St. Anthony Mary Claret

SELFISHNESS OVERCOME

El egoísmo vencido

From the Spanish version of the Italian first edition (Rome, 1869)

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
Selfishness Overcome · 3
Prologue · 3

A Brief Account of the Life of St. Peter Nolasco

Chapter I: Of His Birth and of All That Happened Until He Left France · 4
Chapter II: Of St. Peter Nolasco's Journey to Montserrat and to Barcelona, and What He Did There · 7
Chapter III: Of St. Raymond of Peñafort, Confessor of St. Peter Nolasco · 7
Chapter IV: Of the Apparition of the Most Holy Virgin and the Foundation of the Order of la Merced, That Is, of Mercy · 8
Chapter V: Of the Last Years of the Life of St. Peter Nolasco, and of His Death · 10
Chapter VI: Of the Labours Undergone, the Pains Suffered, and the Fruits Obtained by the Religious of Mercy · 11
The Means of Imitating Nolasco's Zeal · 15
Chapter VII: Of the Most Special Providence with Which God Keeps the Church Militant · 15
Chapter VIII: Of the Most Special Providence That God Has over Good Souls · 17
Chapter IX: Of the Zeal We Must Have for the Greater Glory of God and the Good of Our Neighbour · 19
Chapter X: Of the Means We Must Use to Exercise Holy Zeal · 22

About this translation

Translated from *El egoísmo vencido*, first published in Italian as *L'egoismo vinto* (Rome, 1869). Complete but for a final page on the indulgences of the Mercedarian confraternities, which is left out.

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.

Selfishness Overcome

Prologue

Most beloved reader: we find ourselves, unhappily, in an age of selfishness and indifference: of selfishness towards our neighbour and of indifferentism towards God. That is why I have thought that, to preserve you from these two evils, I could offer you no more fitting matter than the life of St. Peter Nolasco.

The selfish man strives with all his strength for independence from every authority, divine and human; he conspires and plots insubordination, rebellion and liberty, as he calls it, which is nothing other than licence to do whatever his whim dictates, never tiring of troubling and vexing his neighbours, his brothers, and even of wanting to make them his slaves. He is extremely ambitious, and, if he can, he usurps and seizes the goods of others, so as to have at his disposal greater means to feed his pride and his sensuality; for sensuality and pride are the two constituents of selfishness, or rather of self-love, the declared enemy of God and of neighbour.

The glorious St. Peter Nolasco, burning with charity and love for God and for his neighbour, stripped himself of all his goods to help his fellow men, and, when all his monetary means were exhausted, he gave himself up to slavery, with all the pains and labours it brings with it, in order to obtain freedom for those who were in harsh and painful captivity.

It will also be a powerful and effective safeguard against indifferentism towards God to contemplate the great love that St. Peter Nolasco had for God and for Most Holy Mary, the fervour and zeal with which he burned in serving them, and the sacrifices to which he submitted so that the Christian slaves should not apostatize from the faith and religion of Christ, which is the only true one and the only one in which there is salvation, being like Noah's ark at the time of the flood, in which the true children of God saved their lives,[1] while those who did not deserve to be admitted into it were left at the mercy of the waters. In a similar way, when one is overtaken by the flood of death, he who is found within the true religion will die in the kiss of the Lord and will be saved, while he who is found outside it will be irremissibly condemned: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who does not believe will be condemned," as the Gospel says.[2]

Besides offering you, friend reader, this model of love of God and of neighbour, I offer you some most powerful means by which you may imitate the zeal of Nolasco, if not by ransoming bodies and souls as he did, at least by freeing from the slavery of sin souls, which are of the very greatest value. Farewell \[*Vale*\].

---

[1] Cf. Gen 7 and 8; Heb 11:7.

[2] Mk 16:16.

A Brief Account of the Life of St. Peter Nolasco

Chapter I: Of His Birth and of All That Happened Until He Left France

God is wonderful in His saints[1] and in all His works, because He disposes all things sweetly, in measure, number and weight;[2] and since He does all things for His greater glory and honour and for our good, He sometimes allows the common and ordinary means to fail, so that the extraordinary and divine means may shine out more clearly. So it happened with the coming into this world of our St. Peter Nolasco, whom divine Providence had forestalled with blessings of sweetness[3] in order to entrust to him in due time the foundation of the sacred Order of Mercy. And so that the harmony between the birth of the Most Holy Virgin and that of her devotee Nolasco might be seen, it was God's disposition that what happened to Mary's parents should happen to his. Their age was very advanced, and much time had passed without their having had any offspring; similar was the sorrow felt by Peter's parents, named William Nolasco and Theodora.[4] Nevertheless, full of confidence, they commended themselves to God by prayer and works of charity, receiving into their house all who passed through those lands on pilgrimage to Santiago in Galicia,[5] so that it may be said that, just as prayers and works of mercy preceded the birth of Most Holy Mary, so also the prayers and works of charity practised by Peter's parents obtained for them from God a son so holy and so inclined to mercy.

This most fortunate child was born on 1 August 1182, the day on which the Church celebrates the feast of the chains of St. Peter, prince of the Apostles, and for this reason he was given the name Peter in baptism;[6] and this was not by chance or by the whim of his parents or godparents, but by an admirable disposition of divine Providence, which willed that he should be called Peter who was to be like the rock on which the Mother of God wished to build her sacred Order of *la Merced*, that is, of mercy. \[*Merced*: "mercy," "favour," also "ransom-grace"; the Order's full name is the Order of Our Lady of Mercy (Mercedarians), and Claret plays on the word throughout.\]

As little Nolasco grew in age, he grew also in grace and wisdom before God and men;[7] and from childhood he became so outstanding and singular in mercy that he could say with holy Job: From infancy mercy grew up with me[8] towards the poor and afflicted, especially towards those who are ashamed to beg, and towards the sick.[9]

Our Peter first saw the light and lived in a place called Recaudo, in the province of Languedoc or Gallia Narbonensis, between Toulouse and Carcassonne. This place was the patrimony of his ancestors, most noble lords of the ancient family of the Nolascos, related to the royal family of France and of Aragon and to the great princes of Europe.[10] When the child Nolasco was born, those lands were infected with the heresy of the Albigensians, for which our child had so great a horror that in his infancy he never let himself be taken in the arms or caressed by any heretic; and if anyone tried, he resisted, and the cries and tears he shed made it plain beyond doubt how much his childish heart abhorred those errors. Moreover, at the age of five he would never sit at a table at which there was any heretic, even a very close relative.[11]

He abhorred not only heresy but also idleness, mother and mistress of all vices; and at the same time he liked to be always busy, making little altars at home; and in church, where he went often,[12] he liked to offer himself to serve Mass and to say his prayers with great devotion and fervour. On returning home he occupied himself with study, to which he was much given and for which he had aptitude and talent.

So great was the fame that our Nolasco won from early youth that Lady Constance, daughter of Louis VIII, king of France, and wife of the Count of Toulouse, uncle of our Saint and brother-in-law of Don Pedro of Aragon, who was the father of Don Jaime called the Conqueror, asked very insistently that young Peter Nolasco should come to Toulouse; and to please this lady they took him there at once; and all who saw him there were captivated by his most beautiful qualities.[13]

The consolation and joy those lords received at seeing and hearing the graces of young Nolasco were completely eclipsed by the dark shadows of his death, which they saw approaching with giant strides. All the remedies his illness required were applied to him, but without result. Nevertheless, the good Theodora, mother of our Peter, full of confidence in God and in the Virgin Mary, sent for the patriarch St. Dominic,[14] who in those days was in that city preaching and defending the Catholic, apostolic, Roman faith against the heresy of the Albigensians, begging him to deign to visit her only son, who was dying. The charitable patriarch at once consented and without loss of time went to the palace; and scarcely had he entered the room in which the sick youth lay than it was seen that each confessed the holiness of the other: for the sick youth gave proof of St. Dominic's holiness by receiving instant healing from him, and St. Dominic, turning to Theodora and to all those present, said with prophetic spirit: "Would that my preaching might do as much good in France as the charity of this Frenchman is to do in Spain, my homeland!"[15]

Once fully recovered, the holy youth felt sorrow, and at the same time joy, on learning that one of the errors of those heretics was against the honour of the Mother of God, Most Holy Mary, for whom he had much affection and devotion; so that, making a banner and placing on it an image of the Queen of the angels, he said he was going to recruit people and form an army of soldiers to fight against the enemies of the Immaculate Virgin.[16]

At the end of February 1207, when young Peter was reaching the age of twenty-four, after a brief and painful illness he lost his beloved father. There was no one who did not feel and weep for the death of so good and so Catholic a father; but the one who felt it and wept for it most was our Peter, because he foresaw the struggle that was being prepared for him. Indeed, once the days of mourning were past, his mother, his relatives and all who had any interest in the matter began to put to Peter the advisability, and even the necessity, of embracing the married state; but as he had no inclination to that state, he at once had recourse to prayer, as was his custom, in order to know the will of God. Placing himself in the presence of God, he meditated on the uncertainty and brevity of the present life, on the rigour of the judgment that awaits us, on the cruelty of the eternal fire with which we are threatened, on the perishableness and brevity of the goods of this earth, on the cares and dangers that riches bring with them, on the inconstancy and frailty of human beauty, on the vanity and nothingness of the glory of this world compared with the glory that God has prepared in heaven for whoever has served Him faithfully;[17] and considering, finally, the beauty of the virtue of chastity, an incomparable virtue that makes us superior to the angels and brings us close to God, so much so that Jesus and Mary love and single out among their devotees those who keep their virginity and consecrate it to them, our Nolasco at once resolved to leave everything and devote himself completely to the service of God and of Most Holy Mary.

Having made this resolution, with his mother's permission he went to the city of Carcassonne to study philosophy and civil and canon law. Thanks to his talent, his application and his virtue, he made such progress that he was the admiration of his teachers and fellow students. It greatly pleased God and His most holy Mother that the study and application he put into it were not out of vanity or for other earthly ends, as unfortunately some young men do, but solely to please the Lord and to serve Him with greater perfection and for the good of souls.[18]

He did not separate from his study his devotions and the frequent reception of the holy sacraments of penance and communion, which he approached with much devotion, not out of routine, but each time with renewed zeal and fervour; and being, moreover, most devoted to Most Holy Mary, as we have indicated, he imitated the beloved disciple St. John in chastity and in love, in order to deserve, like him, the title of son of the Virgin Mother.[19] And since, moreover, the love of God is united to the love of neighbour,[20] our Peter did all the good he could to his fellow men: he visited them, helped them and consoled them, both in the hospitals and in private houses.[21]

He was already past thirty when God called Peter's mother to Himself; and seeing himself wholly an orphan, he chose Jesus for his father and Mary for his mother, making the poor of Jesus Christ heirs of the goods his late parents had left him.[22]

On the occasion of his mother's death he returned to his father's house to see to his own affairs; meanwhile he fell ill, and made a vow to go and visit the wonder-working image of Mary at the monastery of Montserrat, in Catalonia.

One day our holy young man was meditating on how hard it is for the rich to be saved,[23] and on how Jesus Christ chose to be poor and chose poor people as His companions and apostles,[24] and told a young man who had always kept the divine law that, if he wished to be perfect, he should sell his goods, distribute them to the poor, and then follow Him;[25] and as if this had been written in the Gospel for Peter, while he was meditating on it he decided to put it into practice at once.[26] All his desires were to please God and serve Him; and as he examined within himself in what thing and in what place he could serve Him best, one day he seemed to hear a voice that said to him, as to Abraham: "Go forth from your land and from your kindred (many of whom had already been infected with the heresy of the Albigensians)... and come; I will show you what you must do, and I will make you the head of many people, I will bless you and make your name great."[27] Guided by this inspiration, he set out at once for Catalonia in order to fulfil the vow he had made to visit the sacred image of Montserrat.[28]

---

[1] Ps 67:36 (Vulgate).

[2] Wis 11:21.

[3] Cf. Ps 21:4 \[Vulgate 20:4\].

[4] Cf. Colombo, F., *Vida del gloriosísimo patriarca y padre San Pedro Nolasco* (Madrid 1674) p. 4; Ribadeneira, P. de, *Flos sanctorum* (Madrid 1761) vol. 1 p. 305.

[5] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., p. 7; Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 305.

[6] Cf. *Año cristiano* \[LR, Barcelona 1853\] p. 449.

[7] Cf. Lk 2:40.

[8] Job 31:18.

[9] Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 306.

[10] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., pp. 4–5; Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 305.

[11] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., p. 21; Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 306.

[12] Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 307.

[13] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., p. 30; Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 307.

[14] Cf. Garganta, J. M., *Guzmán, Domingo de*: DHEE II pp. 1070–1072.

[15] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., pp. 81–82; Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 311.

[16] Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 306.

[17] Cf. Rom 8:18; 2 Cor 4:17. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 71, 73–76, 72.

[18] *Aut.* n. 87.

[19] *Aut.* n. 686.

[20] Cf. Mt 22:37–40; Mk 12:30–33; Lk 10:27.

[21] Cf. *Aut.* n. 110. Cf. *Aut.* n. 165. Cf. *Aut.* n. 571. Cf. *Aut.* n. 637.

[22] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., pp. 35–36; Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 308.

[23] Cf. Mt 19:23; Mk 10:25; Lk 18:25.

[24] Cf. Mt 8:20; Lk 9:58.

[25] Cf. Mt 19:16–22; Mk 10:17–22; Lk 18:18–23; Zumel, F., *De initio ac fundatione Sacri Ordinis B. Mariae de Mercede Redemptionis captivorum* (Salamanca 1588) p. 4.

[26] Cf. Zumel, F., *De vitis Patrum* (Salamanca 1588) p. 4.

[27] Gen 12:1–2. Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 308.

[28] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., p. 46; Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 308.

Chapter II: Of St. Peter Nolasco's Journey to Montserrat and to Barcelona, and What He Did There

Our Saint left France and made for the sanctuary and monastery of Montserrat. When he arrived there he made his devotions with the greatest fervour, and, desiring to remain there all his life in homage to Most Holy Mary, he thought of taking up lodging in one of the hermitages that then existed on that mountain;[1] but, not knowing whether this was the will of God, he began to pray with the words of St. Paul: *Domine, quid me vis facere?* "Lord, what do You want me to do?"[2] God made known to him that it was His wish that he should go to Barcelona, and he obeyed instantly.[3]

Being in Barcelona, he drew up a plan of life for himself, which he observed with the greatest possible punctuality. Every day he had spiritual reading and mental and vocal prayer, attended holy Mass, frequented the sacraments of penance and communion, and devoted himself to the works of mercy, helping especially nobles who had fallen into poverty, maidens and women who were in danger of losing their chastity, and everyone according as need required.[4]

When the citizens of Barcelona saw a young stranger, noble and rich, so devout and charitable, great curiosity arose in many, and some young men joined him to practise those works of piety and mercy with him. The Saint received them gladly, and in consequence founded a confraternity whose purpose was to help the poor and to visit, console and assist the sick and the imprisoned; and since in those unhappy times Spain was dominated by the Moors, cruel barbarians who seized Christians and made them slaves, the holy Nolasco and his companions devoted themselves to ransoming them. In those days St. Raymond of Peñafort came from Bologna to Barcelona, and since he enjoyed a great reputation for holiness and learning, Nolasco at once chose him as confessor and spiritual director; King Don Jaime did the same, and their souls, directed by so prudent a confessor, made great progress in virtue.[5]

---

[1] Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 308.

[2] Acts 9:6.

[3] Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 309.

[4] Cf. *Aut.* nn. 85–87.

[5] Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 312.

Chapter III: Of St. Raymond of Peñafort, Confessor of St. Peter Nolasco

St. Raymond of Peñafort was a native of Barcelona and was born in the year 1175; from early youth he devoted himself to the study of letters and made such progress in them that at the age of twenty he was already a professor.[1] After teaching for some time, seeing himself young and endowed with great qualities, in order to trade with the talent God had entrusted to him,[2] he went to Bologna to devote himself to the study of civil and canon law, and made such progress that he was honoured with the title of doctor; and freely, without any self-interest, he taught both laws to the great applause and admiration of all.

At that time Don Berenguer Palou, bishop of Barcelona, who had been in Rome, was returning to his diocese; and as the patriarch St. Dominic was in Bologna, he thought of passing through that city and asked Guzmán for some religious of his Order, who were granted to him at once; and among them, with great entreaties, he succeeded in taking with him also the celebrated saint of Peñafort, to whom he intended to give a vacant canonry in his cathedral, foreseeing the great acquisition he had made in so holy and so learned a man.

They all arrived in Barcelona at the beginning of the year 1218, and the bishop at once gave Peñafort the canonry mentioned. The following year the Dominican religious arrived, and in the year 1222 they began to build the convent that was called Santa Catalina, a convent of religious eminent in all virtues and sciences, as

Cardinal Rosellus left in writing in Rome,[3] and which was destroyed by the revolutionaries in 1835. The friendship the Dominican Fathers had formed with St. Raymond during the journey and in Barcelona never weakened, but on the contrary became so intimate and affectionate that Peñafort decided to take the habit of the same Order and made his solemn profession in it on Good Friday of the year 1222;[4] in this religious Order he persevered until death, and his body was venerated and given honour in the convent of Santa Catalina.

---

[1] Cf. García y García, A., *Peñafort, Raimundo de*: DHEE vol. 3 pp. 1958–1959. On St. Raymond's part in the foundation of the Order of Mercy cf. Gazulla, F., o.c., vol. 1 pp. 146–176.

[2] Cf. Mt 25:14–23; Lk 19:11–19.

[3] Nicolás Rossell (Palma de Mallorca 1314 – ibid., 1362). Cf. Galmés, L., *Rosell, Nicolás*: DHEE III p. 2111. A fuller biography in Moroni, G., *Dizionario di erudizione storico-ecclesiastica* (Venice 1852) vol. 59 pp. 159–160.

[4] Cf. Vargas, B. de, o.c., p. 40; Colombo, F., *Vida del gloriosísimo patriarca y padre San Pedro Nolasco* (Madrid 1774) p. 195.

Chapter IV: Of the Apparition of the Most Holy Virgin and the Foundation of the Order of la Merced, That Is, of Mercy

On 1 August 1218,[1] the day on which the Church celebrates the feast of the sacred bonds or chains with which the prince of the apostles was bound, which are venerated in the Eudoxian basilica, St. Peter Nolasco was at night in most fervent prayer. On the one hand he was meditating on the danger to which one is exposed by living in the midst of the business of the world, and, desiring to make sure of his eternal salvation, he was considering whether it would not be better to go off to a desert to lead a solitary life, to which he had always had a great inclination. On the other hand, contemplating the pains and torments suffered by the poor Christian slaves and the great danger they were in of apostatizing from the Catholic faith, a thought that continually wounded his pious and charitable heart, he was examining how he could remedy so great a need, and not only in the present, but also how to perpetuate this same remedy in the Church. While he was occupied with such thoughts, behold, there appeared to him in a clear vision the Blessed Virgin Mary, clothed all in white, most beautiful, resplendent, accompanied by angels and other saints of heaven, filling with extraordinary light and glory the place where Nolasco was praying; and after assuring him that she was the Mother of the divine Redeemer of the world, with sweet and at the same time grave words she commanded him not to go off to live in solitude; and she added that it would be supremely pleasing to her divine Son and to herself if an order were instituted and founded whose religious would occupy and devote themselves chiefly to redeeming and ransoming Christian slaves from the power of the Moors and the infidels. She made known to him, moreover, that it was her will that the religious of that Order should wear a white habit, like the one the Queen of the angels was wearing at that moment, in sign and honour of her purity, and that he should be the first to wear that habit, because he was to be the father and superior of all the others, choosing him as shepherd of the whole religious family.[2]

The same night the Most Holy Virgin appeared to King Don Jaime and to Don Raymond of Peñafort, who was also confessor of that sovereign, and forewarned them and indicated to them the foundation of this new Order. As soon as day broke, our Nolasco flew to consult his confessor about what had happened, and the latter answered that, though he was a miserable sinner, the same thing had happened to him too; meanwhile King Don Jaime sent for St. Raymond to tell him of the same message received from the Mother of God.[3] The three, then, being together, told one another what had happened to them, and, recognizing that this was the will of God and of Most Holy Mary, they at once communicated it to the Most Illustrious Lord Don Berenguer Palou, bishop of the diocese; and all with unanimous consent resolved to make public that by order of heaven a new religious Order was being founded for the redemption of Christian slaves, and they determined that the institution of this sacred Order should take place on 10 August, the day dedicated to the martyr St. Lawrence.[4] King Don Jaime sent an invitation for this purpose to all the prelates, to the Council

\[*la Junta*\] and to all the nobility, and to as many others as possible; and at this news the hearts of all were filled with unspeakable joy. Everything was prepared with royal magnificence.

When the longed-for day arrived, at the appointed hour the king came out of the palace with all possible pomp and majesty, accompanied by the prelates and by the Catalan and Aragonese nobility, with the devout Nolasco at his side; and his companions followed close behind amid a great multitude, for whole towns had come from everywhere, moved by such great news. When this noble and joyful procession reached the cathedral church, it was received by the bishop in pontifical vestments, by the canons and by the rest of the clergy. Then the *Te Deum* was sung; the bishop celebrated a most solemn pontifical Mass, and when the Gospel was finished the canon Peñafort went up into the pulpit and explained the purpose of that solemnity, the will and command of Most Holy Mary, and the revelation she had made to Nolasco, to King Don Jaime and to himself; and he explained it all with such vividness, unction and apostolic zeal that the congregation shed tears of joy and tenderness.[5]

After the offertory the king came down from the throne and, accompanied by the prelates and his retinue, bringing with him the zealous Nolasco with thirteen of his companions, approached the altar and in a clear and intelligible voice addressed the celebrating bishop, saying that it was his will that the divine will, made known through the Queen of heaven and earth, Most Holy Mary, should be fulfilled and carried out: that a new military Order should be founded, whose religious were to occupy themselves with the redemption of Christian slaves in the manner set out in the eloquent discourse of his confessor, Raymond of Peñafort; that this Order should be made up of clerics devoted to the choir and the altar, and of laymen to fight against the Moors and the Saracens, but all of them, the ones as much as the others, consecrated to the redemption of Christian slaves;[6] that this Order would always be under his protection and that of his successors; and, finally, that the founder and first religious to wear the habit, as head, father and superior of all the rest, should be his friend and counsellor Peter Nolasco, as the Virgin Mary herself had commanded; and that he was addressing the bishop so that, by interposing his authority, he might concur with him in carrying out that divine inspiration.

When King Don Jaime's moving words were finished, St. Raymond took the garment, that is, the military gown, and handed it to the sovereign, who, while Nolasco remained devoutly kneeling, put it on him; and immediately the three invested him with the scapular in this way: the bishop and the king held the front part of the scapular, and St. Raymond held it by the part that falls down the back. Finally, the king alone handed him the sword and girded him with it.

Clothed in this way, the most devout Peter Nolasco, as superior of the Order, by himself gave the habit to the thirteen companions of his religious Order, whom he had already admitted.

Finally, the pious sovereign, desiring that this new and sacred military Order should bear a distinctive sign, because of the part he had had in its foundation and to indicate the protection it was always to enjoy from him and his successors, "willed that the religious should wear on their breast, hanging from the lower part of the scapular, the royal arms or shield itself, which is formed by four red bars on a field of gold, and, with the bishop's consent, the white cross on a red field, which is the sign and emblem of that cathedral; and this not only to complete the shield, but also as a reminder that the tender and holy ceremony mentioned had taken place in the cathedral of Barcelona."[7] And, wishing to give a mystical meaning to this shield, we shall say to these religious that the cross recalls the words of the Apostle: "But far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I to the world";[8] and the four bars of the shield serve to remind them of the four vows by which they are consecrated to God: for, besides the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience made in profession on giving oneself to God, as is practised in the other orders, in this Order of Mercy the fourth vow is made, to remain as a hostage in the power of the pagans, if necessary, in order to free Christian slaves who are in danger of apostatizing from the true faith.

This new religious Order was approved by Pope Honorius III[9] and confirmed by Pope Gregory IX on 17 January 1235.

---

[1] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., pp. 136–145.

[2] Cf. Zumel, F., *De initio et fundatione...* p. 4.9 \[sic\]; id., *De vitis Patrum...* (Salamanca 1588) p. 68; Ribera, M. M., o.c., pp. 4–6.

[3] Cf. Zumel, F., *De initio et fundatione...* pp. 6–7.

[4] Cf. Zumel, F., *De vitis Patrum...* p. 69.

[5] Cf. Zumel, F., *De initio et fundatione...* pp. 7–8; Colombo, F., o.c., p. 151.

[6] Cf. Zumel, F., *De initio et fundatione...* p. 20.

[7] Cf. Zumel, F., *De initio et fundatione...* pp. 8–9.

[8] Gal 6:14.

[9] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., p. 156.

Chapter V: Of the Last Years of the Life of St. Peter Nolasco, and of His Death

St. Peter Nolasco, by his example, by familiar conversations, and by the conferences and sermons he gave in various parts of Spain, through which he always travelled on foot, full of charity and zeal for the greater glory of God and the good of souls, converted many Christian sinners and many infidels. His charity was so great and fervent that it was not limited only to souls, but extended also to the good of bodies: he helped the poor and visited the sick and the imprisoned, consoling and instructing all so that they might gain merit for their souls. But those who most touched his charitable heart were the poor Christian slaves; the lot of those unhappy people was such that it made the great Bossuet exclaim: "If there is anything in the world, any servitude capable of representing before our eyes the extreme misery of man's horrible captivity under the tyranny of the demons, it is the state of a Christian captive under the tyranny of the Mohammedans; for body and soul suffer equal violence there, and the salvation of the soul is in no less danger than life itself."[1]

Contemplating the pains suffered and the dangers run by the unhappy Christian slaves, the pious Nolasco thought of relieving and ransoming them. The first redemption he carried out was in the year 1213, in Valencia, and he did it with his own money, ransoming 300.[2] The second took place the following year, also in Valencia, and he ransomed another 300. When the money was exhausted he presented himself to Don Alfonso, king of Castile, and to other grandees of Spain, and having obtained the means he returned to Valencia and ransomed more than 300; and this was the third redemption he carried out.[3]

A fourth redemption was being prepared, and for this he went again to Valencia with his companion Don Guillermo Bas,[4] and they ransomed many others; but Nolasco, seeing that others were in great danger and having no more money, thought of selling himself as a slave to free them. He sent Bas to Barcelona with 300 ransomed captives and he himself remained in captivity.[5] When news of this heroic act of our Nolasco reached the king, he at once sent money to ransom him, and once free he returned to Barcelona in the year 1217. A few days after his return he organized the fifth redemption, and, making another journey to Valencia, he succeeded in ransoming another 320 slaves. He went afterwards to the Balearic Islands,[6] and with the money received from Doña Berenguela, queen of Castile, he freed another 300; and this was the sixth redemption. Besides these he carried out two others, and he did them all with his own money and with the alms he received from the faithful, so that in those first years he ransomed 2,000 Christian slaves, as is said in the *Bullarium*.[7]

Once the religious Order of Mercy had been erected, he was its superior and governed it for thirty-one years, and in this time more than 5,104 slaves were redeemed, so that, adding those he had ransomed earlier and many others of whom no count was kept, it may be said that the ransomed exceed the number of 8,000. In Algiers, Nolasco himself sold himself as a slave to free others, and during his captivity he endured many labours and suffered unspeakably; and, ransomed at last, he arrived at the port of Valencia in a small old

boat.[8]

While he was superior of the Order he founded many convents in Spain and in France, leaving in them many men eminent in virtue and learning; and having renounced the generalate, he was succeeded by Fr. Guillermo Bas, and he himself withdrew to lead a contemplative life. And just as Moses, while in retreat and prayer, won the victory while Joshua and the army were fighting,[9] so it happened in the Order of Mercy: while Brother Guillermo and the other religious were fighting vices and the enemies of the religion of Jesus Christ, St. Peter Nolasco remained in prayer; and that is why they converted so many souls and ransomed a great number of slaves, and suffered with much joy and patience difficulties and pains, even to martyrdom.

St. Peter was a burning furnace of the fire of charity, and he spread an admirable splendour by the example of humility, patience, meekness, chastity and other virtues. Heaven had enriched him with the gift of prophecy; the Most Holy Virgin and his guardian angel appeared to him many times; and finally, full of God and of merits, seeing his death approaching, having received the last sacraments and taken leave of the religious, his sons, to whom he recommended charity among themselves and towards the poor slaves whom he so loved, he intoned the psalm *Confitebor tibi*,[10] and on reaching the verse *Redemptionem misit Dominus populo suo*[11] he gave up his soul into the arms of the Lord, on Christmas night of the year 1256.[12]

---

[1] *Oeuvres complètes de Bossuet* \[Paris, 2nd ed. 1887\] vol. 7 p. 222.

[2] Cf. Zumel, F., *De vitis Patrum*... p. 65; Colombo, F., o.c., p. 95.

[3] Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., pp. 309–310.

[4] Guede, L., *La Merced* \[Málaga, 2nd ed. 1977\] p. 34.

[5] Cf. Ribadeneira, P. de, o.c., p. 310.

[6] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., pp. 130–131.

[7] Cf. Linás, J., *Bullarium caelestis ac regalis Ordinis B. Mariae Virginis de Mercede Redemptionis captivorum* (Barcinone \[Barcelona\] 1696) p. 2.

[8] Cf. Colombo, F., o.c., pp. 208–211.

[9] Cf. Ex 17:11–13.

[10] "I will praise you" (Ps 110:1, Vulgate).

[11] Ps 110:9, Vulgate.

[12] Cf. Zumel, F., *De initio et fundatione*... p. 22. Cf. Serratosa, R., *Muerte del santo patriarca*: Estudios 12 \[1956\] 205–222.

Chapter VI: Of the Labours Undergone, the Pains Suffered, and the Fruits Obtained by the Religious of Mercy

God our Lord and the Most Holy Virgin arranged that St. Peter Nolasco should have as companions and sons of the Order of Mercy men full of the Holy Spirit,[1] full of zeal and charity, ready to sacrifice their freedom and their life for their neighbours and brothers, in imitation of Jesus Christ, our divine Redeemer. I could weave a history of very many who suffered terrible torments, and even death, for love of God and of neighbour; but for fear of being too long, and so going beyond the limits of brevity I have set myself, I shall confine myself to citing only a few as argument and proof of this truth.

The protomartyr of the Order of Mercy was the Venerable Ramón de Blanes, a Catalan of the Barcelona convent, who, sent to Granada to redeem slaves, was seized, robbed and martyred for the faith of Jesus Christ.

St. Serapion, an Englishman, very zealous, took the habit of Mercy in the Barcelona convent, and in one year carried out two redemptions: one in Murcia, where he ransomed 98 slaves, and another in Algiers, where he and his companion, Brother Berengar, ransomed 87, who were taken to Spain by the latter; and the money having run out, Serapion remained there as a hostage. Seeing those unfortunate people sunk in errors and vices, he could not keep silent, and by the exhortations he gave them and the familiar conversations he had

with them he converted many and regenerated them with the waters of baptism. When that tyrant learned of it, he ordered him to be crucified, his entrails torn out, his body cut in pieces, and finally his head cut off; and he expired in the midst of these torments, full of merits and of joy, in the year 1240.

St. Raymond Nonnatus, of Catalonia, carried out three redemptions: in Valencia, in Algiers and in Tunis; and finally, when the money ran out, he himself remained as a hostage. During his stay in those unhappy regions he preached to, exhorted and persuaded those unfortunate people; but the tyrant ill-treated him and made him suffer greatly, especially by piercing his lips and putting a padlock on them so that he could not speak about religion, for he abhorred the religion of Mohammed and praised that of Jesus Christ; and so that he should not die of hunger and could take some food, every three days he had the padlock removed from Nonnatus, and with this taking off and putting on he suffered very great pain. Finally he was ransomed and returned to Spain, and the supreme pontiff Gregory IX named him a cardinal of the holy Church; at last he fell ill, and before dying he received holy viaticum from the hand of the angels, and expired with the happy death of the saints, which is precious in the sight of the Lord.[2]

St. Peter Paschal, a native of Valencia, fellow student of St. Thomas Aquinas and of St. Bonaventure in Paris, a great theologian, a celebrated preacher and canon of the cathedral of Valencia, entered the sacred Order of Mercy in the year 1249, where he taught theology for thirty years. He was auxiliary bishop of the archdiocese of Toledo, grand chancellor of Castile and, finally, bishop of Jaén. He founded many colleges in Spain and in France. Visiting his diocese one day, he was captured by the Moors of Granada; he remained in that city as a slave for five years, and it was his own will to stay there so long in order to be able to console and encourage to persevere in the faith of Jesus Christ a great number of Christian slaves who were there. He was much loved by the cathedral chapter of his diocese of Jaén, which several times sent him money for his ransom; but he, foreseeing the imminent danger of apostasy in which some were, especially children and women, because of the wickedness of their masters, preferred to ransom the others rather than ransom himself, despite the pains he was suffering. The Christian boys who were there as slaves served his Mass, and he instructed and taught them with much diligence and self-denial.

One day he found himself without any boy to serve his Mass, because he had ransomed them all; yet he saw a stranger present himself, who told him he would very gladly serve his Mass, and afterwards said to him:

"Peter, I am Jesus" (and as He spoke He showed him the wounds of His hands, His feet and His side); "as a reward for having ransomed so many children in My name and for love of Me, I have made Myself your slave, and that is why I have come in the form of a child to help you in the celebration of the sacrifice of the altar."

Bishop Paschal burned continually in the flame of holy zeal, and by word and by writing he encouraged the Christians to patience and perseverance. He reminded them of the pains and sorrows of Jesus, of the martyrs and of the confessors, and of the glory of heaven prepared for them, telling them that all the pains of this world are nothing in comparison with the eternal happiness the Lord would give them in heaven;[3] that the pleasures of this world are passing and momentary, while the joys up above are eternal. He converted many Moors, and even Jews; he wrote and published many little works for this purpose, and, among others, he wrote one against the false sect of Mohammed; for this he was ill-treated by the Moors, and one day, while he was celebrating holy Mass, they cut off his head, in 1300, at the age of seventy-three. He left in writing, with great force of argument, that Most Holy Mary was conceived without stain of original sin, and it is even said that he had a revelation about this mystery.

St. Peter Armengol, also a Catalan, son of the most noble family of the counts of Urgell, who in his youth, belonging to a rich family, let himself be dominated by his passions and became unruly and very wicked; but God, in His infinite mercy, touched his heart and converted him by means of Most Holy Mary, Mother of sinners who desire to amend. Armengol was truly converted and became a religious of Mercy in the year

1258, being a model of charity and penance and giving himself continually to prayer. He set out three times to redeem slaves, and the last time, in 1266 in Africa, after ransoming 118, he himself remained as a slave in place of another 18 youths and children whom he knew to be in great danger of losing their faith and their chastity, and whom, together with the others, he sent to Spain by his companion, Brother William. This Saint, since he was full of zeal and charity, could not remain silent; he always spoke and preached in favour of the religion of Jesus Christ and against the Mohammedan sect; and the Moors were filled with rage not only at what the Saint preached, but also because the time allowed for paying his ransom had expired; and those barbarians, after cruelly scourging him, hanged him from a tree outside the city. After some days, during which he remained hanging there, his companion arrived with the ransom money; and when they told him he had been hanged, grieving and weeping he went at once to that place to bury him. But as he drew near, he was joyfully surprised to hear him say:

"Do not weep, my dearest brother, for I am still alive. During all these days the Queen of the angels has held me up with her hands and has never left me; she has always assisted me with great joy and kindness."

At the sight of this event some of those barbarians were converted to the true religion; at once they untied him and took him down, and he returned to Spain, where he survived ten years with his neck twisted and of a sallow colour, as testimony and proof of this wonder. During all this time he led a holy and exemplary life, and at last passed to eternal rest on 27 April 1276. His holy body is kept in the parish church called de la Guardia, in the town of Montblanc, diocese of Tarragona.

Since the religious of Mercy make the fourth vow to remain as hostages if the need of the slaves requires it,[4] when this happened they suffered many pains, and for a long time, because the masters raised the price of the ransom. In the year 1249 the fathers of that Order who went to Tunis to carry out a ransom were robbed, ill-treated and thrown into the sea. Later, in the year 1253, Fr. Thibaut, who was leaving the city of Tunis with 129 ransomed slaves, having first paid the agreed price, was burned alive, and those poor people who had already been freed remained slaves once more.[5] I should never finish if I stopped to tell all the pains suffered by the slaves and by the Mercedarian fathers to redeem them from slavery to the Moors; we shall know it and see it on the day of the universal judgment, when Jesus will make it manifest in order to reward them, and to the confusion of those who will neither do nor suffer anything for their neighbour.

So far I have briefly narrated the lives of some individuals who have been true heroes of the Order of Mercy; now it will not be wearisome for the reader to hear what some holy women did, so that it may be seen how much they can do by their prayers, by their virtue and by other good works, in imitation of Most Holy Mary, Mother of the divine Redeemer and foundress of this holy Order. I could cite many examples; but to keep to the brevity I have set myself, I shall confine myself to only two: St. Mary de Socós, that is, of Help \[*del Socorro*\], a Spaniard, and St. Natalia, a Frenchwoman, so that it may be seen that grace has no respect of persons, nor is it limited by sex or by person, but the Spirit of God blows where He wills;[6] blessed is he who is faithful to grace and perseveres in it to the end, for he will be eternally happy.[7]

I shall speak first of St. Mary de Socós, who was a native of Barcelona, daughter of noble and rich parents, and was one of the first nuns of Mercy; but since in those times neither the strict enclosure of today nor the renunciation of one's own goods was observed, this Saint relieved every need she came to know of, as her charitable heart dictated; and from this came her being called Mary of Help \[*del Socorro*; Catalan *Socós*\].

Our Saint gave not only material help but spiritual help as well. She spent much time in prayer, raising fervent prayers to God and to the Most Holy Virgin that the Christian slaves might not apostatize from the faith, but rather be patient so as to bear so many pains, labours and desolations. And when the fathers of Mercy went to redeem slaves and came back, she multiplied her prayers and mortifications that they might have a prosperous and happy voyage; not seldom she helped them in storms and in dangers from corsairs, God delivering them through the intercession of this Saint. She was an angel of purity and a seraph of love;

she was a sum of all the virtues; but those in which she most excelled were humility, charity and prayer. Let nuns, tertiaries and other women, then, learn, not excluding those who have to live in the world; yes, let them learn from this Saint the practice of the virtues, and especially fervour and perseverance in prayer. She died in Barcelona in the year 1290, and her holy body is kept there.

St. Natalia was born in France, in a village called Callah, in the diocese of Albi. Her parents went to live in Toulouse and gave Natalia a very careful education. Our Saint was very fond of reading, but not of frivolous things or of profane love stories, as unfortunately some young girls do today, in which they lose not only their time but also their innocence and perhaps even their conscience. Natalia read the lives of the saints. One day, after reading the life of St. Natalia and the heroic act she performed of dressing as a man to enter the prison and encourage her husband, St. Adrian, to suffer martyrdom, her mother confirmed the fact to her and told her that when she too had read it, it had so moved her to devotion that, to honour that Saint, she had wished to give her the name Natalia in baptism.

"I like it, Mama," answered the good daughter, "and this will be a double reason for me to have great devotion to her and to imitate her virtues."

She afterwards made a vow of chastity, and lived recollected in her father's house, fulfilling her duties with all perfection; she frequented the holy sacraments of penance and communion, and the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ was her continual meditation. She had great compassion for the Christian slaves and commended them with all her heart to God, not only out of the love she had for them, but also out of obligation, because she was a tertiary of Mercy, although she lived with her parents, for at that time there was no convent of Mercedarian nuns in Toulouse; and it is known from history that many obtained consolation in their tribulations. Natalia persevered in this manner of life until death, which was most precious in the eyes of God.[8]

The slaves ransomed down to our own days through the prayers, alms, sacrifices and other works practised by the religious, the nuns, tertiaries and other pious persons devoted to Our Lady of Mercy, of whom there is record, amounted in the time of Benedict XIII, as that pontiff himself states, to 70,679 or more; and since then numerous ransoms have been made, not counting the souls that the religious of Mercy have freed from sin and ransomed from the slavery of the devil by their prayers, preaching and administration of the holy sacraments, for these are numberless; and this not only in the old world, but also in the new, which we shall now briefly indicate.

The Venerable Fr. Brother Juan Infantes,[9] a religious of Mercy, ship's chaplain on the first expedition made by Christopher Columbus, was the first priest to celebrate holy Mass in America, on 11 October in the year 1492.

The Venerable Fr. Brother Juan Solórzano, a religious of Mercy and companion of Christopher Columbus, planted the cross on the island of Cuba, and I bear witness to this truth, having been archbishop of that island. The most holy cross was planted by the said Solórzano not far from the harbour that nature forms in that place. In the course of time the parish church of the city of Baracoa was built there,[10] and that cross was moved into the parish church and placed on an altar; and it is called the Cross of the Parra, because, owing to the great vegetation there, there is a *parra*; but it is not a grapevine, as in Europe, but a shady shrub that goes by that name \[*parra*: in Spain, a trellised grapevine\]. I have in my possession a little cross taken from that main cross, which the parish priest and the parishioners gave me when I went for the pastoral visitation, and I saw the cross that Fr. Solórzano and Christopher Columbus planted.

The Venerable Fr. Brother Bartolomé de Olmedo, also of the Order of Mercy, went to Mexico with Hernán Cortés. To this good religious the Lord granted great facility in speaking the language of the Indians, and he catechized and baptized many in those lands. He was a man of great holiness; he vigorously opposed the measures taken by a certain Narváez, because they were not in conformity with the spirit of Catholicism; and

he founded many convents.

The Venerable Fr. Brother Miguel de Orenes, a Mercedarian, planted the first cross in the kingdom of Peru, converted a very great number of people and founded several convents. In this same kingdom Fr. Cristóbal Albarrán, also of the Order of Mercy, was martyred by the Indians.

The Venerable Fr. Brother Francisco Bobadilla, a Mercedarian religious, went to Lima by order of the king, and there did admirable things.

The martyr St. Juan de Vargas, belonging to the Order of Mercy, a most zealous man, went as far as Panama, converted a very great number of people and won the crown and palm of martyrdom. Finally, not a few Mercedarian religious were martyred by the Indians. The sweat of the confessors and the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christians;[11] for the sweat and blood shed by the religious of Mercy, who penetrated so far into the New World, have produced and are still producing so many Christians and devotees of the Most Holy Virgin of Mercy \[*de las Mercedes*\].

---

[1] Cf. Acts 6:5; 7:55.

[2] Cf. Ps 115:15 (Vulgate).

[3] Cf. Rom 8:18.

[4] So it reads in the *Regula et Constitutiones B. Mariae Virginis de Mercede Redemptionis Captivorum* (Salamanca 1588) ch. 25 p. 105.

[5] On Fr. Thibaut (in Spanish, Teobaldo de Narbona) cf. Garí y Siumell, A., *Historia de las redenciones de cautivos cristianos* (Barcelona 1873) pp. 61–63.

[6] Cf. Jn 3:8.

[7] Cf. Mt 10:22; 24:13. Cf. Gómez, E., *Mariana de Jesús*: DHEE III p. 1418.

[8] Cf. Ps 115:15 (Vulgate).

[9] Cf. Placer, G., *Infante, Juan*: DHEE II p. 1192.

[10] Cf. *Aut.* nn. 540–542.

[11] Cf. Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 50, 13: Corpus Christianorum, Latin series, *Tertulliani Opera* part I (Turnhout 1954) p. 171; Rouët de Journel, *Enchiridion Patristicum* (Herder, Barcelona 1962) n. 285.

The Means of Imitating Nolasco's Zeal

Chapter VII: Of the Most Special Providence with Which God Keeps the Church Militant

In the beginning God created heaven and earth;[1] in heaven He placed the angels in a state of merit, and on earth He placed Adam and Eve. Many of the angels rebelled against God, and the Lord, in punishment for their pride and rebellion, expelled them from heaven and condemned them to eternal torment; but the angels who remained faithful He confirmed in grace and glorified. The supreme leader of the good and faithful angels is the archangel St. Michael; the leader of the rebel angels, or demons, is Lucifer.

Lucifer and his followers are obstinate enemies of God and of men, and through their pride and envy they wage continual war on us. God permits it for our good, because we who live on earth form the Church militant, and we must fight and struggle, as the apostle St. Paul says, "not only against men of flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers, against the rulers of this world of darkness, against the evil spirits spread through the air";[2] and so that we may resist and gain the victory, he exhorts us to take up the armour of God,[3] which is the virtues, especially justice, faith, hope, the word of God and prayer; these are the principal weapons of our warfare.[4]

Now I shall show you also what are the weapons or wiles that Lucifer and his followers use. They pretend to be friends and present to us what most satisfies us; they promise us what most pleases us; they study our inclinations, smooth the way for us and push us forward. They know the affection we have for riches and

exaggerate their importance; they observe the vehement desire we have for honours and worldly glory, and they exalt them as much as possible to dazzle us; and finally, they know very well our inclinations to sensuality, and so they spare no means to present to our senses the most attractive objects; and so, by exciting our imagination, they stir up the passions. All the skill and cunning of the demons and their followers consists in knowing how to lie to and deceive mortals, to make them unhappy in this world and damned for all eternity in the next. They do as the fisherman does, who by means of the bait draws the fish to the hook, and so it is caught, cooked and devoured. And since it can be said that the devil is the author of all evil works, St. John assures us that "for this the Son of God came, to destroy the works of the devil."[5] Jesus Christ, who is true God and true man, overcomes him by His preaching, by His passion and by the sacraments He Himself instituted; and that is why St. Paul declares that he did not pride himself "on knowing anything except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."[6] Jesus is the way we must follow, the truth we must believe and the life we must live.[7] This is the doctrine preached by the apostles and the Fathers of the Church, which all the ministers of the word of God have preached and will preach.

Because of the special care and providence that God our Lord has for the Church militant, in all times He has sent and sends men after His own heart, full of grace and doctrine, to stand up to the errors the devil has invented and suggested to the impious, his followers, who pursue the vices into which he has hurled them. I shall cite a few here so that this truth, as certain as it is consoling, may be seen and become more evident. In the same period in which Pelagius was born, St. Augustine, great doctor of the Church, was also born, so that by his doctrine he might refute and confound the falsehood the devil suggested to the heresiarch Pelagius. At the beginning of the thirteenth century the Church was assailed by three most grave evils; but the Lord, who, according to the prophet, neither sleeps nor slumbers but guards Israel,[8] sent three wise and timely physicians to heal her, who were at the same time valiant captains to make war on the enemies of Jesus, of Mary and of mankind. These three envoys of heaven were St. Dominic, St. Francis of Assisi and St. Peter Nolasco, and each of them founded an order, a religious family.

At that time France was entangled in the errors and vices of the Albigensians, and the Lord sent Dominic de Guzmán, full of learning and virtues, who began to fight those unhappy people with heroic valour; and to have companions in the struggle, and to have those who after his death would continue the struggle against the enemies of the Church, he instituted and founded the illustrious Order of the Preacher Fathers.

In a similar way, the world of that time was oppressed by the first and greatest capital vices: pride, avarice and the ambition for worldly honours, with an insatiable thirst to pile up riches. To remedy these grave evils God sent the seraphic poor man of Assisi, so that he and his companions might be a most effective remedy by preaching the Gospel; and they, by the example of their poverty and humility, gave it to be understood that the doctrine they preached was not impracticable. And so that this remedy should not cease with the death of the patriarch of Assisi, God inspired him to found the Order called the Friars Minor, and God Himself made known to him in a most special way the rule that was to direct and govern that religious family.

Likewise, at that same period very many of the faithful were suffering the harshest slavery under the barbarous Saracens, especially in Spain, and God sent the zealous and charitable St. Peter Nolasco; and he too, by order of Most Holy Mary, founded, as we said above, a religious order. The professed religious of this Order are not content with the three customary vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, as the religious of other orders practise them, but add a fourth vow: to remain as hostages or in prison in order to procure the freedom of Christian slaves who are in danger of apostatizing from the faith, or to ransom them. This fourth vow, besides the habit, the rule and other things proper to the Mercedarians, distinguishes them completely from the Trinitarians, whose Order was also founded for the purpose of redeeming slaves. The founders of the Trinitarian Order were St. John of Matha and St. Felix of Valois, in France.[9]

After some years, proud and impatient Satan raises his head again; he makes use of Luther, Calvin and their followers to disturb the peace of the Church once more; and at once the merciful God raised up and called to

the field of battle St. Ignatius of Loyola and his Company, called "of Jesus," which has won the most complete victories.[10]

Notwithstanding the triumphs won by the Society of Jesus over the demons and over perverse men, to hold back the torrent of iniquity it has been necessary for God to send other persons; and this has come about through the many congregations of clerks regular that have come since, such as the Fathers of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri,[11] the Piarists, founded by St. Joseph Calasanz,[12] the Fathers of the Mission, by St. Vincent de Paul, the Redemptorists, by St. Alphonsus Liguori,[13] the Passionists, by St. Paul of the Cross,[14] and, finally, the Congregation of the Sons of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, founded on 16 July 1849 and approved by the reigning pontiff, Pius IX, on 22 December 1865.

All these and other congregations devote themselves to the mixed life, which is the life practised by Jesus Christ when He lived on this earth, clothed in our mortal flesh,[15] uniting the contemplative life of Mary and the active life of Martha. Every day in the morning the members of this Congregation have an hour of mental prayer, the recitation of the divine office and of the holy rosary, and they visit the Most Blessed Sacrament. Besides this, they devote themselves to study and spiritual reading and to the sanctification of their own souls, without forgetting the souls of their neighbours. On the contrary \[*Por el contrario*: here in the sense "on the other hand," "indeed"\], I must say that all the new congregations devote themselves to missions and to giving spiritual exercises to all classes of society, to catechizing, to hearing confessions; in a word, they are occupied with the sacred ministry.

With great satisfaction of heart I must make an observation here, and it is that God our Lord, to cast down and destroy the heresies, errors and vices that the devil strives to stir up and spread by every imaginable means, makes use of the Virgin Mary and of her fervent devotees, whom she helps in a most special way, as the Church sings in that antiphon of the divine office which says: "Rejoice, Virgin Mary. You alone have crushed all the heresies that Satan has invented up to the present, and you will crush all that arise until the end of time." Thus will be fulfilled those words God addressed to the serpent: *Ipsa conteret caput tuum.*[16] Yes, Mary will crush your head, your errors, your vices and your deceits. Come then, all Christians: love, confidence and sincere and fervent devotion to Most Holy Mary, who is Virgin and Mother of God! With her we shall be able to do all things. Let us imitate her virtues, as children of such a Mother. Let us make use of the beautiful devotion of the most holy rosary, like St. Dominic; of the crown \[*corona*: the Franciscan Crown or seven-decade rosary\] and the Way of the Cross, like St. Francis; and of supplications, litanies and the *Salve*, like St. Peter Nolasco. Between us, children of Mary, and the heretics, children of the devil, there will be perpetual war;[17] but there is no reason to lose heart; we shall conquer with the help of Jesus and of Mary, His Mother.

Chapter VIII: Of the Most Special Providence That God Has over Good Souls

It falls to me, as priest and as writer, to draw from ecclesiastical history the religious orders, old and new, and to submit them, dearest reader, to your consideration, as I have done in the previous chapter, though briefly, so that you may choose what can be most useful to you and most suited to attaining perfection. I have done as the father of a family who brings out of his storeroom fruits old and new and distributes them to his favoured and beloved household.[1]

In the Father's house there are many rooms,[2] and to each will be given glory according to the fidelity with which he has corresponded to grace. To enter the glory of heaven baptism is necessary, and besides, when the Christian has reached the use of reason, he must keep the law of God, as Jesus Christ Himself said to that young man of whom the Gospel speaks;[3] but whoever wishes to be perfect must detach himself from earthly things and follow Jesus Christ.

Perhaps someone will ask what is the use of so many religious institutes, and of so many kinds, both of men and of women. And if they all say they do it to follow Jesus Christ according to the Gospel, since Christ Jesus is only one, why so much diversity of institutes, of religious habits, etc.?

This diversity ought not to trouble us; rather, we ought to admire the infinite providence with which God governs His Church and each good soul in particular.

1. In the first place, this diversity forms the beauty and charm of the Church, who is called a queen, adorned with garments of gold by charity and made more beautiful still by the special variety of religious institutes.[4] The Catholic Church can be compared to a prince's great and beautiful garden. If in that garden all the flowers were of the same kind, even if they were all roses, could we praise it? And where would the beauty of that garden be? It is precisely the diversity of plants and flowers, well arranged, that makes it cheerful and beautiful.

2. In the second place, the diversity of religious institutes also serves so that all persons, so diverse in class, condition, inclination and temperament, may have suitable places, according to the disposition of each, in which to perfect and sanctify themselves through the practice of the virtues.

3. This diversity enriches Catholicism with holy works, such as, for example, teaching children, caring for the sick, etc.

4. This diversity produces men eminent in studies and in the sciences, who write sublime and useful works and teach as professors in the colleges, seminaries and universities.

5. The same diversity brings great advantages to society, because the religious needs little for food, clothing and lodging.

6. This diversity is, moreover, a most powerful means, being of all classes and kinds, of drawing society to the right path, not only by the observance of their respective vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, virtues diametrically opposed to the burning desire for gold, to impurity, to pride and to self-will, which are the dominant vices in the world,[5] but also by preaching and the administration of the sacraments.

7. Finally, the diversity of so many men and women religious, of so many and such different kinds, by the sacrifices they make, by the good works they practise and by the prayers they frequently raise to God, holds back the arm of divine justice, angered by the very many and very grave sins of the world, and moreover obtains mercy and graces from the divine clemency. So St. Teresa understood it, and that is why she exclaimed: "What would become of the world if it were not for the religious!"[6]

If some persecute religious and speak ill of them, it is for three principal reasons: first, because they are wicked, and the good example and preaching of the religious irritate them, as those with bad eyesight do not love the light and cannot look at it; second, because they are imitators of the perfidious Jews, of whom Jesus Christ said: *Vos ex patre diabolo estis*;[7] third, God permits religious to be persecuted and slandered because the disciple must not be above the master, nor the servant above his lord.[8] Jesus Christ was set up as a sign of contradiction;[9] He had done harm to no one; on the contrary, He had done good to all; nevertheless He was slandered, persecuted, seized, scourged and crucified;[10] therefore we should not be surprised that the same happens to religious.

Now, for the confusion of the wicked and the edification of the good, and to encourage religious themselves to persevere, I shall say briefly what the religious state properly is. The religious state is nothing other than a special way of life, approved by the Holy Apostolic See, embraced by those persons who aspire to Christian perfection through the observance of the vows of perpetual obedience, chastity and poverty. For the Christian, to obtain eternal salvation it is enough to keep the commandments of the law of God, as is said in the Gospel;[11] but for whoever wishes to attain perfection it is indispensable to follow the counsels of the divine Redeemer.[12]

Christian perfection consists, besides in loving God and one's neighbour for love of Him, in doing and practising all that Christ prescribed, detaching oneself from all earthly things and affections. God is charity, and he who abides in charity abides in God and God in him.[13] Charity is the bond of perfection.[14] So, then, the religious is obliged *sub gravi* to aspire to perfection; perfection is the end of the religious state, as the Angelic Doctor says,[15] so that he who enters religion, I will not say must already be perfect in order to enter, but he enters in order to attain perfection, like one who goes to school to learn a science he does not know but wishes to learn, and uses all the means within his reach to achieve it... Consequently, the end of every religious, and of the perfection to which he binds himself, is to aspire to be perfect in charity both in desires and in works; and the religious who does not nourish these effective desires does not satisfy his own obligation, like the pupil who, attending class distractedly and without application, will never acquire the desired knowledge and will never fulfil his obligation.

Of the means for attaining perfection, some are general and others particular. The general means are:

1. The mortification of the senses and the passions, which are the sources from which faults and the obstacles to perfection arise.

2. The continual exercise of the theological and moral virtues, because with them the disordered appetites are mastered.

3. Love, fervour and perseverance in prayer; this is a most powerful means, because by prayer we obtain the help of grace, without which nothing can be attained.

To conclude this most important matter, I must add that we cannot truly love God and our neighbour as we ought without faithfully keeping the precepts revealed by God Himself. Those who wish to reach perfection, besides keeping the divine commandments, must practise the evangelical counsels, by means of which the obstacles that stand in the way of charity are removed; so that by keeping the evangelical counsels the way is smoothed and made easy, one runs in the following of Jesus, and one likewise arrives at the perfection of the love of God and of neighbour. Moreover, by the observance of the three vows, the religious man or woman consecrates the soul to God by obedience, the body by chastity, and external things by poverty; and so he sacrifices soul, body and external things to God, from whom he will receive in heaven a hundredfold reward: eternal happiness.[16]

Chapter IX: Of the Zeal We Must Have for the Greater Glory of God and the Good of Our Neighbour

The love of God and of neighbour produces an effect very like that of fire. The fire of gunpowder blows into the air whatever object confines it, and drives bullets and shells upwards; the fire of steam makes the carriages of trains run at full speed and drives the ships that plough the waves of the sea; so the fire of the Holy Spirit made the holy apostles travel the whole world. This same divine fire urged and drove St. Peter Nolasco, his companions and the sons of the Order he founded to free from slavery the bodies and souls of many Christians.

Inflamed by the same fire, apostolic missionaries have reached, reach and will reach the ends of the world to proclaim the Word of God,[1] so that they can rightly say of themselves the words of the apostle St. Paul: *Caritas Christi urget nos*. The charity or love of Christ spurs and urges us to run and to fly on the wings of holy zeal.

The true lover loves God and his neighbour; the true zealous man is the same lover, but in higher degrees according to the degrees of love, so that the more love he has, the greater the zeal by which he is driven; and if someone has no zeal, it is a sure sign that the fire of love, charity, has gone out in his heart. He who has zeal desires and strives by every possible means that God may be ever more known, loved and served in this

life and in the next, since this sacred love has no limit whatever.

He does the same with his neighbour, desiring and striving that all may be content in this world and happy in the next; that all may be saved, that none may be lost eternally, that no one may offend God, and, finally, that no one may be found even for a moment in sin. So we see it in the holy apostles and in anyone endowed with the apostolic spirit; and not only in men but also in women, as we read in the life of St. Mary de Socós, of St. Mariana de Jesús, of St. Natalia and of others it would take long to list, who by their prayers, mortifications and exhortations always sought the greater glory of God and the bodily and spiritual, temporal and eternal good of their neighbour. And in confirmation of this truth, let me relate here some interesting passages from their lives.[2]

Of St. Rose of Lima we read that she used to say: "If I were a man, I would go from one kingdom to another preaching until all sinners were converted." And since she could not carry this out, she wept, prayed and did harsh penance to this end; and with the most forceful expressions she strove to persuade preachers, confessors and zealous and virtuous persons to devote themselves to so important a work. When some of them answered that they would devote themselves to preaching after finishing their higher studies, she insisted, saying: "For God's sake, Fathers! To convert the Indians you do not need so much theology; what is needed is zeal, love for Jesus Christ and for the souls He redeemed with His most precious blood. To be able to teach them it is enough to know what we cannot be ignorant of in order to be saved. And who does not know that? So, since you know enough, go, go, my Fathers, for the need is urgent."[3]

So great and ardent was the zeal that continually animated St. Catherine of Siena that in Italy she went from one town to another exhorting and preaching by disposition of the supreme pontiff; and the fruit she produced was so abundant that she had to take with her twelve confessors with extraordinary faculties to hear the confessions of the penitents who were converted on hearing her words.[4]

She had such veneration for preachers and confessors who devoted themselves zealously to the salvation of souls that she kissed the ground where they had set their feet...[5] The great and fervent zeal with which she burned made her exclaim: "My Lord and my God, I would like to place myself at the gates of hell to prevent the souls of sinners from entering it!"

In the life of St. Teresa of Jesus we read that, on hearing of the harm and ruin of the heresy of Luther and Calvin, she said: "I was so grieved at the loss of so many souls that I could not contain myself. I went to a hermitage with many tears; I cried out to our Lord, begging Him to give me some means by which I could do something to win some soul for His service, since the devil was carrying off so many, and that my prayer might avail something, since I was good for nothing more. I had great envy of those who for love of our Lord could be employed in this, even if they suffered a thousand deaths; and so it happens to me that when we read in the lives of the saints that they converted souls, it moves me to much more devotion and tenderness, and more envy, than all the martyrdoms they suffer (this being the inclination our Lord has given me), for it seems to me that He prizes one soul that by our industry and prayer we might win for Him through His mercy more than all the services we can do Him."[6]

St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi used to say: "I envy the lot of the birds, which can fly wherever they please. Ah! If I had wings like theirs and, without prejudice to my profession, could leave the monastery, this very day I would take flight and reach the Indies. There I would gather around me the children of those poor unbelievers and instruct them in the principles of our holy religion, to put them in possession of Jesus and to give Him souls."

One day, after hearing the account of the journeys of St. Francis Xavier, she said to her novices, being at that time their mistress: "My daughters, let us ask God for the conversion of one unbeliever, and let us offer for it all the good we can do today; or rather, let us ask Him that as many of those poor souls may be converted as the steps we shall take today, as the stitches we shall make in our sewing, or as the words we shall pronounce

in the recitation of the divine office."

On another occasion she said: "If the Lord asked me, as He asked St. Thomas Aquinas, what reward I wished to obtain from His goodness, I would answer: 'The salvation of souls'"...

One day, taking a crucifix in her hand, she exclaimed: "You, O my Jesus, willed to die on the cross for sinners and give them all the blood that ran in Your veins; I too, following Your example, would like to shed mine and give my life to convert them."

To conclude this chapter, the reader will not be displeased if I bring here the following words taken from *The Mystical City of God*:[7] Most Holy Mary, in her knowledge and charity, duly weighed how much it means to God to lose a soul eternally, and that it should remain condemned for ever to the torments of hell in the company of the demons.

The Holy Virgin possessed the knowledge of the blessed, but also the anguish of a pilgrim \[*viadora*: one still on the way, *in via*, not yet in glory\], and so she exclaimed: "Is it possible that a soul should of its own will deprive itself eternally of seeing the face of God, and choose to see those of so many demons in eternal fire?"[8]

This Most Holy Virgin said to St. John: "O John, if God had a determined will for the perdition of some souls, my sorrow could be somewhat relieved; but although He permits the damnation of the reprobate because they wish to be lost, this was not the absolute will of the divine goodness, which would wish to make all saved,[9] if they did not resist Him with their free will."[10]

To the Venerable Sister María de Ágreda the Virgin Mary said one day: "No torment, not even death itself, would I refuse, if it were necessary, to remedy any one of those who are damned... Do not excuse yourself from suffering..., from asking and working... to prevent any fault in your brothers, if you can cut it short; and when you do not succeed at once, or do not perceive that the Lord hears you, do not lose confidence for that, but quicken it and persevere, for this persistence can never displease Him... Apply all the means that prudence and charity require... \[The Lord\] does not will the death of the sinner...;[11] He did not on His part have an absolute and antecedent will to lose His creatures; rather He would wish to save them all, if they did not lose themselves; and although He permits it through His justice, He permits what is displeasing to Him because of the free condition of men."[12]

"In all temptations remember my teaching, my sorrows and tears, and above all what you owe to my most holy Son, who is so generous with you in favouring you and applying to you the fruit of His blood, so that He may find in you return and gratitude."[13]

Reflections to Fan Ever More the Fire of Holy Zeal

Begin by defending God's outraged glory, and at once you will experience His divine assistance. Imitate the archangel St. Michael,[14] saying: *Quis ut Deus?* "Who is like God?"

1. God is offended... by sinners! Jesus Christ is crucified anew by sinners! "Blessed is he who prevents sin, because he prevents an infinite offence."

2. Blessed is he who loves God fervently and strives that God may be ever more known, loved, served, praised and glorified, now and for ever.

3. Blessed is he who converts a sinner with the help of divine grace; he gives supreme joy to the Most Holy Trinity, to Jesus Christ, to Most Holy Mary, to the angels, to the saints and to the whole heavenly court.[15]

The Goods That the Zealous Person Obtains for the Sinner by Procuring His Conversion

1. He obtains for him the grace of God, which is worth more than the whole universe. With it, from that moment, he gains merit for heaven in all he does and suffers. It wins for him the acquisition of the virtues

that adorn the soul. It obtains for him the glory of heaven, the vision, the possession and the fruition of God for all eternity, and he will be eternally happy in soul and body, in faculties and senses. What very great good fortune!

2. He frees him from sin, which is the most deadly plague, worse than a mortal illness; sin is the edge of the precipice over a bottomless abyss, and he saves him from a shipwreck, from a fire, from eternal punishment. He preserves him from hell, an eternal prison, most terrible torments without end; from the sight of the demons and the company of the damned. He who was to be eternally unhappy because of the sins he had committed becomes blessed for ever thanks to the zeal of the good Christian. What a reward, what a prize God will give him!

3. God requires our cooperation. So He has arranged it, to make us companions of the divine Redeemer and sharers in His merits. Just as, when we give alms to the poor or assist the sick, it would be cruelty to abandon them and let them perish, so it would be supreme cruelty to abandon souls in need of help and let them die in sin.

4. We must call ourselves guilty before God, who is to judge the evils we have committed and the good we have omitted; and likewise have the heart of children, to trust in His mercy, if we turn to Him with a sincere heart.

5. We must have the heart of a mother towards our neighbour. What does a tender mother do for her child? She feeds him, clothes him and brings him up; she keeps him from falls and from every harm. If she sees him in danger, she warns him and does not push him away; if she sees him fallen, she lifts him up; if sick, she takes care of him; she weeps, prays and makes vows to see him restored. The same must be practised by whoever has zeal for his neighbour.[16]

Chapter X: Of the Means We Must Use to Exercise Holy Zeal

The first means we must use for this end is prayer.[1] St. Thomas,[2] St. Augustine[3] and other holy Fathers and doctors of the Church affirm that whatever God, in His infinite providence and disposition, has determined *ab aeterno* \[from eternity\] to give to souls, He gives in time by means of prayer; and on this means He has made secure the salvation and conversion, the remedy of many souls and the progress and perfection of others. Just as God established and arranged that the earth, when ploughed, sown and cultivated, should produce grain and wine and fruit and other crops in abundance, and that buildings and other monuments should be raised by art, so He has arranged, and it pleases Him, that by means of prayer the souls of the faithful should obtain many graces and heavenly gifts; and for this reason Jesus Christ exhorts us to pray, by word and by example.

His divine Mother prayed continually, and the heavenly messenger found her at prayer when he announced to her the great mystery of the Incarnation.[4] Moses prayed while Joshua fought, and by virtue of Moses' prayer he won that most splendid victory.[5] Likewise, while they prayed, the prince of the apostles proclaimed the word of God, and so in his first sermon he converted 3,000 hearers and in the second 5,000,[6] and the other apostles and disciples worked numerous conversions throughout the world by virtue of prayer.

Daniel prayed, shed tears and fasted for the sins of his people.[7] Jeremiah prayed and wept bitterly.[8] St. Catherine of Siena never ceased to pray and weep for the sins being committed, and Jesus appeared to her, encouraging her to continue and complaining of the little account some made of His glory, of the lukewarmness and selfishness in which they lived. The eternal Father one day showed Himself to St. Catherine and said to her: "I earnestly beseech you to pray without ceasing for the conversion of sinners, on whose behalf I ask of you prayers mingled with tears and compunction, so that I may thus satisfy My keen desire to show them grace and mercy."[9]

In no other way did St. Mary Magdalene de' Pazzi pray, and St. Teresa of Jesus and all her nuns, St. Mary de Socós, St. Mariana de Jesús and so many other saints. The continual prayer of the just man is of great value.[10] A celebrated author says that the merits of one saint are worth more than those of a million ordinary Catholics.[11] When a soul aspires to perfection it is held by God in the highest esteem; and he concludes by saying: "Let us implore God to send saints to the earth, and the world will be saved; meanwhile let us pray: 1st, for the sinners most disposed to be converted; 2nd, for the just who are in proximate danger of sinning; and 3rd, for the souls in purgatory nearest to leaving it."

It is fitting, moreover, to keep silence and interior and exterior recollection, to pray without growing faint and to implore graces for all, exhorting everyone to pray unceasingly and to recite slowly and often, with reflection and fervour, the Our Father, the Hail Mary and the Salve Regina, together with the most beautiful and devout prayer of the Rosary; to hear holy Mass; and to offer Jesus Christ to the eternal Father when receiving Holy Communion, when hearing Mass and when visiting the Sacrament of the altar, always praying through the merits of Jesus, through the intercession of Mary and of all the saints of paradise, men and women, and of the just on earth.

St. Thomas says that the cause of prayer is the desire of charity;[12] from this desire prayer must proceed. This desire must always be in us, either virtually or habitually; the influence of this desire is found in us in all the things we do out of charity. And since we must do everything for the greater glory of God, according to St. Paul's expression, it follows that prayer must be continual;[13] and it is, says St. Augustine, if our works are always animated by the desire of faith, hope and charity.[14] Such a desire fosters in the heart ejaculatory prayers and uprightness of intention in all the good works one does.

The second means of putting zeal into practice is good example, whose force and power cannot be put into words. We are moved more quickly and effectively by good example than by words. Luis de la Puente says that the good thief was converted so sincerely not by the preaching or the miracles of Jesus, which perhaps he had never heard or seen, but was moved by His heroic patience and meekness, and by that so great example of charity when he heard Him pray to His eternal Father for those who were crucifying Him.

The precursor of Christ, St. John the Baptist, worked no miracle during his life, and nevertheless he converted many, and some even believed he was the Christ, because of the good example he gave in his whole being and the penance he did; and the apostles converted the world not only by virtue of the preaching and the miracles they worked, but also by the most exemplary life they led.

All the Christians of the first times of the Church were so exemplary that Tertullian came to call them a Compendium of the Gospel; that is, in their conduct the Gospel itself was revealed, summarized and put into practice. I could adduce here innumerable arguments confirming the efficacy of good example for converting sinners and encouraging the just to persevere in perfection.

I limit myself only to exhorting the reader to read the Gospel, the life of Jesus, of Mary and of the saints; let us imitate their virtue, and we shall work wonders in the neighbour who sees and observes us.

The third means of putting zeal into practice can be found in familiar conversation.

"Let no evil word come out of your mouth," says the apostle, "but only what is good for the edification of faith, that it may give grace to those who hear it,"[15] and set them on fire with the love of God and the desire for virtue and perfection. So did St. Francis Xavier, and we know that by his conversation he produced greater fruit than by his preaching. Sermons cannot always be had, nor in all places, nor at all times; but conversing is a very easy thing, because it can be done whenever a suitable occasion arises. This weapon of familiar conversation can be wielded by priests as well as by lay people and even by women, as long as they are persons instructed in the duties of the Christian and moved and set on fire by the love of God and of neighbour.

A great example of this holy zeal that we must all have, and of the way we must practise it, is offered to us by the Queen of the angels, Mary. We know that Mary remained seven years in Egypt, and the good she did there until she returned to Nazareth; before that she had been in the hill country, in the house of St. John the Baptist, where she stayed three months, conversing familiarly and spiritually with all.[16] She travelled from Jerusalem to Ephesus, as the holy Fathers say; she likewise went to Antioch and to other places, always full of grace, charity and zeal; she used prayer, conversation and good example.[17] For she was so modest, grave and good that, St. Dionysius says,[18] if faith had not undeceived them, all would have thought she was God, like her Son. Despite her virginal modesty, says St. Ignatius Martyr,[19] she was subjected to the great murmurings of the scribes and Pharisees, the enemies of her divine Son; she, however, was not held back by this nor distressed, but rather showed herself more joyful at the lot given her of being able to imitate her Son Jesus, and likewise by her example to encourage the apostles and disciples, present and future, to suffer and to continue their mission.

These three means, prayer, good example and familiar conversation, are common to men and women, to priests as well as lay people; and here I venture to beg everyone to make use also of meditation on the Last Things: death, judgement, hell or paradise. Yes, let these truths be meditated on as much as possible, and let them be always ready and prepared to take advantage of the occasions that will frequently present themselves.[20]

God our Lord, by the mouth of a saint, tells us: *Memorare novissima tua et in aeternum non peccabis.*[21]

Let us always keep these important words in mind, and let us make others remember them too, and so we shall prevent very many evils.

In the life of St. Teresa of Jesus we read these words spoken by the Saint: "Once I had been like this for more than an hour, the Lord showing me wonderful things, and it seemed to me He did not leave my side. He said to me: 'See, daughter, what those who are against Me lose; do not fail to tell them so.'"[22]

The same Saint relates that she drew great profit from the sight of hell, and counts this among the greatest favours the Lord did her, both for herself and for the good of many souls.[23]

St. John Chrysostom never ceased to thank God for having created hell, and so as never to forget hell he kept in his study a picture representing a soul damned in hell. And to have a curb that holds back the human heart above the precipice of evil in which it takes pleasure, a grave and eternal threat is needed; otherwise it remains empty and without force.

The fourth means, lastly, is the preaching of the divine word, which must never be neglected, especially on all feast days; and particularly in Advent and Lent the divine word must be proclaimed with greater force and energy. Every year spiritual exercises should be held, and every three years, or at the latest every five years, a mission.

Finally, the fifth means is the spreading of good books, not of great size, bearing the mark of ecclesiastical approval. The good that can be drawn from reading a good book cannot be calculated, and since this is the best alms that can be given,[24] he who gives it will certainly receive from God a hundredfold reward for it in eternal life.[25]

Here we put an end to our words, recommending devotion to Most Holy Mary, to St. Joseph, to the archangel St. Michael, to St. Catherine of Siena, advocate of contrition, and to all the other saints of the heavenly Zion.

---

[26] Gen 1:1.

[27] Eph 6:12. *Aut.* n. 101.

[28] Cf. Eph 6:13.

[29] Cf. 2 Cor 10:4.

[30] 1 Jn 3:8: *In hoc apparuit Filius Dei ut dissolvat opera diaboli*.

[31] 1 Cor 2:2.

[32] Cf. Jn 14:6.

[33] Cf. Ps 120:4 (Vulgate).

[34] Cf. Porres, B., *Trinitarios*: DHEE IV pp. 2594–2595.

[35] Cf. *Aut.* nn. 139–167.

[36] Cf. García, J.–Alba, A., *Oratorianos*: DHEE III pp. 1810–1811.

[37] Cf. Vila, C., *Escolapios*: DHEE II pp. 808–810.

[38] Cf. Ferrero, F., *Redentoristas*: DHEE III pp. 2058–2059.

[39] Cf. San Pablo, B. de, *Pasionistas*: DHEE III p. 1886.

[40] Cf. Rom 8:3.

[41] "She shall crush your head" (Gen 3:15).

[42] Cf. Gen 3:15; Rev 12:17.

[43] Cf. Mt 13:52: *Qui profert de thesauro suo nova et vetera*.

[44] Jn 14:2.

[45] Cf. Mt 19:17; Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20: You know the commandments.

[46] Cf. Ps 44:10 (Vulgate).

[47] Cf. 1 Jn 2:16.

[48] *Libro de la vida*, ch. 32 n. 11: *Obras completas* (BAC, Madrid 1962) p. 133.

[49] "You are of your father the devil" (Jn 8:44).

[50] Cf. Mt 10:24; Lk 6:40; Jn 13:16.

[51] Cf. Lk 2:34.

[52] Foretold: cf. Mt 16:21; 17:12, 22–23; 20:18–19; Mk 10:32–34; Lk 18:31–33. Fulfilled: cf. Mt 26–27; Mk 14–15; Lk 22–23; Jn 18–19.

[53] Cf. Mt 19:17; Mk 10:19; Lk 18:20.

[54] Cf. Mt 19:21; Mk 10:21; Lk 18:22.

[55] 1 Jn 4:8, 16.

[56] Col 3:14.

[57] St. Thomas, *Summa theol.* II-II q. 186 a. 2c.

[58] Cf. Mt 19:29; Mk 10:29–30; Lk 18:29–30.

[59] *Aut.* n. 440.

[60] Cf. *Aut.* n. 87. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 225–227. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 235–263.

[61] Quoted *ad sensum* from Ribadeneira, P. de, *Flos sanctorum* (Madrid 1761) vol. 2 p. 650.

[62] Cf. Gisbert, L., *Vida portentosa de la seráfica y cándida virgen Santa Catalina de Siena* (Girona 1804) p. 9.

[63] Cf. Blessed Raimondo da Capua, *La vita di S. Caterina da Siena* (Rome 1866) first Prologue XV p. 10.

[64] St. Teresa of Jesus, *Fundaciones*, ch. 1 n. 7: *Obras completas* (BAC, Madrid 1962) p. 500. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 242–258.

[65] Cf. Vázquez, I., *Ágreda, María de Jesús de*: DHEE I p. 14.

[66] *Mística ciudad de Dios* (LR, Barcelona 1860) vol. 6 p. 350.

[67] Cf. 1 Tim 2:4.

[68] *Mística ciudad de Dios*, ed. cit., p. 351.

[69] Cf. Ezek 33:11.

[70] *Mística ciudad de Dios*, ed. cit., p. 352.

[71] Ibid., p. 353.

[72] Cf. *Aut.* n. 329.

[73] Cf. *Aut.* nn. 8–15. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 15–17, 203–213.

[74] Cf. *Aut.* n. 211.

[1] *Aut.* n. 434. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 264–273. *Aut.* n. 264; cf. nn. 662–663. Resolutions 1858: *Escritos autobiográficos* \[BAC, Madrid 1981\] p. 551.

[2] *Summa theol.* II-II q. 83 a. 2 (cf. St. Alphonsus de Liguori, *Del gran mezzo della preghiera* \[Monza 1822\] p. 19).

[3] Cited by Rodríguez, A., *Ejercicio de perfección y virtudes cristianas* (LR, Barcelona 1861) part 1, p. 216.

[4] Cf. Lk 1:26–38.

[5] Cf. Ex 17:10–13.

[6] Cf. Acts 2:14; 4:4.

[7] Cf. Dan 9:1–19.

[8] Cf. Jer 9:1–11; 14:7–22, etc.

[9] Cited by Faber, F. W., *Todo por Jesús* \[*All for Jesus*\], trans. Jenaro Espino Pua (Madrid 1866) vol. 1 p. 189.

[10] Cf. Jas 5:16.

[11] Cf. Faber, F. W., op. cit., p. 194.

[12] *Summa theol.* II-II q. 83 a. 14.

[13] Cf. 1 Cor 10:31.

[14] St. Augustine, *Epist.* 121 c. 9: PL 33, 501.

[15] Eph 4:29.

[16] Cf. Lk 1:56.

[17] Cf. *Aut.* nn. 214–220. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 223–224. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 228–229.

[18] PG 3, 1103.

[19] Cf. *Epistola ad S. Ioannem*: PG 5, 943. Cited by La Puente (loc. cit.).

[20] Cf. *Aut.* nn. 294–295. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 8–15. *Escritos autobiográficos* \[BAC, Madrid 1981\] p. 423.

[21] Sir 7:40.

[22] *Vida* ch. 38 n. 3: *Obras completas* (BAC, Madrid 1962) pp. 159–160.

[23] Cf. *Vida* ch. 32 nn. 1–6: ibid., pp. 131–132.

[24] Cf. *Aut.* nn. 37, 41–42. Cf. *Aut.* nn. 310–322.

[25] Cf. Mt 19:29.