is approaching, it will be rehearsed beforehand so that it goes well. For if people in the world rehearse their plays, why should we not rehearse those functions in which we are a spectacle to the world, to Angels and to men?

Art. 7. It would be very good to arrange to have some musicians devoted exclusively to the functions of the church, who would never play in theaters, dances or other profane amusements. They should be spiritual men; their compositions should be entirely sacred and not profane; in church they should keep silence and not leave their place, as some do, during the sermon or another interval. In this there are many abuses to correct. These and other abuses will be discussed in the conferences, and each will propose the means his zeal suggests. It is left to the prudence of the president to choose those most suitable, given the circumstances of the matter, place and time, so that the remedy may not become worse than the disease it seeks to cure.

Art. 8. Besides the Office and the Mass, the holy sacraments will be treated: their necessity and usefulness and the manner of administering them. For this sacred moral theology is needed, and it will be one of the chief subjects of the conferences, the members using Lárraga, Boit, St. Liguori. The president will take care not to weary or overburden the members, so that they always come and attend gladly. The gentlest way that

has been seen and practiced in some places for some years is this: the secretary reads the moral author and all the rest listen. During the reading the president interrupts the reader from time to time and gives a brief explanation when the matter is not very clear, or when it is of importance, or may have particular applications. In this way the reading is more profitable and less heavy. When the set time arrives, the book is closed and reflections and observations are made on it, and practical cases are put: for example, the sacrament of baptism is administered. Confessions are made: for example, one plays the confessor and another the penitent. The one who plays the penitent should be one of the more experienced priests, so that he may present in the conference, aloud, all the states of life and all the things that can occur in each of them, in such a way that all present can hear it, and at the same time observe how the one playing the priest handles it: what questions he asks, what reflections he offers, what penances he imposes. When this practice is over, the president says whether it went well or badly, or where there was a fault, and so all have something to learn.

Held in this way, these conferences are very easy and very profitable, if done well. But it must be pointed out that there is a danger into which one easily falls: soon everyone wants to talk, and in fact each talks with the man beside him. The president will watch closely over this, and so that it never happens or is repeated, he will never allow more than one to speak, giving room for each to express his way of thinking. What has been said of the sacrament of Penance is to be understood of the other sacraments. All of them will be discussed in theory, and all of them will be practiced.

Art. 9. The conferences will also treat of the manner of catechizing and preaching, and for this the *tonos* or "Joseph's coat," as it is commonly called, will be practiced.[5]

Art. 10. Likewise the manner of making mental and vocal prayer and the other exercises of piety will be a subject of the conferences. This is left to the prudence of the president.

Art. 11. When the conference is over, three Hail Marys are prayed to the Most Holy Virgin. If there are tasks to assign, they are assigned and carried out as has been arranged, and an account of their result is given to the president at the next conference, as has been said.

Art. 12. On the first free day of each month, where there are many conferences, all the presidents meet with the director and give an account of their respective conferences.

Art. 13. If the presidents and members of one city wish, they may all meet in one place and form a single gathering, though they will always be organized in thirteens.

Art. 14. The directors in the cities will report every three months to the director general on the state of the conferences, and the director general will give suitable directions according to the needs.

Art. 15. These conferences will serve not only for the splendor of worship and the observance of the sacred rites and ceremonies, but also to form ministers fit to catechize, give missions and give retreats. These will leave themselves to the providence and obedience of their superiors, which is the surest way of bearing fruit.

AD MAJOREM DEI GLORIAM, ET BEATAE MARIAE SEMPER VIRGINIS HONOREM. AMEN.

(These conferences were begun in Madrid on 16 July 1857, with the permission of the Vicar.)

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[6] Spanish edition: *Colaciones*, 2 vols. (1958–1961), ed. Rialp, Madrid.

[7] Lk 14:30.

[8] Lam 4:1.

[9] ALPHONSUS MARY DE LIGUORI, *Selva di materie predicabili* (Bassano 1833), *ex libris*; *Selva de materias predicables*, in *Obras ascéticas* (BAC, Madrid 1954).

[10] SCARAMELLI, GIOVANNI B., *Discernimiento de espíritus*, Madrid 1804; *Directorio ascético*, Madrid 1806, 4 vols.; *Directorio místico*, 1817, 2 vols.

[1] Mt 5:48.

[2] PUENTE, LUIS DE LA, *Meditaciones espirituales* (LR, Barcelona 1856).

[3] RODRÍGUEZ, ALONSO, *Ejercicio de perfección y virtudes cristianas* (LR, Barcelona 1861), 3 vols.

[4] SALA, BERNARDO, *El sacerdote instruido en las ceremonias de la Misa rezada y cantada*, 3rd ed., Barcelona, Herederos de V. Pla, 1857 (full title in note 12).

[5] *Tonos comunes* by Fr. José Xifré: *Prácticas espirituales* (Madrid 1888), pp. 258–264; RIBERA, RAMÓN, *El Novicio Instruido* (Madrid 1931), p. 460.