St. Anthony Mary Claret

THE STRAIGHT AND SURE WAY TO REACH HEAVEN

Camino recto y seguro para llegar al cielo

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

English translation

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

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About this translation

Translated from *Camino recto y seguro para llegar al cielo* (first published 1843), in the edition of Barcelona, 1862, which calls itself the forty-first. The devotional and instructional text is complete; the calendar and almanac tables at the front of the volume and the publisher's catalogue are left out. The hymns and *gozos* are rendered line by line for the sense, without rhyme or metre.

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.

Notice on the Saints of the Calendar

In that calendar you will find, Christian, the Saints whose feasts the Church celebrates in the course of the year. They are in heaven, where they are and will be happy for all eternity. They are your mediators with God, and they pray to God for you as Onias and Jeremiah prayed for their people (2 Macc. 15:12, 14). They desire your happiness and hope to see you one day in heaven in their company. You must take the road they took and practice the virtues they practiced. In them you have a mirror in which to look at yourself and a model you must copy. To know their merits and virtues more clearly you may read their lives, written by Fr. Croisset in the *Año cristiano*, or by other authors. In this holy reading you cannot help praising the providence and mercy of God when you see so many Saints of every state, sex and condition, and of every age. There is no doubt that this greatly encourages us to trust in God, and spurs us with irresistible force to put into practice the means best suited to reach the same end. I do not doubt that you will say: “The will does not resist, it cannot resist, when it sees so many holy men and women who were men and women like me, weak and wretched like me, and some of whom had been as great sinners as I am, or perhaps greater; but they repented and made a good confession of all their sins, and so obtained grace. When I consider that they lived in the same world I live in, surrounded by the same dangers and fought by the same enemies, and yet they were saved, then I too hope to be saved if I do what they did. *Can you not do what these men and these women have done?* I say to myself, as Augustine said to himself.[1] Yes, I will use the means they used, and so I shall reach the same end, since my salvation matters no less to me than theirs mattered to them. They were saved; then I too will be saved, cost what it may. To this end I will try to keep before my eyes the images of the Saints whose originals are in heaven; I will read their lives thoughtfully; I will celebrate their feasts devoutly, not in the worldly way with dances, drunkenness, impurity and other sins, as bad Christians do, but by admiring their heroism and imitating their virtues; and so I hope to obtain the true happiness that is to last for all eternity in heaven. Amen.”

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[1] St. Augustine, *Confessions* VIII, 11, 27: *Tu non poteris quod isti, quod istae?* (“Can you not do what these men and these women have done?”).

The Straight and Sure Way to Reach Heaven

Introduction

Jesus Christ says of himself in the Gospel: *I am the way, and the truth, and the life* (John 14:6). And since, as the sacred commentators explain, we walk along him insofar as we observe his most holy law exactly, receive his Sacraments, and try to imitate his example, every Christian, so as to keep his divine commandments more easily and by this means obtain eternal life, should do every day, morning and night, the devout practices called the *Christian's Exercise*. He should say a part of the most holy Rosary; hear holy Mass when he reasonably can; give a little time to mental prayer, even while working with his hands if he has no time for more; and if he can read, read some spiritual book, or listen to it being read. When he cannot do this, he will make up for it by considering the wounds of the most holy body of Jesus, a book written in letters of blood, which with piercing and powerful voices are telling us: Love, love for a God made man, who loved us to the point of giving his life for love of us, to the excess of dying on the shameful gallows of the cross like the vilest thief and criminal.

Every week he will attend the solemnities of the Church, such as the divine offices, sermons and the explanation of Christian doctrine, the Rosary, and so on; and it is very useful that all this should be in the parish church. So he will try to sanctify those days that are set apart for the Christian to spend in the service of God. To this end, besides what has been said, he will occupy himself in other good works, such as visiting the sick and the imprisoned, teaching the ignorant, and so on; and he will abstain from bad and dangerous ones, especially from servile work, dances, love affairs, forbidden games, and the like. As for Christian doctrine, he will take particular care to learn it, so as to know how to practice it afterwards, since an adult cannot be admitted into the kingdom of heaven without having known it and put it into practice. Every eight or fifteen days, or at least every month, he will receive the sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. Every year he will make a general confession, and will spend some days in retreat, giving himself to the holy exercises under the direction of a wise and prudent director.

At all times he must be exact in keeping the holy commandments and fulfilling the duties of his own state, and he will turn his back on all occasions of sin, such as wicked companions, idleness, gambling, indecent dances, love affairs, theaters with bad plays, and everything which, if a person gives himself to it, may lead him into mortal sin.

In this little book the Christian who truly wishes to be saved will find everything he needs to fulfill his duties and lead a life entirely in keeping with the holy and sweet law of the Lord. With it he will give glory to God in this life, and afterwards he will go to enjoy him and praise him for all eternity in heaven. That is my desire, and it is what has moved me to offer him this little book.

The Christian's Morning Exercise

On waking, make the sign of the cross, saying:

By the sign of ✠ the holy cross, from our ✠ enemies deliver us, O Lord ✠ our God. In the name of the Father, and of the Son ✠, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Jesus.

Then say:

Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.

When you have got up and dressed, kneel and say:

My Lord and God, in whom I believe and hope, I adore you and love you with all my heart. I thank you for having created me, redeemed me, made me a Christian, and preserved me this night. I offer and consecrate to

your honor and glory all my thoughts, words, works and labors. I humbly ask your pardon for my sins, and I am sorry from the depths of my heart for having offended you; and by the merits of Jesus Christ and of the most holy Virgin I beg you to give me grace not to offend you again.

Then say the Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed; and turning to the most holy Virgin, say to her:

O Virgin and Mother of God, I give myself to you as your child, and in honor and glory of your purity I offer you my soul, body, faculties and senses, and I beg you to obtain for me the grace never to commit any sin. Amen. Jesus. *Three Hail Marys.*

Now invoke your holy Guardian Angel, saying:

Holy Angel, under whose care and keeping God in his infinite goodness has placed me, enlighten me, defend me, rule me and govern me. Amen.

On beginning your work, say:

I offer you this work, my God; graciously pour your holy blessing upon it.

During the day, often lift up your heart to God with one of these or similar aspirations:

In you I believe, my God; in you I hope; I adore you, I love you above all things. My Jesus, have mercy on me. Help me, my Savior, with your grace, so that I may never offend you.

Before eating, say:

Pour your holy blessing, my God, upon us and upon this food we are about to take, to keep us in your holy service. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

After eating, give thanks, saying:

We give you thanks, Lord, for the food with which you have favored us; grant that we may use it in a holy way. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

When the clock strikes the hour, say the Hail Mary and add:

I offer you, my God, every moment of this hour; grant that I may spend them in doing your holy will.

(Pope Leo X granted a hundred years' indulgence to all who say the Hail Mary when the clock strikes the hour.)

When a temptation troubles you, make the sign of the cross or say a Hail Mary, and add:

Lord, give me grace never to offend you.

If you fall into sin, or doubt whether you have consented, repent at once and say from your heart:

Mercy, my God! I am sorry with all my heart for having offended you, because you are who you are, and because I love you above all things. I am sorry, my good Jesus, for having sinned, and with your grace I resolve to die a thousand times rather than offend you.

In troubles, say:

Give me patience, my God, and accept this trouble that afflicts me in satisfaction for my sins. — Blessed be God. — All for God.

Say these or other good words, and keep from bad ones, for a good word is said as quickly as a bad one.

At the bell for the Angelus, say:

Angelus Domini nuntiavit Mariae, et concepit de Spiritu Sancto. Hail Mary.\ *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.* Hail Mary.\ *Et Verbum caro factum est, et habitavit in nobis.* Hail Mary.

The same in the vernacular:

The Angel of the Lord declared unto Mary, and she conceived by the Holy Spirit. Hail Mary.\ The Virgin Mary consented, saying: Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word. Hail Mary.\ The Son of God was made man and dwelt among us. Hail Mary.\ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. For ever and ever. Amen.

Blessed and praised be the most holy Sacrament of the altar, and the most pure and Immaculate Conception of most holy Mary, our Mother and Lady, conceived without stain of original sin in the first instant of her being. Amen.

Then ask for the blessing.

At night, when the bell rings for the prayer for the souls, say the De profundis (Ps. 129) if you know it, and if not, an Our Father and Hail Mary.

When the most holy Viaticum is being carried to the sick, accompany it if you can, and so you will gain the indulgences; and if you cannot, kneel, adore it, say an Our Father and Hail Mary, and add:

Give, Lord, to this sick brother of ours the graces he needs for his salvation and your glory.

The Night Exercise

Before going to bed, kneel, make the sign of the cross, and say:

My Lord and God, in whom I believe and hope, I adore you and love you with all my heart. I thank you for having created me, for having redeemed me and made me a Christian, and for having preserved me this day. Give me grace to know my sins and repent of them.

Here examine yourself, asking yourself: What have I done today? How have I done it? What have I left undone of what I ought to have done? And end the examination with a fervent act of contrition, saying:

My Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, my Creator, Father and Redeemer, in whom I believe and hope, and whom I love above all things: solely because you are who you are, infinite goodness, infinitely merciful, and because of the most precious blood you shed for love of me on the holy tree of the cross, I say that I am sorry for having offended you. I am sorry, my God, that I am not more sorry; and even if there were no hell to fear nor glory to hope for, solely because you are who you are I repent, I detest my sins, and I am sorry for having sinned. And I would wish, Lord, that every evil, even death, should come upon me rather than that I should offend you again. I resolve, Lord, never to sin again and to keep away from the occasions of offending you; and I offer you my life, works and labors in satisfaction for all my sins. And as I ask it, so I hope in your infinite goodness and mercy that you will forgive them, and give me grace to amend my life and to persevere to the end of my life in your friendship and grace. Amen.

Then say:

Keep me without sin this night, Lord, and deliver me from all evil.

Try to put yourself in the state in which you would wish to be found at the hour of death, and think a little of how useless riches, honors, pleasures and pastimes will be to you at that hour; what pain the sins you have committed will give you, and what satisfaction your good works; and say:

What would become of me, my God, if I had to die this night and appear before your judgment seat to render account! Am I in grace or in mortal sin? Have I made good confessions or bad ones? In what state do I find myself? Do I hate anyone, or keep what belongs to another? Have I the vice of swearing, of gossiping, of working on feast days, or of committing impure acts? Do I fulfill my duties, and spend my time in a holy way? What answer do I give to these questions? Woe is me! How strict is the judgment before which I am to

be brought, and how much I ought to fear if I do not repent and amend while I am given time!

Then say at least the Our Father, Hail Mary, Creed, and the prayer to the holy Angel (above, Morning Exercise).

In bed, say:

May I die in your grace, O most holy Trinity! Jesus and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.

Finally, ask God for his blessing, making the sign of the cross over yourself and saying:

May the blessing of God almighty, Father, and Son ✠, and Holy Spirit, come upon me and remain for ever. So be it.

How to Make a Good Confession with Great Profit

Dearest Christian, you must know and be thoroughly convinced of this important truth: for those who have sinned mortally after baptism, it is either confession or damnation.

Confession, or the sacrament of Penance, was instituted by Jesus Christ to give grace to those who have unhappily lost it, and to increase it in those who happily keep it. It is the rainbow of peace that reconciles sinners with God. It is the only plank to which those who have been shipwrecked in the sea of guilt and sin must cling if they wish to be saved. It is the only medicine offered to the Christian if he wishes to be healed of the mortal wounds that sins have opened in his soul. But you must not forget that, just as medicine will not work if it is not given at the right time and in the right way, neither will the sacrament of Penance heal your spiritual ailments if you do not receive it at the right time, that is, now, when God is offering it to you, *now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation* (2 Cor. 6:2); or if you receive it unworthily, through lack of examination, sorrow, purpose of amendment, confession or satisfaction. But since I see that you wish to receive it with fruit, I will teach you how you should do it.

Prayer before the Examination

O eternal and incomprehensible God! You who with your infinite power and wisdom have created all things, laying on each of them the law it obeys exactly and with the greatest promptness, you have created me too, drawing me out of nothing, so that I may love and serve you and direct all my thoughts, words and works to this end. This, Lord, is the end for which I was created; and this law you have laid on me is a sweet yoke and a light burden (Matt. 11:30). But I, an ungrateful and insolent creature, have said, if not in words then in deeds, *I will not serve* (Jer. 2:20)… I have despised your holy law, and I have insulted, offended and wronged you in the most wicked way, for I have had the boldness to sin in your very presence… What insolence, my God!… Forgive my sins, Lord, for I am now sorry for having committed them. Enlighten my understanding to know them, and quicken my memory to remember them all; inflame my will to detest them and cast them out of my soul by means of a sincere and sorrowful confession.

Most holy Virgin, advocate and mother of poor sinners who wish to amend, intercede for me, for I truly want to amend and to confess all my sins. Grant that I may remember them all and detest them with true sorrow. Holy Angel my guardian, my holy Patrons, pray for me; you see well how much I need it in order to make a true confession.

Now examine your conscience, going through the commandments of the law of God and of the Church and the duties of your state. See in what you have failed, and how many times. If you can find out the exact number of faults you have committed against each of the commandments, say it; and if not, say the number you think, more or less, that you have committed, or how long the vice lasted and how many times a day or a week you used to fall.

Examination on the Commandments

In the 1st. Examine whether you have denied or doubted any of the mysteries of our holy Religion. Whether you have uttered words against the faith. Whether you have read, or have in your possession, books that are forbidden or deserve to be. Whether you have distrusted the mercy of God. Whether you have complained of his providence with hatred of him or of sacred things. Whether you have invoked the devil, taken part in or believed in superstitions, or consulted those who work by evil arts. Whether you have used sorcery to find something out, to get what you wanted, or to free yourself from some harm; or whether you have carried, or carry with you, any of these charms or superstitions.

In the 2nd. Whether you have sworn falsely, even in jest and without harm to anyone. Whether you have sworn falsely with harm to another. Whether you have sworn truly but without necessity. Whether you are in the habit of swearing. Whether you have done the medicinal penance the confessor gave you to cure some vice: for example, that every time an oath, blasphemy, curse, foul word, gossip, lie or other bad word escaped you, you should make a cross on the ground with your tongue, kiss it, and say a Hail Mary, especially when you are alone. Whether you have blasphemed God, the most holy Virgin, the Angels and Saints. Whether you have made vows or promises to God, to the Virgin, to the Angels and Saints, and not kept them.

In the 3rd. Whether you have worked on a feast day, and whether the work went beyond two hours, and whether people saw it and you therefore gave scandal. Whether on Sundays, feast days and holy days of obligation you have attended Mass, and devoutly, or whether you have been talking, sleeping, or deliberately distracted, looking at things you ought not. Whether on feast days you have attended the instruction, sermon and other religious services. Whether on those days you have occupied yourself in other spiritual works, or only in the worldly works you renounced in baptism. Whether since the age of seven you have confessed at least once a year, and whether you have done it well. Whether from the age of ten onwards you have received Communion at Easter. Whether since the age of twenty-one you have fasted on the appointed days, unless you had some impediment. Whether you have broken the days of abstinence. Whether you have presumed to be saved without keeping from evil, without repenting, without confessing, without bringing forth fruits worthy of penance, and without trying to do good works.

In the 4th. Whether you have offended your parents, teachers or superiors with mocking or insolent words or actions, or by gossiping about them. Whether you have disobeyed when they forbade you to go out at night, to keep bad company, and to go to gambling houses and places where there is danger of sin. Whether you have disobeyed when they told you to go to Mass, to the catechism class, to the sermon and other religious services, to receive the Sacraments and do other good works. Whether you have disobeyed in applying yourself to the studies, trade or craft they have provided for you. Whether you have obeyed in the things of the house. Whether you have done everything they told you as soon as you could and as well as you knew how. Whether, when they told you to do something, you have pulled a long face, grumbled or growled, answered back, or said you would not do it. Whether, as the father of a family or one in charge of it, you have failed to see to the upbringing of your children, and so on, or given them bad example, or allowed any danger of scandal among them. Whether you have cursed them. Whether you have seen to it that they went to catechism and learned to hear holy Mass well.

In the 5th. Whether you have hated your neighbor, or refused to greet him, or tried to take revenge on him. Whether you have refused to be reconciled, or given him any scandal or bad advice. Whether you have insulted anyone by word or deed, or wished death or some harm to yourself or another.

In the 6th. Whether you have dwelt on impure thoughts, even without intending to carry them out. Whether you have spoken immodestly, sung or listened to impure things, or read scandalous books or papers. Whether you have obscene pictures in prints, little boxes, jewelry, and so on. Whether you have provoked a person of the other sex by word or deed, explaining the circumstances. Whether you have committed any impure act by

yourself, or given scandal to your neighbor by indecent fashions.

In the 7th. Whether you have tried or wished to damage your neighbor's goods. Whether you have stolen or kept what belongs to another. Whether you have failed to fulfill the obligations of your trade, or to return what you found, or to restore what you ought to have restored. Whether in buying and selling you have committed any injustice in the price, measure or quality of the goods. Whether you have lent at excessive interest. Whether, when in doubt about the lawfulness of some contract, you have failed to consult the confessor about it.

In the 8th. Whether you have lied, and whether to your neighbor's harm. Whether you have revealed some grave hidden sin, even a true one, or sown discord among families. Whether you have made rash judgments, or criticized the conduct of your superiors. Whether you have failed to restore the good name you took away, and to give satisfaction to the neighbor you offended.

The 9th and 10th commandments are included in the preceding ones.

To examine the faults you may have committed against the duties of your state, look at the one that applies to you in the Duties of Various States, which you will find further on, and see in what you have failed.

When you have examined your conscience and come to know the sins you have committed, rouse yourself to true sorrow for them. Otherwise you would be like the hunter who, after climbing among brambles and rough places to start the game, is too slow to fire when he finds it, and is left as tired as he is cheated. Ask it, then, of God through the intercession of the most holy Virgin, saying for this purpose seven Our Fathers and seven Hail Marys in memory of her sorrows; and making acts of contrition and attrition, say the following

Prayer after the Examination

Lord, alas! what have I done, wretch that I am?… I have sinned against you… I have offended and wronged you… I have lost grace, I have given up my rights to glory, and I have made myself deserving of hell!… And worst of all, this has not been once only, but so many times that I cannot even count them. Ah, Lord! I am horrified when I remember that one single mortal sin of thought was enough to turn most beautiful Angels into horrible and loathsome devils. How horrible, then, my soul must be after so many sins of thought, word and deed! When I consider that if my sins were shared out among as many Angels, I alone would be enough to make an army of devils, and that in my soul there is the malice and ugliness of as many devils as I have sins, I am horrified and appalled at myself… The Angels, as soon as they sinned, were turned into devils and cast down at once from the heights of heaven into the depths of hell; and me, O my God, you have waited for, so that I might do penance… How long, Lord, am I to abuse your patience and goodness? How long am I to remain asleep in this insensibility and criminal indifference, as if I had never sinned?… Woe is me!… I have sinned… I have lost grace, whose value is greater than that of the whole world… I have lost my rights to heaven… I have made myself guilty of hell… and with giant strides I am drawing near to the torment of eternal punishment, that place of torments… Ah, Lord, at the sight of it I am horrified and tremble… but my tears are the expression of my sorrow and repentance for having offended you. A man who had been called to inherit the richest estate in the world, but on condition not only of being deprived of it if he sinned but also of being shot, how he would repent and weep after sinning, on seeing that through his own fault, besides losing his fortune, he was condemned to death! Woe is me!… How much greater must my weeping and repentance be, now that through my own fault I find myself disinherited of the glory you had promised me, and condemned to hell for my crimes!

Ah, Lord! Now I know that I was my own worst enemy, and that no one could harm me as much as I harmed myself by sinning. What madness!… Pardon, Lord, pardon, for now I am truly sorry. Ah, if at least the malice of sin had stayed limited to me… but the worst of it, and what grieves me most, is that it reaches to you as well, since I have ill-treated you. Yes, my God, yes: by sinning I have despised you, I have insulted

you, I have crucified you a thousand times worse than the Jews, for they did not know you and I do; and yet I have put you after the Barabbas of my vices, and, what horror! I offered myself gladly to be the executioner who took away your life. Be astonished, O heavens! (Jer. 2:12). Pardon, then, Lord!… Pity! Mercy! Like another prodigal I throw myself at your feet, stripped of grace and covered with the rags of my vices and sins. Ah, my Father! What have I done, wretch that I am? *I have sinned against heaven and before thee… I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants* (Luke 15:18–19)… Here, Lord, at your feet, you have a sinner like the Magdalen, though unlike her in two things: that I exceed the Magdalen in wickedness, and that the Magdalen exceeds me in sorrow. But, Lord, I trust that you will make up for this lack when I confess and weep for my crimes at your feet and at those of the confessor, your minister. O my good Jesus, when the priest gives me absolution, let me hear deep within me those words, as sweet as they are consoling, which you spoke to the Magdalen: *Thy sins are forgiven thee… go in peace* (Luke 7:48, 50), to the joy of my soul. Grant me, Lord, this grace I ask of you through the merits of Jesus Christ, through the sorrows of the Virgin Mary, and through the merits and intercession of the Saints in heaven and the just on earth. Amen.

Practical Method of Confessing

Kneel at the confessor's feet with the humility, confusion and sorrow with which the prodigal son approached his father, or with the repentance with which the Magdalen approached Jesus. If others are waiting, take your proper place without talking or arguing; and there, recollecting your faculties and senses, rouse yourself more and more to sorrow for your sins, often repeating acts of contrition and attrition.

As soon as it is your turn to go to the confessional, kneel and join your hands. Then make the sign of the cross, and bowing deeply, say the I confess, etc., and begin your confession in this way:

Father, it is so long since I last confessed. I have done my penance (or: I have not done it). My state of life and occupation is such-and-such. I have examined my conscience; I have sorrow for my sins and a purpose of amendment; and I accuse myself of all in which I have failed.

In the first commandment I accuse myself of having failed… *Here say what you have found on examining yourself.*

In the second commandment I accuse myself… *Again say the faults you have found belonging to this commandment. If you know the exact number, say it; if not, the approximate number, or how often you usually fall each month, or each week, or each day.*

In this way go on accusing yourself, following the commandments and the duties of your state, without hiding any sin or lessening its gravity, whether out of fear or out of shame. Say them all humbly and clearly, the certain as certain and the doubtful as doubtful, just as you have them in your conscience, explaining whether you sinned alone or with another person, whether this person was a relative, and what state of life he or she was in.

If only a short time has passed since your last confession, it is enough to say the faults you have committed, without going through the commandments.

Nor should you accuse yourself conditionally, saying: I accuse myself if I have not loved God; if I have said a bad word; if I have not paid attention at Mass, and so on; *for such an accusation is of no use at all. You need only say plainly in what you have failed.*

If you have the happy lot of finding your conscience clean, say:

Father, since my last confession, by the mercy of the Lord, I do not find that I have failed in anything notable; and as certain and definite matter for this Sacrament I accuse myself of such-and-such a sin of my past life.

Here accuse yourself of one or more of the gravest sins of your past life that have already been confessed, keeping them before your mind and forming fresh sorrow for having committed them. Finally say:

I also accuse myself of all the mortal and venial sins of my whole life, for which I ask pardon again of God our Lord, with a firm purpose of amendment; and of you, Father, penance and absolution, if I am worthy of it. At the same time I ask your leave to receive Communion, unworthy though I am.

Then listen to the confessor's exhortation with great attention, without wondering whether you have forgotten something, or thinking of anything else. While he gives you absolution, bow deeply and say the act of contrition, "My Lord Jesus Christ…" (see the Night Exercise above). But if afterwards some other sin occurs to you, explain it before he gives you absolution, without interrupting the confessor's words to you on that account.

Prayer after Confession

O most merciful Jesus, Father of goodness and God of all consolation, most wise and most generous physician, who came down from heaven to earth for love of me and died on a cross, making with the blood of your veins a most effective medicine to heal all my ills, and applying it to me through the sacrament of Penance which I have just received: I give you infinite thanks for so great a benefit, and I would wish heaven and earth to praise you on my behalf for having granted me so signal a favor. I am so grateful to you for it, Lord, that now on earth and afterwards in heaven I will sing your mercies for ever (Ps. 88:2). Grant me, my Father, Creator and Redeemer, a general pardon and a plenary indulgence of all my sins. Ah, how sorry I am for having committed them!… Grant me this grace through the merits of your most holy passion and death, and through those of the most holy Virgin, your Mother and mine. I resolve to do penance to satisfy divine justice as far as I can; all that I do and suffer from now on I offer you, Lord, for your greater honor and glory and in satisfaction for my faults and sins. Ah, Lord! If until now I have offended and wronged you, from now on I want to love you, and I will love you with all the affection of my heart. Do not permit, Lord, my enemies to take advantage of my weakness again, or make me swallow once more the vomit of my sins (Prov. 26:11; 2 Pet. 2:22), which I have cast out at the confessor's feet. For this I will keep away from all the persons and places that have been occasions of sin for me, using all the means the confessor suggested to me, and not leaving out those I myself see to be suitable. Grant me this grace, Lord, for I ask it of you through the intercession of the most holy Virgin Mary and of all the Angels and Saints; and I do not doubt that I shall receive it, because my sincere petition rests on your merits and infinite mercy.

If you have the opportunity and the time, do at once the penance the confessor gave you, unless he has arranged otherwise; and if you cannot do it at once, do it as soon as possible.

Preparation for Communion

You know already that four things are indispensable for receiving the Lord worthily: the natural fast, cleanness of conscience, knowledge, and desire.

1. *The natural fast* consists in not having eaten or drunk anything at all from midnight until you have received the Lord. But I want you to know that this fast is not broken merely by putting into your mouth something that is not chewed, such as a pin, a cord, a handkerchief, and so on; nor if, while washing your face, a drop of water enters your mouth with your breath; nor by blood that may come from the gums; nor by swallowing with your saliva the remains of supper left between your teeth. Nor, finally, does having not slept all night prevent you from receiving Communion.

2. *There is cleanness of conscience* when there is no mortal sin in it. But since the devil quite often tries to prevent Communion by bringing to mind many faults forgotten in confession, I must tell you that if these faults are only slight, it is enough to be sorry for them and to receive Communion in peace. But if they are

grave, go back to the confessor if you conveniently can and accuse yourself of them. If this is not easy for you, because you are already among those going up to Communion and there is danger of being noticed or causing surprise or scandal, it is enough to make there and then an act of contrition in your heart, with the purpose of confessing, and you may receive Communion in peace. For you must know that such faults were forgiven you by virtue of the universal sorrow you brought, the absolution the confessor gave you, and the grace the Sacrament causes. It only remains to submit them to the tribunal of Penance, and you will fulfill this precept by telling them in your next confession.

3. *A person has knowledge* who reflects on and knows who Christ is, present in the consecrated host he is going to receive, and who the man is who receives him.

4. *By desire* we mean the loving longing and eagerness your soul should have to welcome the Lord into your breast. And understand that the more fervent this longing is, the greater will be the graces Jesus Christ grants you.

Some people ask whether the Lord may be received after midday. Fr. Jaén, on page 118, answers that he may, even if it has struck one, two or three in the afternoon; and on days of great crowds, at jubilees and missions when people have had to wait to make their confession, he allows greater latitude.

Some also ask how long one must go without spitting after receiving the sacred Host. Fr. Jaén answers, on page 184, that since there is no law to fix it, half an hour or a quarter of an hour will ordinarily be enough, and less still if there is need. But in that case, and if it is before eating or drinking, one should try to spit into a decent place, unless a long time has already passed since Communion.

Practical Method of Receiving Communion with Great Profit

Before receiving Communion, consider attentively who Jesus Christ is, whom you are going to receive, and who you are.

Jesus Christ is true God and true man. As God, he is Son of the eternal Father, God as the Father is God. He is all-powerful, all-rich, all-wise. He is that God at whose presence *the pillars of heaven tremble* (Job 26:11), and out of reverence for whom the Seraphim cover their faces with their wings (Isa. 6:2). He it is whom countless Angels serve. He is the Author of nature, which respects and reveres him as its creator and master, keeping his laws with the greatest faithfulness. As man, he is the Son of the most holy Virgin, the most beautiful and most perfect of all men. And being God and man, he hid himself under the veil of the accidents, so as to be able to enter within us, to be our food and life, and to fill us with every good.

And you, who are you? Ah!… You are a compound of soul and body. As to the soul, you are an ignorant creature, conceived in sin, ungrateful for God's benefits, slow to do good, quick and inclined to evil; so much so that if the arm of the Lord had not held you up, you would have fallen into the most enormous sins, and, more than that, you would already be burning in hell. As to the body, you are a wretched thing, subject to every ill and to death. You are mud, you are earth, you are dust, you are a shadow, you are nothing…

And this God, so noble, wants to come to you, who are so wretched! So you will try to adorn your soul, which I suppose is already in grace and accompanied by the indispensable virtues, namely faith, reverence, fear, humility, trust, desire and love. You will prepare your body too, by the natural fast, by clean hands and face and combed hair (though not in a worldly fashion), and by decent clothing. And finally you will recollect your senses: that is, you will not look about or talk with others without need.

Prayer before Communion

My Lord Jesus Christ, creator and preserver of heaven and earth, most loving father, most compassionate physician, all-wise teacher, most charitable shepherd of our souls: here you have this wretched sinner,

unworthy to be in your presence and more unworthy still to approach that unspeakable banquet. Ah, Lord! When I consider your infinite goodness in wishing to come to me, I am astonished… and when I look at the multitude of sins by which I have offended and wronged you all my life, I am confounded, I blush, and I feel compelled to say to you: Lord, do not come… *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord* (Luke 5:8). If the Baptist did not think himself worthy to loose the strap of your sandal (Mark 1:7), how shall I deserve so great an honor?… If fear and reverence make the Angels tremble in your presence, can I not tremble when I come before you and sit at your divine table? If the most holy Virgin, though destined to be your Mother and adorned with every excellence, prerogative and grace possible in a pure creature, nevertheless considered herself a handmaid, unworthy to conceive you in her most pure and virginal womb, can I, a wretched sinner full of imperfections and faults, have the courage to receive you within me? Ah, Lord! Does this criminal not horrify you?… Does it not disgust you to come to me and enter so vile and unclean a dwelling?

In truth, Lord, I would not have the courage to approach you if you did not first call me, saying to me as to another Zacchaeus, not once only, but as many times as there are inspirations by which you make known to me your desire to come to me: *Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for this day I must abide in thy house* (Luke 19:5). But what moves you to come to me, Lord? My merits? My virtues? How can a sinner like me speak of virtues and merits? Ah, now I understand, Lord: my miseries, my poverty… that is what moves you. O excess of love! You said that *they that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick* (Matt. 9:12); and see, that is why you wish to come: you see my urgent need, and the desire to remedy it drives you. Indeed, Lord, such is the state of my soul that I can truly say: *from the sole of the foot unto the top of the head, there is no soundness therein* (Isa. 1:6), so many are my imperfections! Nevertheless, here I am, Lord. I come before you, not because I think myself worthy of you, but because I cannot live without you. I will go to you as a beggar goes to the rich man, so that you may relieve my miseries and free me from the stifling weight of my faults and imperfections. I will go, because only you can cure the great sicknesses that afflict me. One compassionate glance, divine Physician, and my faculties and senses will be healed.

Pause here a little, and confidently uncover to him all your bodily and spiritual ills; then continue:

Most holy Virgin, since in your compassion for the bride and bridegroom of Cana in Galilee you rescued them from their difficulty, obtaining from Jesus that miraculous change of water into wine, ask him also to work a like wonder in my favor, granting me the graces I need to receive him worthily. He never refused you; you are always heard. Take my part, then; do all you can for me. Oh, how much I need it!

Holy Angels, you see that I am going to sit at the holy table and eat him who is your bread: obtain for me that I may go in the wedding garment (Matt. 22:11–12), clothed in the adornment of all the virtues.

O all you Saints who dwell in heaven! Take my part, and grant that I may come to the august Sacrament as you came to it, and that, drawing from it the fruits you drew, I may truly say: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2:20). With this faith, hope, trust and love I come to you, my Lord and my God.

Notice for before Communion

Remember that the Sacraments cause grace in proportion to the disposition of the one who receives them. Just as a fire catches more quickly the drier and more resinous the wood put to it, so in a certain sense it may be said that holy Communion, which is a divine fire, kindles in us the blaze of divine love in proportion as it finds us detached from the things of the world and made inflammable by the resin of the virtues. From this you can infer how diligent you ought to be in stripping yourself of all earthly affections and exercising yourself in all the virtues.

When you have prepared in the best way you can, and the priest who is to give holy Communion has come, say the Confiteor Deo, or the I confess, while he opens the tabernacle. Then quicken your faith and trust, and while the priest takes the ciborium, takes up the sacred Host and says Ecce Agnus Dei, say:

I adore you, O sacred Host, living bread and food of the Angels. I adore you, O my Savior: in you I believe, in you I hope, and you I love.

Then say three times with the priest, and with the greatest possible fervor, the words of the Centurion (Matt. 8:8):

My Lord Jesus Christ, I am not worthy that your divine Majesty should enter my poor dwelling; but by your most holy word may my sins be forgiven and my soul be healed and saved.

When these words are finished, let the mouth be silent and the heart speak, with fervent though brief acts of love and desire. As the priest comes near with the sacred Host, raise your head, settle the cloth under your chin with both hands, open your mouth moderately and put out your tongue a little, so that the sacred Host can easily be placed on it. When you have received it, close your mouth and let it be moistened by the saliva that naturally flows, but without moving it about in your mouth; and then swallow it. If in spite of this care it sticks to the roof of your mouth, take care not to pull at it with your fingers; free it reverently with the tip of your tongue, and if this is not enough, take a little water, and once moistened with it the Host will go down.[1]

Notice for after Communion

When you have received the Lord, recollect yourself with all your faculties and senses, either in the same chapel or in another part of the church, to make use of this most favorable occasion to deal with him. Do not imitate Judas, who as soon as he had received Communion went out, led by the devil (John 13:27, 30); nor the many other Christians who, imitating that unhappy man, also leave as soon as they can, preferring to go off with the devil rather than stay with Jesus and ask him for favors. Woe to those who act like this!… There is no reason to hide it: such people are, to say the least, ill-bred, coarse and without refinement. For is it not true that good breeding and refinement require that when a great personage comes to honor us in our house, we should entertain him at least with a decent conversation? And if, just as he took his seat or addressed his first words to us, we left him standing and turned our backs on him, would he not call our unseemly behavior savage rudeness? What name, then, shall we give to the haste with which some, on finishing Communion, leave the church at once, as if they had received no such divine guest? Shall we call it brutishness?… Oh yes, brutes they are; they are wolves, not persons. Not so? Let us see. The wolf is an animal as rapacious as it is voracious. Always fond of good mouthfuls, it never fails to gulp down the fat, well-fed lamb if it can steal it; and yet as a rule it is always gaunt and thin. And why? Because it does not chew the cud. The same thing happens to the Christians we are speaking of. They eat, it is true, or rather they devour and gulp down the spotless Lamb, Jesus, who takes away the sins of the world; and yet you will always see them thin in virtue, in spite of so excellent a morsel; and perhaps (ah, would to God this were not so true!) perhaps in continual mortal sin. And why so fatal a misfortune? Because, as the wolf eats its prey, so they eat the divine Lamb without chewing it over, without stopping to consider what they have received. Do not imitate them, then. Rather devote half an hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, to paying your respects to the most loving God whom you have had the happiness of receiving into your breast, and to asking him for favors. You may address him with the following

Prayer after Communion

Thanks, most lovable Jesus, infinite thanks be given you for the priceless benefit you have just done me in coming to me and deigning to enter the poor dwelling of my heart… And whence is this to me, so great a happiness? (Luke 1:43). I contemplate you in the arms of my soul like the aged Simeon, and enraptured by so divine a treasure I will cry out with him: I will die gladly, for I have obtained what I so much desired (Luke 2:29–30)… I have obtained the greatest happiness that can be obtained in this world. What thanks, then, can I give you for this grace, which contains not only all graces but also their Author? O holy Angels! Praise the Lord, all of you, and give him thanks for me… O Saints of heaven and just on earth! Help me to thank God

for so signal a favor. O most holy Virgin!… You who knew how to respond so perfectly to the singular benefits God bestowed on you, grant that I too may know how to respond and give him due thanks; but since this is impossible for me, give them to him for me.

I would wish, my God, that all the creatures in heaven and on earth would thank you for me; but I am well convinced that even so I would not make a worthy and fitting return. So I offer you yourself, together with my whole body and soul, faculties and senses, so that from now on I will always say with the apostle St. Paul: *I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me* (Gal. 2:20). O my God! From today on I shall always be yours; adorn me, then, as a thing that belongs to you, with all the virtues you know I need to love and serve you with all perfection.

When I see you lodged in my soul I am filled with wonder and amazement; and enraptured like the Magdalen, I cannot stop contemplating your infinite mercies. What did you see in me, Lord, to make you come? Virtues?… But how, when I am stripped of them? Merits?… Alas, I am a wretched sinner. Who, then, my Good, moved you? Ah, now I know: the miseries that oppress me and the needs under which you see me groan. How good you are, O my good God!… Let me, then, Lord, embrace your most holy feet and water them with tears of tenderness and love. No, I will not rise from your feet until, as you did to the Magdalen, you grant me a plenary indulgence of all my sins; nor will I let you go until you have given me your holy blessing (Gen. 32:26).

Oh, how I love you, my God! What a pity that I have not always loved you! When I remember that I had the courage to offend you, my face is covered with shame and a sharp sorrow breaks my heart. Yes; with the blood of my veins I would wish to wipe out my sins. I would wish that the days on which I offended you and did not love you were not counted in the number of years I have lived. But from now on… heaven and earth, be witnesses of my resolve! From now on I will offend you no more, and with your grace I will love you with all the affection of my heart.

And not only that, Lord: I will also try to make the whole world love you and no one offend you. And since I contemplate you seated in my heart as on a throne of mercy, ready to grant me graces, and not only urging me to ask for them but complaining that until now I have not asked you, I make amends for my negligence and ask you: first, to convert all poor sinners; do you not see, Lord, how they plunge from abyss to abyss? Second, to grant the just final perseverance in your holy service; what good would a good beginning be to them if their end were unhappy? Third, to free the blessed souls from the pains of purgatory and bring them to your glory; you know well how much they love you and long for you! Fourth, to grant my parents, friends and benefactors all the graces they need. Fifth, that the Church may triumph everywhere, and our kingdom prosper. Sixth, that you may bless all who have a claim on my prayers. Grant to all of us your divine grace, your holy love and fear, and at last glory, where you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

When this prayer is finished, as circumstances allow, consider slowly how much Jesus did and suffered for you. Try to join the Angels who surround Jesus, adoring him in your breast; and in honor of the nine choirs they form, say nine times the Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be, offering the first six to Jesus, whom you will embrace inwardly, remembering his five wounds and crown of thorns. Then, to gain the plenary indulgence granted by Pius VII in 1821 (which by another decree he extended to every day for those who are accustomed to confess and receive Communion every eight days), say the following

Prayer

Behold, O my beloved and good Jesus, I cast myself upon my knees in your most holy presence. I pray and beseech you with the greatest fervor to impress upon my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity, true sorrow for my sins, and a firm purpose of never offending you again; while I, with all the love and

compassion of which I am capable, consider your five wounds, beginning with what the holy prophet David said of you, O my God: *They have dug my hands and feet. They have numbered all my bones* (Ps. 21:17–18).

Finally say the three Our Fathers that remain of the nine, offering them to the most holy Virgin so that she may obtain for you humility, purity and love.

If you have time and feel moved to devotion, you may spend some time in a holy way in one of the following meditations.

First Meditation: The Child Jesus

If the most holy Virgin put the Child Jesus into your arms, what would you say to him? Oh, how you would adore him!… This is no exaggeration; it is a reality. When you have received Communion you have Jesus… Ask him, then, for his divine love.

Second Meditation: Jesus Is Light, the Sun of Justice

What would this world be without the sun? Darkness! Cold! Want! That is what there would be in it. Well, man without Jesus would be still more unhappy than the world without the sun. Ask him, then, to enlighten your mind with his grace, and to warm and kindle in your breast a blaze of divine love.

Consider him as father, as spouse, as lover, as friend, as teacher, as shepherd, as physician. Uncover to him your faults, your depraved inclinations, and so on, and ask him for a remedy for everything.

Some, after receiving Communion, think of themselves as sick in their senses and faculties, and of Jesus as the physician, and they say to him: Lord, heal these eyes of mine, so that they may not look at what they should not; heal this chattering, lying, gossiping tongue of mine, and so on; heal these ears of mine, these hands, these feet, and so on; heal my understanding, my memory and my will. *Heal my soul, for I have sinned against thee* (Ps. 40:5). Happy is he who receives Communion with lively faith and believes that he has Jesus within him when he has just received Communion; and happy will he be who asks him with fervent hope, for he will obtain, as the blind, the paralytics and the other sick obtained, as the Gospel tells.

There are others who, as soon as they have received Communion, contemplate Jesus as seated in their heart; and the soul calls all its faculties and senses to adore Jesus and be blessed by him. As, when a great lord visits a house, the master of the house presents his children and servants to that lord and puts them at his service, so the soul should present its faculties and senses to Jesus and offer them to him. It will give him its whole heart for ever, consecrate it all to the love of Jesus, and love no other object but Jesus and for Jesus.

After spending some time in a holy way in one of these considerations, withdraw with all modesty, and do not forget so great a favor all day long. He who goes to a wedding in the morning goes about in his best clothes all day; so he who had the happy lot of attending the wedding feast of Jesus should be adorned with virtues all day. But it is not only on this day that you must try to live virtuously and commit no mortal sin, but all your life, as we read of a young Indian in the following example:

"A missionary in the Indies writes that, after converting a young man, instructing him in the catechism, baptizing him and giving him holy Communion, he left that place to go and preach in other villages. A year later the missionary returned, and when the young man heard of it he went to him at once and asked him for holy Communion. 'Gladly, my son, I will give it to you,' said the missionary, 'but you must first prepare by confessing the sins you have committed this year.' 'What do I hear?' answered the young man. 'What! Is it possible, Father, that a Christian, after receiving Jesus into his heart in holy Communion, should cast him out by sin and put the devil in his place? Tell me, Father, is so much ingratitude possible?… so much iniquity?… so much wickedness?'"

Like this young man, then, you must try to be always in grace, and to desire holy Communion. Oh, if he had been able to receive Communion often, how well he would have done it! Receive Communion sacramentally, then, as often as you can with your director's leave, for by it you will gain much glory. The Venerable María de Ágreda says the most holy Virgin told her that the glory many who received Communion will have shall be equal to that of many martyrs who did not receive it. But when you cannot receive sacramentally, make up for it by spiritual Communion, of which we shall now speak.

[1] *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* 160–161.

Spiritual Communion

Spiritual communion is the easiest, shortest and most useful devotion, and at the same time the sweetest and most delightful occupation. It can be made in every place and at every time, without having to ask for it, without losing time, without holding back our tasks or occupations; nor can sickness prevent it. It is enough to want it. Hence Blessed Águeda of the Cross used to communicate spiritually a hundred times during the day and as many times during the night; and the life of Blessed Juana de la Cruz may be said to have been an uninterrupted spiritual communion, so easy is it. As for its usefulness, it is enough to say that Jesus Christ, appearing to this same Juana, told her that the grace given her in spiritual communion was as great as what she received when she communicated sacramentally. Even if the grace given you is less, because you are less fervent, it will always be great if you try to make it with all the devotion and fervor you can.

Spiritual communion, then, consists in a burning desire to receive Jesus sacramentally and to share in the graces and favors he lavishes on those who have the happy lot of approaching the holy table. But this desire requires that there be no mortal sin on the conscience, or that one first rouse oneself to contrition for one's sins. To make it easier, here is the

Practical Method of Communicating Spiritually

O Jesus, my Lord! I most firmly believe that you are really present in the august Sacrament of the altar. Ah, my God! How happy my lot would be if I could receive you into my heart!… I hope, Lord, that you will come to it and fill it with your grace.

I love you, my sweetest Jesus… I am sorry that I have not always loved you!… Would that I had never offended or wronged you, sweetest Jesus of my heart!… I desire to receive you into my poor dwelling.

Here be silent, adore, and give yourself to Jesus without reserve. Crede, et manducasti \[Believe, and you have eaten\], says St. Augustine.[1] *If with lively faith you desire to receive Communion, you have already communicated spiritually.*

[1] St. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 25, 12: *Crede, et manducasti*.

Renewal of the Promises Made in Holy Baptism, Which Should Be Made at Least Once a Year, on One's Birthday

O my God! I give you infinite thanks for having created me in your image and likeness, for having given me new birth in holy Baptism, for having given me in it your grace and the gifts and virtues of the Holy Spirit, and for having made me a child of your Church.

On that day, so happy for me, I not only renounced Satan through the mouth of my godfather, and all his works, pomps and vanities, but I also professed to believe in one only God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit; to believe the Catholic Church, the communion of saints, and all the other truths revealed by you; and finally I resolved to live and die in this belief and in the keeping of your holy commandments.

But woe is me, my God! How badly I have kept such holy and solemn promises! I have listened to the suggestions of the devil; I have fought under the banners of Satan; I have gone after the pomps of the devil, dragged along by the pleasures and vanities of the world; I have preferred honors, riches and other earthly things to the spiritual and eternal goods you promise your children. When I ought to have loved you above all things, I have put you after the vilest things and for their sake have despised you by sinning. When I ought to have lived for you alone and consecrated to you all my thoughts, words and works, I have lived only for myself and directed them all to the satisfaction of my whims. Woe is me, for I have broken your holy laws, those of the Church, and those of my state! But, Lord, I renounce once more everything that is not you. From today I detest and abhor all my iniquities; I humbly ask your pardon for them all; and I hope that by the merits of your beloved Son you will forgive me them.

Deign, my God, to accept the renewal I make on this day of the promises I made before the whole Church on the day of my baptism, which I intend to keep with all exactness and faithfulness. To this end, now that I have greater knowledge, I say that I renounce Satan, all his pomps and all his works. I will never listen to the devil, nor to anything that has to do with him. I will take care not to let myself be carried away by pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth and lying, and I will turn my back on everything that is sin, because I know that sin is the work of Satan. I will take care to root out of my heart the love of the riches, honors, pomps and pleasures of the world, because I know that all this is nothing but a snare with which the devil, our enemy, tries to catch our souls. I will try to meditate on the vanity and frailty of the goods of this world, so that my heart may always be free of every earthly affection and love only you, who are my center, my infinite, eternal and incomprehensible good.

Yes, Lord, yes: I want to live and die in faith, hope and charity, and in the obedience and faithfulness I have promised you. I believe all that the holy Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church believes, and I reject all that she rejects.

Never again will I put my hope in riches, honors, beauty, youth, or any other created thing, but in you, my God. Yes, in you I place all my happiness; you alone are the object of my renewed hope. The days of life that remain to me I will spend in loving and serving you with all faithfulness and love.

I want to love you, my God, with all my heart, with all my soul and with all my strength. From today I consecrate to you all my thoughts, desires, words and actions, my body, my soul, my goods, all I possess and may possess; and I am resolved to use nothing in my power except for your greater honor and glory and according to your most holy will.

I love you, my God, and I will love you always more and more with all the affection of my heart, and never cease to love you. Neither life nor death, neither the hope of good nor the fear of evil, neither my friends nor my enemies, nor any created thing shall make me break the word of faithfulness I have just given you (compare Rom. 8:38–39), which I now renew before heaven and earth, whom I call as witnesses. With entire submission I subject myself to your commandments, and likewise to those of all my superiors.

Such, Lord, is my new resolution and will, in which I desire to live and die; and since you are its author, I hope that you will help me with your grace to carry it out, for you know well that without your grace I can do absolutely nothing (John 15:5).

Renew in me, O divine Redeemer, the spirit of faith, hope, charity, humility and the other virtues you poured into me in Baptism, so that, strengthened by them, I may rise above the concupiscence that drags me to sin, resist my enemies, and be faithful to what I have just promised you. All this I ask of you through the merits of your most precious blood, through the merits and intercession of your beloved Mother, of the Angels and Saints in heaven and the just on earth. Amen.

Exhortation to the Christian

You will be happy in this world and the next, O Christian, if you try to keep exactly the promises you made to God in holy Baptism. But woe to you if you are unfaithful, for an endless hell awaits you! On the day of judgment, before which you must infallibly appear, your great accuser will be the white hood or garment with which your head was covered, which, as you know, signifies the purity of life that should go with you all your life. If not, attend to the following example. The histories relate that a certain Elpidophorus received Baptism at the hands of Muritta, a deacon of Carthage; and afterwards, apostatizing from the Catholic religion, he became an Arian heretic and a judge against the Catholics. Now it happened that Muritta, as a faithful worshipper of the cross of Jesus Christ, was arrested and brought before the tribunal of Elpidophorus. But as soon as Muritta found himself before this apostate, he took out of his pocket the white garment he had put on him at Baptism, and reminding him by it of the promises made to God, which he was now breaking, he said to him: "This, Elpidophorus, minister of error, this is the white garment that will accuse you before the God of majesty at the judgment to which you must be brought."[1]

I say the same to you, Christian: woe to you if, instead of being faithful to what you promised in Baptism, you apostatize or are unfaithful to the word you gave! Woe to you if not only do you fail to keep your promise, but also criticize, censure, mock or jeer at the conduct of true Christians! Woe to you, I repeat, for the hood, the lighted candle that signifies the light of the good example you must give, and everything else that is done in holy Baptism, will be your greatest and most terrible accusers on that dreadful day when Jesus, whom you now persecute by sinning, is to judge you! Whether you believe it or not, whether you remember it or forget it, the day will come (perhaps it is not far off!) when you must die and be judged, and saved or damned according to your good or bad works; and however much you turn it over, you will not escape it.

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[1] the story is told by Victor of Vita, *History of the Vandal Persecution* V, 9–10 (Africa, about 484).

Instruction on the Mass

Introduction

Holy Mass is the best of all the things in which a Christian can be occupied, whether to praise God, to thank him for the benefits received, to obtain what he needs for salvation, or to make satisfaction to him for the faults committed. At Mass, says St. John Chrysostom, the Christian does not pray alone: the Angels and the Saints pray with him, and even Jesus Christ himself. Happy are those who hear it devoutly, not only on Sundays and holy days of obligation, as they are bound to, but on all the other days as well, for they lay up great merits for this world and the next. St. Louis, King of France, heard two each day; St. Isidore also heard it every day before beginning his work, as did many other Saints whom it would take long to list. Do the same, dearly beloved Christian, even if you are not rich or idle, but a poor day laborer, as St. Isidore was. Remember the proverb: *Hearing Mass and giving the mule its barley never lost anyone a day's journey.*

Perhaps what keeps you from hearing holy Mass every day will be not so much the fear of falling behind in your work, or lack of time, as the fear of what worldly people and gossips will say. If so, I tell you that you should take no notice of them, as Jesus Christ teaches us (Matt. 15:14). Do not listen to them, for being blind they set themselves up as guides for the blind; or they are like the gardener's dog, which neither eats the cabbages nor lets anyone else eat them. Surely, when you go to the house of some great lord to ask a favor, you do not mind the dogs that are barking at the door. You must do just the same with these dogs of the world, who try to frighten you with the howls of their criticism and mockery so that you will not enter the house of the Lord of heaven and earth, where he is to grant you every kind of temporal and eternal grace. Do not forget that the church is the house of God and the gate of heaven (Gen. 28:17), which you should long to enter; still less should you forget that not only will the dogs, that is, wicked men, not enter there, but they will

be cast outside, as St. John declares (Apoc. 22:15).

Remember that St. Isidore, St. Louis and other Saints were also criticized; and I would like you to answer such people with these words of St. Louis: “Surely they would not say a word if I spent twice the time hunting in the hills or playing at dice.” Even of Mary Magdalen we know that while she once squandered her money on the vanities, amusements and follies of the world, she received applause instead of criticism; but as soon as she resolved heroically to consecrate herself entirely to the service of Jesus Christ, a thousand serpent tongues spat their venom at her; and, who would believe it! even the Apostles, following Judas, criticized what she did, so that Jesus Christ himself had to become her advocate and defender (John 12:3–8; Matt. 26:8–13). Believe me, then, Christian: hear Mass every day with the advice of your director, without failing in your household duties, and despise whatever worldly people may say, or those who call themselves spiritual. The day will come when Jesus will be your defender, as he was the Magdalen’s then.

When you are on your way to church to hear Mass, think that you are going to Calvary to be present at that bloody sacrifice Jesus offered there; for the sacrifice of the altar is the same as that one, with this difference: on Calvary the blood was really shed, and here it is not shed; there he offered himself once only, and here he is offered every day. But both this sacrifice and that are offered to save and redeem us. On Calvary he made use of the malice of the Jews as his instruments, but on the altar he makes use of the excessive love with which he loves us; and it is this love that obliges him to renew the same sacrifice every day, and not once only, but as many times as there are Masses celebrated each day.

When you are already in church to hear Mass, quicken your faith and reflect: if you had to witness the sacrifice or death of your father or husband, oh, what would be the sorrow and anguish of your heart! Well, this is no fiction; it is a reality. When you hear Mass you are present at the sacrifice and death of your father and of the spouse of your soul, Jesus. Ah, if Christians filled their minds with these truths… it would be impossible… they would not laugh, or chatter, or sleep, or commit the thousands upon thousands of irreverences that are committed every day in our churches, to the great sorrow of Religion and the scandal of the little ones. What sorrow! One cannot write this invective against those who are Christians only in name without trembling at the sight of the punishments the wrath of God is about to bring down upon us for so many acts of disrespect, and without such atrocious crimes, committed at the very time of the most august act of our divine Religion, covering one’s face with shame while they freeze the blood in one’s veins. I would like to draw a veil to hide an ominous and horrifying picture… but it is all too true. By such atrocious, public and, alas, daily acts of disrespect they give, without wishing or intending it, a proof that the sacrifice of our altars is the same as that of Calvary: for just as the Jews on Calvary mocked Jesus, gambled, laughed, chattered and denied his divinity, so such Christians, a disgrace to Christianity, laugh, chatter and turn their backs on the same Jesus. Those who behaved so toward Jesus on Calvary carried in their bodies a legion of devils that drove them to such wickedness; the Christians who are irreverent in church are in mortal sin and are therefore slaves of the devil, if we do not also call them devils, since by their sacrilegious irreverences they drive others to similar disrespect.

Try, then, dear Christian who read this, try to be attentive and devout in church, whether you are attending Mass or have come in for some other devotion, and never chatter there, for *my house shall be called the house of prayer* (Matt. 21:13), and not a house of chatter. If necessity or real usefulness requires it, let it be with as few words as possible and in a low voice; and if someone obliges you to answer, let it be briefly too, and without anyone hearing. Otherwise you make yourself guilty of the same offense as the one who speaks to you, and Jesus would bring down on you, as on him, a shower of lashes that would drive you out of the temple now and afterwards out of glory, as he once drove out the Jews who profaned the temple of Jerusalem (John 2:15).

I also earnestly beg you to come to church in modest clothing that does not offend against decency. If you are a man, at least with your jacket on, and never wrapped in a blanket gypsy-fashion. If you are a woman,

without a scandalous neckline, without your sleeves rolled up like a tripe-seller, and with your head covered in the fashion of your country, not with a transparent veil and still less uncovered; for St. Paul reproves this (1 Cor. 11:5–6), and the holy Fathers after him.[1] Is it not true that if necessity or interest obliges you to appear before some personage or the authorities, you try to go decently and neatly dressed? Why, then, will you not do at least as much when you come before Jesus, King of kings and Lord of lords, on entering the church? Finally, I warn you never to let any dog go with you to church, for this is indecent and reprehensible.

When Mass is over, after the priest has withdrawn from the altar and you have finished your private devotions, leave the church with great modesty. Taking holy water from the font, make the sign of the cross as you did on entering, and make a reverence to the Lord (on both knees if the Blessed Sacrament is exposed, on one if it is reserved in the tabernacle, and if it is not there, a bow of the head to the principal image). Try not to commit irreverences, or make scribbles when you form the sign of the cross, for when it is made badly Satan is pleased. Let the people go out in order, without pushing, and not as if you had to escape from the church because it was about to fall down. Let most of the people go out first, and then you can leave calmly, and so you will have time to cross yourself unhurriedly. And so that you can do this, I am going to give you a short explanation of this sign of the Christian.

To sign oneself and to cross oneself is an abbreviated profession of the chief mysteries of our most holy Religion. In signing ourselves we make three crosses, or the sign of the cross three times, by which we confess one God in three persons: the cross we make on the forehead symbolizes the Father, the one on the mouth symbolizes the Son, and the one on the breast symbolizes the Holy Spirit. In crossing ourselves we make a cross from the forehead to the waist and from the left shoulder to the right. Bringing the hand down from the forehead to the waist symbolizes that the Son, the second person of the most holy Trinity, came down from the bosom of the eternal Father into that of the most holy Virgin Mary; and by passing the hand from the left shoulder to the right we signify that the mystery of the Incarnation was the work of the Holy Spirit. Finally the hands are closed or joined, and by this union we symbolize the union of the two natures, divine and human, in one single person, who is Christ. The hands so joined are brought to the breast or kissed, to show the great veneration with which we regard the high mysteries symbolized by the crosses and actions we make in signing and crossing ourselves; and the cross that is formed symbolizes Jesus Christ crucified.

Oh, if Christians reflected on what they do and say when they cross themselves, and on what the crosses they make symbolize, with how much more devotion and frequency they would use the sign of the cross, in imitation of St. Louis, who crossed himself very often, saying that his mother had taught him so! Ah, from how many evils of soul and body they would be delivered, which is precisely what we ask of God in pronouncing the words that go with the act of crossing ourselves! So it was with St. Benedict, who by the sign of the cross escaped the death prepared for him in a cup of poison, and with many others I could name. Follow these counsels, therefore, my dearest in Jesus Christ: use the holy cross often, but especially when you get up and go to bed, when you leave the house, when you enter and leave the church, and when you begin any work. I would like this to be one of the first lessons that teachers give their pupils, fathers and mothers their children, and masters those in their service; for if they learned it as children, oh, from how many harms they would all be preserved!…

A Short Explanation of the Mysteries Represented in the Mass

The Priest, vested in the sacred vestments, represents Christ our Redeemer in his sacred Passion.

The *Amice*, with which he covers his head as he begins to vest, symbolizes the crown of thorns, and the cloth with which they covered his divine face and mocked him, saying: *Prophesy, who is he that struck thee?* (Luke 22:64).

The *Alb* symbolizes the white garment in which they treated him as a madman in Herod's house, despising him (Luke 23:11).

The *Cincture* symbolizes the cords with which he was bound in the garden.

The *Stole* recalls the rope he wore round his neck when they led him away a prisoner.

The *Maniple* is a symbol of the cord with which they tied him to the pillar to scourge him.

The *Chasuble* symbolizes the purple garment in which they clothed him in Pilate's house, when he was already crowned with thorns.

The *Chalice* represents the tomb, and the *Corporal* the shroud in which his most holy body was wrapped.

The *Introit*, or entrance of the Mass, signifies the great longing with which the holy Fathers in limbo awaited the coming of Christ into the world to redeem them and us; and to signify their cries, the *Kyries* are said immediately, which in our language mean: Lord, have mercy on us.

The *Gloria in excelsis* reminds us of the joy of the Angels and shepherds when Christ was born.

The *Prayers* the priest says after the *Dominus vobiscum* are a symbol of the many times Christ prayed for us in the course of his life.

The *Epistle* symbolizes the preaching of the Prophets, especially that of the Baptist.

The *Gradual*, or what is read after the Epistle, signifies Christ's solitude in the desert; and the *Alleluia* represents the services the Angels rendered him after the devil had tempted him and he had come out victorious.

The *Gospel* signifies the preaching of Christ. For the reading of the Gospel the Missal is carried to the other side of the altar, to signify that Christ passed from one town to another preaching the Gospel. While the Gospel is read we stand, to show the readiness with which we must obey the law of Christ, which is proclaimed to us in the Gospel. At the end of the Gospel we say *Laus tibi, Christe*, bowing the head in sign of submission.

The *Creed* is a summary of all the Christian must believe; and the priest kneels at the *Et homo factus est* to show the great humility of the Lord in taking our nature, and how much, therefore, we must humble ourselves before God, who is our Lord.

The *offering* the priest makes of the host and chalice reminds us of the most ready and entire willingness with which Christ offered himself to suffer and die for us.

The priest's *turning to the people* and saying *Orate, fratres* reminds us of the moment when Christ, after praying in the garden with a sweat of blood, came to his disciples and said to them: *Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation* (Matt. 26:41).

The *Preface* and *Sanctus* symbolize the solemn and public entry of Christ into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and the joy with which the people received him.

In the *Canon* the priest says the prayers in secret, reminding us that Christ withdrew from the Jews and went in secret with his disciples to Ephrem (John 11:54); and also to inspire in us a great reverence, for it is well known that what is done with too much publicity becomes common and is easily despised.

The host and chalice are *raised* to remind us that Christ was lifted up on the cross.

The *Pater noster* symbolizes the words Christ addressed to the eternal Father just before he expired; and the short time the priest remains silent after the *Pater noster* signifies the time Christ was in the tomb and his soul went down to the bosom of Abraham to set free the souls of the holy fathers who awaited his coming.

The *Pax Domini* symbolizes the appearance of Christ to his disciples and to the holy women after he rose again.

The *Agnus Dei* reminds us that after his resurrection Christ ascended into heaven to be our advocate there.

The *last Prayers* the priest says are a symbol of those Christ offers for us to the eternal Father in heaven.

The *Ite, missa est* signifies that the priest has acted as ambassador and minister sent by God to offer him that sacrifice for the whole Catholic Church and for the souls in purgatory, and to obtain divine grace for all.

The *Blessing* the priest gives at the end is a sign of the one Christ will give the just on the day of the last judgment.

Method for Hearing Holy Mass Devoutly

Offering

O my God, I offer you this sacrifice of the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ: in witness that I acknowledge you as my supreme Lord and Creator; in thanksgiving for all the benefits you have deigned to give, not only to me but to all other creatures; in satisfaction for my sins and those of all men; for the relief of the souls in purgatory, especially those most in need and those to whom I have the greatest obligation; and finally, to obtain from your divine mercy the grace of conversion for sinners and of perseverance for the just, so that we may live and die in your grace. Amen.

At the Confession

When the priest reaches the altar, cross yourself, say the general Confession (the Confiteor) and the following

Prayer. My Lord God Jesus Christ, who as your passion drew near willed to be afflicted and to suffer for me, and to be comforted by an Angel in the garden of Gethsemani: grant me grace to bear with holy resignation all pains and troubles, so that, suffering with you, I may afterwards have the consolation of sharing in the merits of your most holy passion. Amen.

At the Introit

Prayer. O my most patient Jesus, who willed to be sold and betrayed with the kiss of the treacherous Judas, to be seized and bound by armed men and taken to the house of Annas: do not let me fall into any sin, or commit treachery, or harm my neighbor at the prompting of some wicked man or of the evil spirit; but let me do your holy will in all things. Amen.

At the Kyrie eleison

It signifies the most holy Trinity, of whom mercy is asked three times.

Prayer. O my most merciful Savior, who, looking with eyes of mercy upon Peter, who had denied you three times, gave him bitter tears of sincere penance: look on me too with merciful eyes, so that I may weep for my sins before you and deserve from your mercy the graces I need never to deny you in thought, word or deed. Amen.

At the Gloria in excelsis

Prayer. O my most lovable Creator, to whom the Angels sang glory and praise, proclaiming peace on earth on the day you were born to begin to suffer for me: help me with your love, so that I may love you and worthily praise you for all you suffered for me from the manger to the cross; and give me inward and outward peace, so that I may always be united with you and with my neighbors. Amen.

At the First Dominus vobiscum

Prayer. O shining light of the eternal Father, who enlightened the Magi kings so that they might adore you, and willed to be circumcised in order to suffer and shed your blood for me: enlighten my soul so that I may adore you as almighty and offer you the myrrh of mortification, the incense of prayer, and the gold of perfect charity, being circumcised and set apart from all the things of this world. Amen.

At the Epistle and Gradual

It signifies how the Apostles preached penance.

Prayer. O all-wise Teacher, who instructed the Apostles to teach men the Catholic truths, and yet willed to be led and falsely accused before Pilate's tribunal: teach me to turn away from the false doctrines of wicked men, and to believe and put into practice the truths you teach me through your ministers. Amen.

At the Gospel

Prayer. O infinite Wisdom, who preached to men to turn them from sin, and for love of me willed to be led from the house of Herod to that of Pilate, so that, being reconciled, they became close friends (Luke 23:12): grant that, rising above the plots of the enemies of my soul, I may take occasion from them to conform myself more and more to your divine will. Amen.

At the Creed

It signifies the fruit of the Gospel; and the mouth confesses what the heart believes.

Prayer. O my most loving Redeemer, who suffered so many pains to instruct me in your holy faith, and gave such fortitude to the Martyrs that by their invincible constancy they overcame the wicked fury of the tyrants: give me a lively faith to believe all that you taught and that your holy Church proposes and commands us to believe; and may I live and die in this same holy faith. Amen.

At the Uncovering of the Chalice and the Offertory

It signifies that the doctrine of Christ produces faith, the witness of his works.

Prayer. O most innocent Jesus, who willed to be stripped, scourged and crowned with thorns by those inhuman executioners: grant that I may strip myself of all earthly affections, putting all my care and love in you, and offer myself with my whole will to suffer all adversities and troubles for the honor and glory of your divine Majesty. Amen.

At the Lavabo

It signifies how Pilate washed his hands after declaring Jesus innocent.

Prayer. My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, who, though declared innocent and without fault by the governor Pilate, did not refuse to hear the furious shouts and cries of the unbelieving Jews: grant me your holy grace, so that I may live in innocence among the enemies of my soul and never be disturbed or afflicted by evil thoughts or by the will of wicked men. Amen.

At the Preface and Sanctus

It signifies the entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem, and how the Jews sang Sanctus to him.

Prayer. O King of Israel, whose triumphal entry into Jerusalem was celebrated with songs of joy and applause, and who yet willed to be reviled by the same people and condemned by Pilate to die on a cross: grant that I may hate all worldly satisfactions, embrace contempt, and place my glory in carrying the cross of mortification and of penance for my sins. Amen.

At the Canon

Prayer. O most faithful Shepherd of our souls, who loved them to the point of giving your life for them, having first suffered countless insults and injuries in your passion: I beg you, Lord, to give me grace to bear for love of you all slanders and persecutions, so that after my death I may rest in you and bless you for all eternity. Amen.

At the Consecration

Prayer. O most gentle Jesus, who at the Last Supper put an end to the figures of the old law and gave yourself to the Apostles, body, soul and divinity, in the most holy Sacrament: put an end to my sins, and make me a sharer in the gentleness and sweetness of that heavenly Bread. So may you live in me and I in you! Amen.

At the Elevation of the Host

Prayer. I adore you, O sacred Body of my Lord Jesus Christ, who on the altar of the cross were a worthy sacrifice for the redemption of the whole world.

At the Elevation of the Chalice

It signifies how Christ shed his most sacred blood from his wounds.

Prayer. I adore you, precious Blood of my Lord Jesus Christ, who, shed upon the cross, were offered to the eternal Father for our salvation.

At the Rest of the Canon after the Elevation of the Host and Chalice

Prayer. My Lord God Jesus Christ, who, nailed hand and foot to the cross, prayed to the eternal Father for the whole human race, and especially for those who had just crucified you: give me, I beg you, true meekness and patience, so that, according to your precept and example, I may love my enemies and do good to those who hate me and do me harm (Matt. 5:44). Amen.

At the Omnis honor et gloria

It signifies how Joseph and Nicodemus took Christ down from the cross.

Prayer. O my Savior Jesus Christ, who, shedding your blood on the cross, entrusted your most holy Mother to John your beloved disciple, and him to your Mother: I entrust myself to you, imitating the closeness with which you entrusted those two to each other, so that as a reward for this fitting act I may deserve to be united to you by love and, through the intercession of those two, to be preserved from all evil in dangers and adversities. Amen.

At the Sed libera nos a malo

Prayer. O my sweetest Jesus, as your soul, united to the divinity, went down into limbo to set free the souls of the holy Fathers, I beg you to draw mine out of the limbo of sin, delivering it from hell, so that on leaving this life it may go as soon as possible to sing your praises with the holy Fathers in glory. Amen.

At the Breaking of the Host

It signifies how Christ broke bread for the disciples at Emmaus, and they knew him by it.

Prayer. O infinite Wisdom, who after your resurrection appeared to the disciples going to Emmaus and made yourself known in the breaking of bread, leaving them full of wonder and consolation (Luke 24:30–35): I beg you, Lord, to deign to show me all that may be useful for my salvation, so that I may enjoy the wonderful fruits of your Resurrection. Amen.

At the Pax Domini

It signifies the appearance of the risen Christ to his disciples, giving them peace.

Prayer. O most glorious Jesus, who in your triumphant Resurrection appeared to your disciples and urged on them peace and union: grant, Lord, that my soul may rise again to the life of grace, never again to depart from you, so that it may always love you and deserve to ascend with you to the heavenly homeland, to enjoy that endless peace and eternal rest. Amen.

At the Agnus Dei

It signifies how Christ gave his disciples power to forgive sins.

Prayer. My Lord Jesus Christ, since, at the sight of your patience in torments and shameful death, many struck their breasts, wept for their sins and were converted (Luke 23:48): I beg you, by your most holy passion and death, to grant me a sincere sorrow for my sins, and that I may never offend you again. Amen.

At the Communion and Postcommunion

It signifies how Christ ate with his disciples before his Ascension.

Prayer. O most pure Jesus, who for love of me willed to be laid in a new tomb of stone; who on the third day after your burial rose again; who for forty days appeared several times to your beloved Apostles, giving them the most evident proofs of your Resurrection, and clothing them and their successors with your power to forgive sins: grant, my Lord and God, that by a good confession made to your ministers I may rise again to the life of grace, that my heart may be purified and renewed, and that one day I may at last appear in a white robe among your elect in the heavenly homeland (Apoc. 7:9). Amen.

At the Last Dominus vobiscum

It signifies how Christ ascended into heaven by his own power.

Prayer. My Lord Jesus Christ, who, when the forty days after your glorious Resurrection were fulfilled, ascended into heaven in the presence of your disciples: grant, I pray, that for love of you my soul may weary of all earthly things and aspire only to the eternal, longing for you, O my Lord, as the fountain of all happiness and the sanctuary of all rest for the Christian soul. Amen.

When the Priest Gives the Blessing

It signifies how Christ, according to his promise, sent the Holy Spirit.

Prayer. Most loving Jesus, who sent the Holy Spirit to your disciples when they were rapt in the highest contemplation: cleanse my heart entirely, I beg you, so that the same divine Spirit, finding a pleasing dwelling in my soul, may deign to adorn it and console it with his divine gifts and graces. Amen.

At the Gospel of St. John

It signifies the mysteries of the divinity and humanity of Christ.

Prayer. O Jesus, most ardent zealot for the salvation of souls, who through the Apostles made known to the nations the mysteries of your divinity and humanity, whose representation has just been accomplished in the holy sacrifice of the Mass: with the deepest submission I beg you, my Lord, to be pleased to bring me to glory, where, seeing you face to face, I may praise you for ever. Amen.

When the Gospel is over, kneel and say:

I give you thanks, divine and sovereign Lord, for the benefits you have just bestowed on me in letting me hear this holy sacrifice of the Mass. Forgive me the faults I have committed during it, and grant that the

memory of your passion and death may remain imprinted on my heart, and that I may have true sorrow for my sins, since they were the cause of your sufferings. Amen.

Say an Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed, then the Act of Contrition, "My Lord Jesus Christ…", and finally say:

Lord, there I leave you my heart. With your blessing I will go about my duties; give it to me, then, Lord. *And crossing yourself, say:* May the blessing of God almighty, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, come down upon me and remain in me for ever. Amen.

Virgin Mary, be always my protection and guide. Amen.

When the priest does not say the Gloria or the Creed at Mass, you may leave out the prayer that goes with them.

Hearing Mass with Mental Prayer

If you prefer to occupy yourself in mental prayer, you can hear Mass meditating on some scene of the Passion, or saying the holy Rosary, contemplating especially the sorrowful mysteries. To make it easier for you, after saying the first mystery, and imagining that you see Jesus in his agony in the garden, speak to yourself in this way:

My soul, who is this who suffers? The Son of God made man for love of me… The Son of the eternal Father… the King of heaven and earth… my God… my Father… my Creator… my Redeemer…

And what does he suffer? Ah, what terrible and cruel pains!… They must surely have been most horrible and dreadful, since the mere thought of them threw him into so mortal an agony that it drew from him an abundant sweat of blood… *My Father*, our good Jesus cried to his eternal Father, *my Father… if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me… Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt* (Matt. 26:39). Here all the torments of his passion and death came before him: the five thousand lashes that were to open and wound his sacred back, the seventy-two thorns that were to pierce his most holy head, the blows, the spittle, the mockery, the contempt, the cross, the nails, the gall and vinegar, the insults, and above all our ingratitude.

And for whom does he suffer this? For me, an unhappy sinner; for me, who have basely offended him so many, many times; for me, who, as far as it lay with me, have crucified him again with unheard-of cruelty every time I have offended him mortally (Heb. 6:6)…

And why does he suffer this? Because he wants to bring me to heaven; because he does not want me to be damned; because he does not want me to fall into those abysses of fire in which I should have burned… raged… and despaired eternally for my sins…

And in view of all this, shall I not esteem my God, who has loved me to such an extreme? Shall I not hate and weep for my sins, which have caused my God and Lord so many pains? Can I fail to be patient in the troubles he is pleased to send me in satisfaction for my sins, knowing that by them I have so often deserved the horrible pains of hell? Ah, my God!… Yes, I will die rather than sin… I will never offend you again… I now resolve to accept all my pains and troubles in a spirit of penance, and I offer them to you in union with those you suffered for love of me, so that, joined to yours, they may serve me as satisfaction for the many, many sins I have committed. Ah, my God and my Father!… Would that I had never offended you!… Would that I had always served and loved you!… Most holy Virgin, divine Mother, since you are the refuge of sinners and the Mother of divine love, obtain for me from your Son the grace that, weeping now and detesting my sins, not merely for fear of punishment but because they are offenses against a God of infinite goodness, I may obtain his grace and friendship, and afterwards eternal glory. Amen. *And to oblige you the more I will greet you with an Our Father and ten Hail Marys.*

If you know how to occupy yourself in these holy thoughts, even if you do nothing else during the whole Mass and say not a single decade of the Rosary, your Mass will be well heard, and this time well spent in the holy service of God. But if you do not know how to enter into these holy considerations, whether because you are distracted (so long as you are not so willingly), or because of dryness and lack of felt devotion, or for other reasons by which the Lord will often test you to detach you from the things of the world and even from yourself, you must not be troubled on that account. Rather, take courage to be patient, at the example of Jesus Christ, who for three hours was in the greatest desolation in the garden and on the cross; and go on saying what remains, following the same practice, and pausing at whatever moves you most.

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[1] The 1917 *Code of Canon Law* (can. 1262) kept it; the 1983 Code does not.

The Trisagion to the Most Holy Trinity

Origin of the Trisagion

The most holy Trisagion is not an invention of human wit but the work of God himself, who inspired it in the prophet Isaiah when he heard the Seraphim singing it to exalt the glory of the Creator (Isa. 6:3). It was in the school of these same Seraphim and the other heavenly choirs that it was miraculously learned by that boy who, like St. Paul, was caught up into heaven, as the histories of the Church relate. In the year 447, when Theodosius the Younger was emperor of the East, there was an almost universal earthquake, very violent, which by its length and dreadful havoc became the most notable that had ever been seen until then. Incalculable was the damage that six months of almost continuous shocks caused to the most sumptuous buildings of Constantinople and to the whole famous wall of the Chersonese. The earth opened in many places and whole cities were buried in its depths; springs dried up and new ones appeared; and so violent were the shocks that they tore up very large trees; mountains appeared where there had been plains, and deep hollows where there had been mountains. The sea threw fish of great size onto the shore, and beaches and ships were left without water, which went off to flood large islands.

In such a plight it was thought prudent to abandon the towns, and so the inhabitants of Constantinople did, with the emperor Theodosius, his sister Pulcheria, St. Proclus, then patriarch of that church, and all his clergy. Gathered in a place called the Field, they sent up to heaven fervent supplications and loud cries, asking for help in so pressing a need. Then one day, between eight and nine in the morning, the earth gave so extraordinary a shock that it almost caused the same havoc as the universal flood. This fright was followed by wonder at the following prodigy. A boy of few years was caught up into the air in the sight of all those in the Field, who saw him rise until they lost sight of him. After a long while he came down to earth in the same way as he had been caught up to heaven; and when he was brought before the Patriarch, the Emperor and the whole astonished multitude, he told how, being admitted to the heavenly choirs, he had heard the Angels singing these words: "Holy God, Holy Strong One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us"; and how he had been commanded to make this vision known to all who were gathered there. Having said these words, the boy died.

When St. Proclus and the Emperor heard this account, they ordered with one accord that all should intone the sacred chant, and at once the earthquake ceased and the whole earth was still. From this came the use of the Trisagion, which the general Council of Chalcedon prescribed to all the faithful as a form for invoking the most holy Trinity in times of disaster and calamity.[1] *From this it has come to merit the approval of so many prelates of the Church, who have supported its practice and enriched it with the treasure of indulgences; and from this, finally, it has come to be arranged in a method, printed and reprinted so many times, always with the universal applause and acceptance of all, who hold it to be an impenetrable shield against all the evils God sends upon the earth as punishment for our sins.*

Offering to Gain the Indulgences Whenever the Trisagion Is Said

We pray to you, Lord, for the state of the holy Church and her Prelates; for the exaltation of the Catholic faith, the uprooting of heresies, peace and concord among Christian princes, and the conversion of all unbelievers, heretics and sinners; for the dying and for travelers; for the blessed souls in purgatory, and for the other holy intentions of our holy mother the Church. Amen.

℟. Blessed be the holy and undivided Trinity, now, and always, and for ever and ever.\ ℟. Amen.\ ℟. O Lord, open my lips.\ ℟. And my voice shall proclaim your praise.\ ℟. O God, come graciously to my aid.\ ℟. O Lord, make haste to help me.\ ℟. Glory be to the Father,\ Glory to the eternal Son,\ Glory to the Holy Spirit,\ For ever and ever.\ ℟. Amen. Alleluia.

In Lent, instead of Alleluia, say: Praise be to you, O Lord, King of eternal glory.

Act of Contrition

Most loving God, three and one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in whom I believe, in whom I hope, whom I love with all my heart, body and soul, senses and faculties: because you are my Father, my Lord and my God, infinitely good and worthy to be loved above all things, I am sorry, most holy Trinity, I am sorry, most merciful Trinity, I am sorry, most lovable Trinity, for having offended you, solely because you are who you are. I resolve and give you my word never to offend you again, and to die rather than sin. I hope in your supreme goodness and infinite mercy that you will forgive me all my sins and give me grace to persevere in a true love and most heartfelt devotion to your ever most lovable Trinity. Amen.

Hymn

(rendered line by line, without rhyme)

Now the burning sun departs,\ And so, O light for ever one,\ Pour a constant love\ Into our yielded souls.

At dawn we praise you,\ And at midday too,\ Sighing to enjoy\ The sight of you in heaven.

To the Father, to the Son, and to you,\ Spirit who give life,\ Now and always be given\ Infinite praises. Amen.

Prayer to the Father

O eternal Father! Apart from possessing you I see nothing but sadness and torment, whatever the lovers of vanity may say. What does it matter to me that the sensual man says his happiness is the enjoyment of his pleasures? What does it matter to me that the ambitious man says his greatest contentment is the enjoyment of his vain glory? For my part I will never cease to repeat to you, with your Prophets and Apostles, that my supreme happiness, my treasure and my glory is to be united to my God and to keep myself inviolably close to him (Ps. 72:28).

An Our Father, a Hail Mary, and nine times:

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts, the heavens and the earth are full of your glory.

And the choir answers:

Glory to the Father, glory to the Son, glory to the Holy Spirit.

Prayer to the Son

O eternal truth, apart from which I see nothing but deceptions and lies! Oh, how everything seems tasteless to me beside your sweet attractions! Oh, how lying and loathsome the speeches of men seem to me compared with the words of life with which you speak to the hearts of those who listen to you! Ah, when will the hour come when you will deal with me without riddles, and speak to me plainly in the bosom of your glory? (1

Cor. 13:12). Oh, what converse! What beauty! What light!

An Our Father, a Hail Mary, and nine times: Holy, Holy, Holy, etc.

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

O love, O gift of the Most High, center of the sweetness and happiness of God himself: what delight for a soul to find itself in the abyss of your goodness and filled with your unspeakable consolations! Ah, deceitful pleasures! How could you ever compare yourselves with the least of the sweetnesses that God, when he pleases, knows how to pour into a faithful soul? Oh, if one single particle of them is so delightful, how much more will it be when you pour them out like a torrent, without measure and without reserve! When will this be, O my God, when will it be?

An Our Father, a Hail Mary, and nine times: Holy, Holy, Holy, etc.

Antiphon

To you, God the Father unbegotten, to you, the only-begotten Son, to you, the Holy Spirit the Paraclete, holy and undivided Trinity, with all our heart we confess, praise and bless you. To you be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

℟. Let us bless the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.\ ℟. Let us praise and exalt him for ever.

Prayer. Lord God, one and three, give us continually your grace, your charity and communion with you, so that in time and in eternity we may love and glorify you, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, in one Godhead, for ever and ever. Amen.

A Devout Supplication to the Most Blessed Trinity

℟. Eternal Father, almighty God,\ ℟. May every creature love and glorify you.

Divine Word, immense God, *May every creature,* etc.\ Holy Spirit, infinite God, *May every creature,* etc.\ Most holy Trinity, and one only true God, *May every creature,* etc.\ King of heaven, immortal and invisible, *May every creature,* etc.\ Creator, preserver and governor of all created things, *May every creature,* etc.\ Our life, in whom, from whom and by whom we live (Acts 17:28), *May every creature,* etc.\ Divine life, one in three persons, *May every creature,* etc.\ Divine heaven of majestic loftiness, *May every creature,* etc.\ Supreme heaven of heaven, hidden from men, *May every creature,* etc.\ Divine and uncreated Sun, *May every creature,* etc.\ Most perfect circle of infinite capacity, *May every creature,* etc.\ Divine food of the Angels, *May every creature,* etc.\ Beautiful rainbow, bow of mercy, *May every creature,* etc.\ First and threefold light that enlightens the world, *May every creature,* etc.

From every evil of soul and body, *Deliver us, threefold Lord.*\ From every sin and occasion of sin, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From your wrath and anger, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From sudden and unprovided death, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From the snares and nearness of the devil, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From the spirit of impurity and its suggestions, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From the concupiscence of the flesh, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From all anger, hatred and ill will, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From the plagues of pestilence, famine, war and earthquake, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From storms at sea or on land, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From the enemies of the Catholic faith, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From our enemies and their schemes, *Deliver us,* etc.\ From eternal death, *Deliver us,* etc.\ By your Unity in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, *Deliver us,* etc.\ By the essential equality of your Persons, *Deliver us,* etc.\ By the height of the mystery of your Trinity, *Deliver us,* etc.\ By the ineffable name of your Trinity, *Deliver us,* etc.\ By the wonder of your name, One and Three, *Deliver us,* etc.\ By how much you are pleased with souls devoted to your most holy Trinity, *Deliver us,* etc.\ By the great love with which you deliver from evils the peoples among whom there is some devotee of your lovable Trinity, *Deliver us,* etc.\ By the divine power that the devils recognize against themselves in those devoted to your most holy Trinity, *Deliver us,* etc.

We sinners, *We beseech you, hear us.*\ That we may succeed in resisting the devil with the weapons of devotion to your Trinity, *We beseech you, hear us.*\ That you may make your image in our souls more beautiful every day with the colors of your grace, *We beseech you, hear us.*\ That all the faithful may strive to be very devoted to your most holy Trinity, *We beseech you, hear us.*\ That we may all obtain the many blessings bound up with devotion to your ineffable Trinity, *We beseech you, hear us.*\ That as we confess the mystery of your Trinity the errors of unbelievers may be destroyed, *We beseech you, hear us.*\ That all the souls in purgatory may enjoy great refreshment by virtue of the mystery of your Trinity, *We beseech you,* etc.\ That you may deign to hear us in your mercy, *We beseech you, hear us.*

Holy God, Holy Strong One, Holy Immortal One, deliver us, Lord, from all evil.

This is repeated three times.

Offerings to the Most Holy Trinity

1. O most blessed Trinity! I give you my word that I will try with all my effort and strength to save my soul, since you created it in your image and likeness and for heaven. And for love of you I will also try to save the souls of my neighbors.

2. To save my soul and give you glory and praise, I know that I must keep the divine law. I give you my word that I will keep it as the apple of my eye, and I will also try to make others keep it.

3. Here on earth I will practice praising you, and I hope to do it more perfectly afterwards in heaven. For this I will often say the Trisagion and the verse *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.* And I will also try to make others praise you. Amen.

Gozos for the Trisagion

(Gozos are a Spanish hymn of praise in stanzas, each ending with the refrain.)

One God and Three, to whom so often\ Archangels, Cherubim,\ Angels and Seraphim\ Say: Holy, Holy, Holy.

Rejoice, lovable Godhead,\ In your incomprehensible essence,\ And that in your mercy\ You forgive our wickedness.\ For this kindness,\ In mystic sweet song, etc.

O ineffable Trinity,\ Supreme, Eternal, Uncreated Good,\ Communicated to man\ By excess of goodness!\ And because in the eternity\ Of your being you rejoice so much, etc.

Rejoice, for your pure light,\ Though it is so bright,\ Never comes to be comprehended\ By any creature;\ And so, seeing your beauty,\ With sacred awe and delight, etc.

You are All-powerful,\ Wise, Immense, Creator,\ Just, Rewarder,\ Good, merciful;\ Wonderful in your Saints\ You have been and are; and so, etc.

Rejoice that in your being\ All is supreme, all is equal,\ For unequal perfection\ Can find no place in you.\ Coming to know this,\ The most holy Trisagion, etc.

Though our faith is blind,\ It goes beyond reason,\ For by revelation\ It sees itself enlightened.\ All that we see now\ Is a riddle (1 Cor. 13:12); meanwhile, etc.

Our hope, trusting\ In your divine promise,\ Journeys toward the homeland\ With sure confidence.\ Until it reaches it,\ With the sweetest song, etc.

Your supreme lovable goodness\ Inflames our heart,\ This flame flowing\ From your immense charity.\ Love, creatures, love\ Him who for loving him so much, etc.

Let our consolation now be\ The Trisagion that Isaiah\ With sweet melodies\ Heard sung in heaven,\ Where with fervent longing,\ To strike terror into hell, etc.

One God and Three, to whom so often\ Archangels, Cherubim,\ Angels and Seraphim\ Say: Holy, Holy, Holy.

■. Let us bless the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit.\ ■. Let us praise and exalt him for ever.

Prayer. Almighty and everlasting God, who have deigned to reveal to your servants, in the confession of the true faith, the glory of your eternal Trinity, and that they should adore the unity in your august Majesty: we pray you, Lord, that by the strength of this same faith we may always be kept free from all adversities and dangers. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

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[1] *On the Trisagion* 3.

Visit to the Most Holy Sacrament

Praised be the most holy Sacrament of the altar.

One of the devotions most pleasing to God, and most profitable and meritorious for the Christian, is without doubt to visit the Lord in the Sacrament.

This devotion is so sweet that, almost without knowing how, it springs from a soul in love with God; for the soul that loves God fervently runs naturally to the object of its love, which is Jesus at the noonday of his love, the most holy Sacrament of the altar.

The Gospel says that wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together (Matt. 24:28). Those good souls that, like eagles, soar above earthly things and rise in holiness and perfection gather around the body of the Lord in the Sacrament.

As the queen of Saba went to visit King Solomon in his palace and on his throne (3 Kings 10:1), so good souls, queens and mistresses of their vassals the appetites, come to visit Jesus, wiser than Solomon, in his palace, which is the church, and on his throne, which is the Sacrament of the altar, the throne of mercy.

And as the Kings of the East came from afar to adore Jesus in Bethlehem and offered him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh, so do good Christians. As kings that they now are of their passions, and afterwards will be of heaven, they come to adore Jesus in the Sacrament of the altar, offering him the myrrh of mortification, the incense of prayer and the gold of charity. And Jesus is very pleased and grateful to these fervent lovers. Like a friend who finds himself visited by other friends, he fills them with grace and grants them mercy now; and afterwards, on the day of judgment, he will say to them: Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom of heaven prepared for you, because you came to visit me when I was as it were a prisoner and sick with love in the Sacrament of the altar (compare Matt. 25:34–36).

Christian who read this, try to visit the Lord in the Sacrament every day: if you can, when he is exposed, and if not, when he is enclosed in the tabernacle. And if you cannot go to church, make the visit from your house, or from wherever you are, turning from there toward the church where the most holy Sacrament is.

Prayer

My Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, here I come in company with the most holy Virgin, the Angels, the holy men and women of heaven and the just on earth, to visit and adore you in this consecrated Host, where I most firmly believe you are as present, powerful and glorious as you are in heaven. And by your merits I hope to obtain eternal glory, following your divine inspirations in all things. And in gratitude for your infinite love I want to love you with all my heart and soul, faculties and senses.

I beg you, Savior of my soul, by the precious blood you shed in your circumcision and in your most holy passion, to exercise toward me this office of Savior, giving me, with your most holy Mother as intercessor, the gifts of prayer and devotion together with perseverance, so that at the end of this life you may lead me to the eternal life you enjoy in heaven. Amen.

O Lord, who in this wonderful Sacrament have left us the memorial of your Passion: give us grace so to adore in it your body and blood, and grant us, by an effect of your infinite mercy, the plenary indulgence of this holy jubilee.[1] By it we ask you to grant health and happiness to the Supreme Pontiff, to our diocesan Prelate, to our Catholic Monarch and the Royal family, and to all who govern the nation. I also pray you, my God, for the eternal rest of the blessed souls; and finally I beg you to give us grace never to stray from the way of our salvation, so that after this wretched life we may see and enjoy you eternally in the happiness of glory. Amen.

Prayer to the Eternal Father

O Lord my God, from the lofty throne and sanctuary where you dwell in heaven, look down and see this most holy Victim which our great High Priest and your Son, Jesus Christ, offers you for the sins of his brethren, so that the multitude of our iniquities may be blotted out. The voice of the blood of our brother Jesus Christ cries to you from this sacred Host (compare Gen. 4:10; Heb. 12:24). Hear, Lord; appease your just anger; cast upon us a look of compassion and tenderness, and forgive us. For your own love, O my God, do not delay to grant us this grace, since your name has been invoked upon this city and upon your people; and deal with us according to your great mercy (Dan. 9:18–19). So be it.

Prayer

O divine and heavenly Father, Father from whom all is obtained that is asked with faith and trust (Matt. 21:22): with all the affection of my heart and all the hope of my soul I ask of you the conversion of sinners, the perseverance of the just, and the relief of the blessed souls in purgatory. For all I ask the graces they need to love and serve you more; and for myself in particular I ask divine love, and that in all things I may always do your most holy will with the greatest perfection.

To obtain these graces more quickly, and to satisfy for my faults, failings and sins, I offer you your Son Jesus Christ, in union with that infinite and eternal charity with which you sent him and gave him to us as our Savior (John 3:16). I offer you his most holy incarnation, life, passion and death. I offer you his excellent virtues and all he did and suffered for us. I offer you his labors, his weariness, his torments and his blood. I offer you every time he has been and will be offered in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. I offer you every time he has been and will be received in holy Communion. I offer you every time he has been and will be adored in the most holy Sacrament of the altar. I offer you the patience and love with which he has borne the ingratitude, irreverence, blasphemies and sacrileges of men. I offer you also the merits of the most holy Virgin Mary and of all the Saints in heaven and the just on earth. I hope, my Father, that by your infinite goodness and mercy, and by the merits of Jesus Christ, of most holy Mary and of the Saints, you will grant me now these graces I ask of you, and afterwards the eternal glory in which you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.

Adoration Offered by Good Souls to the Most Holy Sacrament and to the Sacred Heart of Most Holy Mary, in Union with the Nine Choirs of Angels

For better understanding, it should be known that the nine angelic choirs are divided into three hierarchies. The first comprises the Seraphim, the Cherubim and the Thrones; in the second hierarchy are the Dominations, the Virtues and the Powers; in the third hierarchy, the Principalities, the Archangels and the Angels.

With the first two hierarchies we adore Jesus in his five wounds and crown of thorns; and with the third we ask Mary for humility, purity and love, in this way:

I adore, my Jesus, the wound of your right hand together with the choir of the Seraphim, and I ask you to grant me divine love, so that I may love you with all fervor, as the Seraphim love you. Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

I adore, my Jesus, the wound of your left hand together with the choir of the Cherubim, and I ask you to grant me wisdom, so that I may know and love you as the Cherubim know and love you. Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

I adore, my Jesus, the wound of your right foot together with the choir of the Thrones, and I beg you to grant me inward peace and tranquility, so that my heart may be a true throne on which you, the King of peace, may rest, as you rest in the choir of the Thrones. Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

I adore, my Jesus, the wound of your left foot together with the choir of the Dominations, and I ask you to grant me the grace to master all my passions and rise above them all, and to love and serve you as the Dominations love and serve you. Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

I adore, my Jesus, the wound of your heart together with the choir of the Virtues, and I ask you to grant me the grace I need to exercise myself magnanimously in all the theological and moral virtues. Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

I adore, my Jesus, your crown of thorns together with the choir of the Powers, and I beg you to grant me the power, grace and fortitude to fight lawfully against the enemies of the soul (2 Tim. 2:5), and so obtain the crown of glory. Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

Offerings to the Most Holy Sacrament

1. I give you my word, Lord, that I will come to visit you every day; and if I cannot come to church, I will make the visit from my house.

2. I give you my word, Lord, that I will come to receive you at least once every year, as the Church commands; that out of devotion I will receive you often sacramentally; and that every day, when the clock strikes each hour, I will make a spiritual communion.

3. Ah, Lord! In that Sacrament you give me your heart, your body, your blood, your soul, your divinity and all you have, and in return you ask me for my heart. Ah, my Jesus! In all truth I say to you:

Here now is my heart,\ I put it in your palm,\ My body, my life and soul,\ My inmost self and my affection.\ Light, Spouse, Redemption,\ I am yours, for I offered myself,\ I am yours, for you I was born:\ What will you have me do? (Acts 9:6)

Letrillas of the Most Holy Sacrament, Sung to the Tune of *Sacris*

(A letrilla is a short Spanish song in stanzas.)

Most high Lord,\ Who knew how to join\ At once on the altar\ Being Lamb and Shepherd:\ I would wish with fervor\ To love and receive\ Him who willed to die for me.

Heavenly Lamb,\ Bread born in Bethlehem,\ If I do not eat you well\ It will go ill with me.\ You are all lodestone\ That draws the heart\ Of one who gives you adoration.

The food that is given\ In the sacred monstrance\ Tastes to me of a thousand delights,\ Far more than the manna.\ If the soul is clean\ When it eats of this bread,\ They will give it eternal glory.

The Redeemer is received\ In a delicate food\ By the poor, the servant, the lowly,\ The slave and the lord.\ They taste its savor\ If they go with lively faith;\ If not, this bread is poison (1 Cor. 11:29).

Come, children of Adam,\ To a banquet of love\ Which the Lord gives us today\ Of bread and wine alone,\ Of so sweet a savor,\ Of such grace and power,\ That it delights, fills and gives health.

The bread that is given us today\ Came down from heaven;\ It is bread that is living (John 6:51);\ It is heavenly food\ That God gave us as a gift,\ And he himself prepared it\ Within a virgin womb.

The Angels, seeing\ Such glory and majesty,\ With deep humility\ Adore his power,\ Without being able to merit\ The happiness of enjoying\ So rich and divine a food.

You are death to the sinner\ Who comes to receive you;\ You give the just life\ With fine and tender love.\ O ineffable Lord,\ Who in one same food\ Know how to give both life and death!

You are a consuming fire,\ Shepherd, Lamb and Bread,\ Spouse, King, Lover,\ God, Man and Redeemer.\ A greater wonder than this\ God could not find\ To give to man.

Precious wheaten bread,\ Who to the just and faithful soul\ Are sweeter than honey,\ Fairer than the honeycomb (Ps. 18:11):\ Heavenly glory\ I hope for in you, my God,\ To reign without end with you.

Thanksgiving for the Benefits Received, Natural and Supernatural

I. With all my heart and soul I give you all the thanks I can, my Lord, for having created me, drawing me out of nothingness into the being I have in your image and likeness, while leaving uncreated countless other souls that you could have created like mine, and never did. I give you infinite thanks for this benefit and for the love with which you created me.

II. I give you all the thanks I can for having made me a Christian. On the day you created my soul you created many others, some among idolaters, others among heretics; mine among Christians, making me one of them. Who, Lord, asked you for me more than for the others? Or when did I deserve it more than the others? I thank you for this benefit and for the love with which you gave it.

III. I thank you, my God, and I beg all heaven to help me thank you, for having given us your most holy Son as a proof of the great love you have for us, because you are good, because your mercy is infinite. And moreover you have given him to us to be our model, our Teacher, our Redeemer and our Savior.

IV. And to you, my Jesus, I give the same thanks for all you have done and suffered for all of us.

V. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you became man, were born of the Virgin Mary, were laid in the manger, were circumcised and exiled to Egypt.

VI. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you received baptism, were tempted, preached the Gospel, healed the sick and even raised the dead.

VII. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me, over thirty-three years, you suffered labors, weariness, contempt, persecutions, slanders and insults.

VIII. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you willed to celebrate the Pasch with your disciples, washed their feet and taught them humility, instituted the most holy Sacrament of the altar, and promised that you would be with us until the end of the world.

IX. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you went to the garden of Gethsemani, where you sweated blood and water from your agony; and shrinking from death you were comforted by an Angel; and having conformed yourself to the will of the heavenly Father, you allowed Judas to betray you, the other apostles to abandon you, the Jews to bind you and lead you prisoner through the streets of Jerusalem.

X. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you willed to be brought before Annas and struck in the face; and afterwards you willed to be taken to the house of Caiaphas, where you were outraged and spat upon, the High Priest having declared that you must die so that the people might not perish (John 11:50).

XI. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you allowed yourself to be accused by false witnesses and condemned to death by the great council of the chief men of Jerusalem, who all despised, mocked and spat upon you. That night you also allowed yourself to be handed over to the rabble, who covered your face, struck you and treated you as a false prophet; and to crown your sufferings, the apostle Peter denied you.

XII. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you allowed yourself to be led a prisoner through the streets of Jerusalem amid the shouting of the people, and were taken to Pilate's house, and from him to Herod, who clothed you in white and treated you as a madman. Again they took you to Pilate, who had you scourged although he had declared you innocent. They crowned you with thorns, they put you after Barabbas, and finally Pilate condemned you to death.

XIII. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you took up the cross and carried it to Calvary; you met your most holy Mother, who accompanied you to the sacrifice; you fell several times under the enormous weight of the cross, hurting your face, hands and knees, and were left disfigured by the dust that stuck to the clotted blood of your body and garments.

XIV. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me, on reaching Calvary, you willed to be stripped, nailed to the cross and raised up on it. There you spoke seven words, and one of them was to give us your Mother as our Mother, which is one of the greatest graces you could bestow on us (John 19:26–27). Moreover you were given gall and vinegar to drink; and after doing and suffering all that the Prophets had said of you, you deigned to die for me.

XV. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me, being dead on the cross between two thieves, you allowed a soldier to open your side with a lance, and blood and water came out (John 19:34), to form the seven Sacraments of the Church, who is your spouse, the new Eve. You willed to be taken down from the cross and laid in the arms of your Mother Mary, and then placed in a tomb.

XVI. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you rose again on the third day; you appeared to your most holy Mother, you appeared several times to the holy women and the disciples, and deigned to teach them what they were to practice and teach throughout the world.

XVII. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me, forty days after rising again, you ascended into heaven in the presence of all the disciples, where you are seated at the right hand of God the Father, acting as our advocate (1 John 2:1).

XVIII. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me, ten days after you ascended into heaven, you sent the Holy Spirit upon most holy Mary, the Apostles and the disciples; they were all filled with his gifts and graces, and began to speak of the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11).

XIX. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you have sent the Apostles throughout the world, as your Father sent you (John 20:21). I thank you also for having founded your Church on Peter, and for having promised that the gates of hell would never prevail against her (Matt. 16:18).

XX. I thank you, my Jesus, because for love of me you have always provided your Church with a successor of St. Peter, who is the Pope, and with prelates, priests and ministers, so that they may take good care, in your name, of all the souls you have redeemed with your precious blood.

XXI. I give you all the thanks I can for all the times you have forgiven me my sins and delivered me from them and from their occasions; for the times I have received the most holy Sacrament, and for all the other Sacraments; for all the graces and gifts you have given me; for all the good works I have done, inwardly and

outwardly, with your grace; for the Guardian Angel you have given me; and for the love with which you have done me all these favors.

XXII. I also give you all the thanks I can for having given me health, food and temporal goods with which to pass my life and be able to serve you, while others better than I have neither health nor food as I have. I am sorry that I have not used all this better in your holy service; and I thank you for the benefit of all of it, and for the love with which you have done me all these favors.

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XXIII. Lastly, I thank you in general for all the benefits you have done me, natural and supernatural, of soul and body, those that are known to me and those hidden that I do not know. For all I owe you I give you all the thanks I can, and for the love with which you have done me all these favors.

What We Ought to Ask of God

I. Lord, since you are more merciful than I am wretched, and so good and generous that you are more eager to give than I am to receive, I humbly beg you to forgive me all my sins. I am sorry for having offended you because you are who you are, infinite goodness; and I beg you to give me grace never to fall into mortal sin, and to deliver me from venial sins. Through Jesus Christ your Son.

II. I beg you, my Lord and Father, to save me, and not to let me be damned, but to take me, Lord, to heaven to see you, love you and glorify you with the Saints and Angels for ever without end. Through Jesus Christ your Son.

III. I beg you, my Lord and Father, to give me all the graces, gifts and helps my soul needs to love, serve and please you more, especially the gift of perseverance until I breathe my last. I ask you to give me peace and charity toward all my neighbors; and to please you more and more I ask for humility, chastity and the other virtues. Through Jesus Christ your Son.

IV. I beg you, my Lord and Father, if it is good for me, to give me temporal goods, life, health, sustenance, honor and joy; and of all this I ask only what will be for your greater glory and the salvation of my soul. Through Jesus Christ your Son.

V. I beg you, my Lord and Father, as earnestly as I can, for those who are in mortal sin, that they may come out of so unhappy a state; for the dying, that they may have great contrition for all their sins, that none may depart without receiving the holy Sacraments well, and that all may die in the kiss of peace. I ask you for the blessed souls in purgatory, that they may soon come out of that place of pains. I ask you also, my Father, for all the needs of my neighbors, both general and particular, and especially for my relatives and benefactors, for my friends and enemies, for all who have commended themselves to my poor prayers, and for all for whom I have promised to pray. Through Jesus Christ your Son.

VI. I beg you, my Lord and my Father, as earnestly as I can, for the conversion of unbelievers and sinners, the return of heretics, and the exaltation of the Catholic faith; for the Pope, cardinals, archbishops, bishops, parish priests and the other priests and ministers; for men and women religious and their superiors; for emperors, kings and other authorities. For all I ask you, my Lord and Father, and I desire that we may all love and serve you in very truth. Through Jesus Christ your Son.

VII. I beg you, my Lord and my Father, for an abundance of good and zealous priests in your Church, to cultivate your vineyard with care. I ask you to give all peoples a desire to hear the divine word, that they may hear it and profit by it; that they may keep the precepts of the holy law and the evangelical counsels; that they may receive the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion well and often; that they may love mental and vocal prayer and be assiduous in it; that they may have great devotion to most holy Mary; that they may practice all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy; and that all may live penetrated with your holy fear

and love. Through Jesus Christ your Son.

VIII. Lastly, my Lord and my Father, I ask you for a remedy, and I long for the disappearance of the cancer that gnaws at modern society and the contagion that has infected it: that Luciferian spirit of pride and envy, that itch to command and dominate everyone and to be subject to and obey no one; and besides, the wish to enjoy oneself in every way and always, and to suffer nothing, ever. From this follow selfishness, greed, injustice and every evil, making peace, faith, charity and brotherly union disappear. Make, Lord, the example, the doctrine and the virtues that Jesus Christ your Son taught us revive in society; who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.

An Exercise of the Love of God

*To love, says St. Thomas, is the same as to wish someone well (*Summa theologiae* I–II, q. 26, a. 4). And since we cannot wish God greater goods than those he has, we can wish them to him by way of rejoicing in them, which is a very high way of loving him. It is done as follows:*

I. My God, be God as you are, now and for ever, for I rejoice in my soul that you are so. You have infinite power: be God almighty as you are. You have infinite wisdom: congratulations indeed, have infinite wisdom as you have it. You have infinite goodness, infinite charity and infinite clemency: have, Lord, infinite goodness, charity and clemency as you have them. You, Lord, have mercy, providence and generosity: have, Lord, mercy, providence and generosity as you have them. You, Lord, are glorious and blessed without end: be glorious and blessed without end as you are.

II. You, Lord, are Three and One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three distinct persons and one only true God: be Three and One as you are. You are Creator and preserver of all things, you are our Savior and glorifier and that of the Angels: be so, and congratulations, as you are, for I rejoice greatly in it.

III. You, Lord, know yourself with infinite knowledge: know yourself with infinite knowledge as you know yourself, for infinite knowledge well befits infinite being. You, Lord, love yourself with infinite love: love yourself, Lord, with infinite love as you love yourself, for infinite love well suits infinite goodness. You, Lord, rejoice with infinite joy: rejoice, Lord, with infinite joy, for infinite joy goes well with infinite glory. Know yourself, my God, as you know yourself; love yourself as you love yourself; rejoice as you rejoice, now and for ever; and be God as you are.

IV. You, Lord, are the universal Lord, whom the Angels and the Blessed in heaven and men on earth love, praise and serve: be Lord of all, and may all of us in heaven and on earth love, praise and serve you without end.

V. O Lord! Would that I could convert all the unbelievers and sinners there are, and bring it about that no one offended you, and that all loved, praised, blessed and served you in all that you want of us! For this I would give my blood and my life a thousand times, though of myself I can do nothing. Do it yourself, for I, Lord, desire that all should be employed in your holy service now and for ever. I will and desire, Lord, that all creatures, visible and invisible, created and yet to be created, should love, praise and bless you every day and every moment as many times as there are numbers that can be formed with the ten known figures. Do it, Lord, since I cannot.

O Heart of Jesus, love God for me!\ O Heart of Mary, love God for me!\ O hearts of all the Saints, love God for me!\ O choirs of all the Angels, love God for me!\ O all creatures, love God for me!

O divine fire, which always burns and is never quenched! O Heart of Jesus, which always glows and never grows lukewarm! Make my heart always glow and burn in the fire of divine love.

O my God! I would melt in your love; I would be consumed in your love as incense is consumed in smoke upon the coals. O my love! O my love!

[1] *Cuarenta Horas*.

Visit to Most Holy Mary

Hail, Mary, Virgin and Mother of God! Though a wretched sinner, I come with the greatest confidence to cast myself at your most holy feet, fully persuaded that it is you who by your powerful protection obtain for the human race all the graces of the Lord. You are most rich, and I am a wretch; you are a mother, and I, though unworthy, am your child: show that you are my Mother. What mother would have the heart to let her child suffer if she could help him? And will you, who are so powerful, not help me? Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary, that it has never been heard that anyone who ran to your protection and implored your help was left forsaken. Shall I be precisely the first and only one to find this door shut, which has always been open to all? But even if this happened, I will not lose confidence; rather I will cry out louder and will not give up until you grant me what I ask.

Yes, my Mother and Lady, hear my prayer. Obtain for me perseverance in holy service; and if I have the misfortune to fall into sin, which God forbid, let me find no rest until I make a good confession and obtain the pardon of my sin. I also ask you for the perseverance of the just and the conversion of sinners. What do you wish me to do for them? I gladly offer myself to be the instrument of their conversion. Likewise I pray you for the blessed souls in purgatory; for my parents, friends and benefactors, and for all who have commended themselves to my prayers; for the Pope and for our Prelate; for the cardinals, archbishops, bishops, parish priests and the rest of the secular clergy; for religious of both sexes, so that all may be saints and so sanctify others. Together with these I implore your favor for the spread of the holy Catholic faith and the uprooting of heresies, schisms and vices; for the Monarch and the governors of the nation, provinces, cities and towns, that they may have all the prudence, knowledge and good judgment of Solomon, and that like him they may seek and achieve the wealth, peace and happiness of the kingdom. And finally I pray you for all my neighbors, especially for the sick, prisoners, exiles, travelers and seafarers, that you may grant them all the graces they need.

To move your Heart the more, I ask all these graces of you by the love you have always had for the most holy Trinity; by your love for the most august Sacrament; by the love you had and have for your parents St. Joachim and St. Anne, for your spouse St. Joseph, for the apostle St. John, and for your chief devotees St. Ildephonsus, St. Dominic, St. Bonaventure, St. Bernard, St. Ignatius and St. Liguori. And if that is still not enough, I set as mediators and advocates the nine choirs of Angels, the Patriarchs and Prophets, the Apostles and Evangelists, the Martyrs, Pontiffs and Confessors, the Virgins and Widows, and all the holy men and women of heaven and the just on earth. Yes, most holy Virgin, Mother of the eternal Word, with such powerful backing you cannot fail to hear my prayers and obtain for me what I ask. Amen, Jesus.

Three Our Fathers, Hail Marys and Glory Bes to the most blessed Trinity, in thanksgiving for the graces it granted to most holy Mary.

Blessed be your purity,\ And may it be so eternally,\ For a whole God delights\ In such graceful beauty.\ To you, heavenly Princess,\ Sacred Virgin Mary,\ I offer from this day\ Soul, life and heart.\ Look on me with compassion;\ Do not leave me, my Mother.

This stanza has been granted 39,600 days of indulgence; and by saying "Hail Mary most pure", another 2,590 days are gained, and the same by answering "Conceived without sin."

Adoration of the Sacred Heart of Mary

(This completes the Adoration with the nine choirs given above.)

I adore, O Virgin and Mother of God, your sacred Heart, together with the choir of the Principalities, and I ask you to obtain for me from your Son Jesus the grace always to be meek and humble of heart (Matt. 11:29). Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

I adore, O Virgin and Mother of God, your sacred Heart, together with the choir of the Archangels, and I beg you to obtain for me from your Son Jesus purity of body and soul and cleanness of heart. Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

I adore, O Virgin and Mother of God, your sacred Heart, together with the choir of the Angels, and I beg you to obtain for me from your Son Jesus the grace to know how, and to be able, to practice charity, zeal and the other works of mercy toward my neighbors. Amen. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*[1]

Another Prayer to Most Holy Mary

Remember, O most loving Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help or sought your intercession was left forsaken by you. Inspired with this confidence, I too fly to you, O Virgin Mother of virgins; and groaning under the weight of my sins I dare to appear before your sovereign presence. O Mother of God, do not despise my petitions, but hear them and graciously receive them. So be it.

His Holiness Pope Pius IX granted 300 days of indulgence each time this prayer is devoutly said; and if it is said every day, a plenary indulgence once a month, on confessing, receiving Communion and visiting a church, praying there for His Holiness's intention.

Offerings to Most Holy Mary

1. I know very well, most holy Virgin, that to be truly devoted to you I must abstain from all sin, imitate your virtues, frequent the holy Sacraments, offer you some acts of homage, and perform well, willingly and perseveringly, the devotions and other things of your service. In all this I will exercise myself with your help, to please you and give you joy, my Mother.

2. Every hour I will say a Hail Mary. Every day I will say a part of the Rosary. Every Saturday I will fast, or mortify myself in something. Every first Sunday I will receive the holy Sacraments and say the three parts of the Rosary.[1]

3. For love of you and in your honor I will practice, as far as I can, the fourteen works of mercy.

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[2] *adorar*. *latria*.

[1] *Rosarium Virginis Mariae* 19–21.

The Rosary in Honor of the Most Holy Virgin

Introduction

The prayer called the Rosary is the devotion most pleasing to God and to the most holy Virgin, and at the same time the most profitable for all men, after holy Mass. It is enough to say that the Mother of God herself taught it to the great patriarch St. Dominic as an effective remedy for relieving the needs of the world and obtaining the graces mortals need to be saved, and that the decades of which it is made up are like the steps of the great ladder by which souls climb to heaven; and the praise of this devotion to Mary is complete. A thousand times happy are those persons and families who do not let a day pass without paying Mary this tribute of devotion, for they will receive from this good Mother many great graces in life, still more special ones at the hour of death, and finally eternal glory.

It is true that some are in the habit of saying it every day, or almost every day, but so badly that it could be considered an insult rather than worship offered to Mary, and by it they rather bring on themselves the Virgin's displeasure than her graces. So that you may not suffer this harm, I will tell you, if only in passing, how you should say it.

When you begin to say the Rosary, compose yourself modestly and devoutly, giving up every posture that seems less fitting for speaking with the Queen of Angels and of men. Do not talk, do not sleep, do not pronounce the words yawning, do not drag out the endings, and do not say it in a near-chant, which encourages lack of devotion or brings on sleep. Do not start asking about things foreign to what you are doing. Do not begin until the others have finished, for it is annoying to hear how some begin the *Holy Mary* when the others have not yet reached the middle of the *Hail Mary*, spoiling everything and making a babble that amuses the devil, rather than a choir of persons consecrated to honoring the Mother of God. Do not do so, then. Take care that all the words go at a steady pace, that they are pronounced whole and not as if chewed or cut short, that time is given for your companions to do the same, and that everything is edifying. Surely, if you had to speak to a queen of the earth, you would try not only to be modest and composed in her presence, but you would take great care over what you said and pay great attention to what she said to you. Quicken your faith, then, and know that in saying the Rosary you are speaking with God and with Mary, who are the King and Queen and Lords of heaven and earth, and this will oblige you to be modest and attentive.

And so that you may obtain the graces, bodily and spiritual, temporal and eternal, that they usually grant to those who pray devoutly, set before your mind the persons who take part in each of the mysteries you meditate. This will also help you to know how much Jesus and Mary have done to save you. With these reflections your heart will break with sorrow for having sinned and for having returned the ugliest ingratitude for the greatest benefits; you will kindle it with lively desires to imitate Jesus and Mary, and you will ask them for the graces you need, which, do not doubt it, they will grant you. And you will try not only to save yourself but also to make it possible for others to be saved, which you will ask and obtain for them. Pray, then, pray the holy Rosary devoutly and attentively; and I hope that in doing so you will put into practice what I have just pointed out to you.

If while praying you feel drowsy, get up at once if you are sitting, pray walking about, or refresh your eyes with water. But the best and wisest thing would be for the whole family to kneel before an image of the most holy Virgin, which should never be missing from your room or bedroom, and which you should greet on entering and leaving, saying to her at least: *Hail Mary most pure, conceived without sin.*

On Mondays and Thursdays the Joyful mysteries are meditated; on Tuesdays and Fridays the Sorrowful; and on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays the Glorious. But if on any of these days there falls a feast of Our Lord Jesus Christ or of Our Lady that recalls some mystery, those that belong to it are said, and not those that correspond to the day of the week. For example: does Christmas fall on a Tuesday or Friday? Leave the sorrowful mysteries and meditate the joyful. Does the Assumption fall on a Monday or Thursday? Leave the joyful and meditate the glorious; and so on for the other feasts of the year.

How to Say the Rosary

By the sign, etc.

O Lord, open my lips.\ And my voice shall proclaim your praise.\ O God, attend to my help and protection.\ And defend me from my enemies.\ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.\ For ever and ever. Amen.

Offering. Lord our God, direct and accept all our thoughts, words and works; and you, most holy Virgin, obtain for us grace to say your most holy Rosary devoutly.

The mysteries we are to meditate today are the…

The Joyful Mysteries

First joyful mystery. The first joyful mystery is the Incarnation of the Son of God in the most pure womb of most holy Mary. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Second joyful mystery. The second joyful mystery is when most holy Mary went to visit her cousin St. Elizabeth. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Third joyful mystery. The third joyful mystery is the Birth of the Son of God in the stable at Bethlehem. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Fourth joyful mystery. The fourth joyful mystery is the Purification of most holy Mary and the Presentation of the Son of God in the temple. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Fifth joyful mystery. The fifth joyful mystery is when most holy Mary, having lost her Son, found him in the temple disputing with the doctors of the law. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

The Sorrowful Mysteries

First sorrowful mystery. The first sorrowful mystery is the sad and afflicted prayer of Our Lord Jesus Christ in the garden, in such agony that he sweated blood and water. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Second sorrowful mystery. The second sorrowful mystery is when Christ our Lord was tied to a pillar and scourged with great cruelty, until the blood ran on the ground. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Third sorrowful mystery. The third sorrowful mystery is when our Redeemer Jesus was crowned with thorns, spat upon, struck, and treated with ignominy. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Fourth sorrowful mystery. The fourth sorrowful mystery is when Christ our Lord carried the cross on his shoulders, with great pain and weariness, to the mount of Calvary. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Fifth sorrowful mystery. The fifth sorrowful mystery is when Christ our Redeemer was nailed hand and foot to the cross, where he gave his life for love of us. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

The Glorious Mysteries

First glorious mystery. The first glorious mystery is the triumphant Resurrection of Christ our Lord. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Second glorious mystery. The second glorious mystery is the wonderful Ascension of Christ our Lord, body and soul, into heaven. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Third glorious mystery. The third glorious mystery is the Coming of the Holy Spirit upon the sacred apostolic College. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Fourth glorious mystery. The fourth glorious mystery is the Assumption of most holy Mary, body and soul, into heaven. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Fifth glorious mystery. The fifth glorious mystery is the Coronation of most holy Mary as Queen and Lady of heaven and earth. In honor of this mystery we will say an Our Father, ten Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Salutation

Hail, Mary, Daughter of God the Father; hail, Mary, Mother of God the Son; hail, Mary, Spouse of the Holy Spirit; hail, Mary, temple and tabernacle of the most holy Trinity; hail, Mary, conceived in grace without stain of original sin. Amen.

Thanksgiving

Infinite thanks we give you, sovereign Princess, for the favors we receive every day from your bountiful hand. Deign, Lady, now and always, to keep us under your protection and shelter; and to move you the more we will greet you with a *Salve*.

Hail, holy Queen, Mother of mercy, etc.

The Litany of Our Lady

(The Litany of Loreto, printed in Latin in the original. I keep the Latin, with an English rendering in brackets.)

Kyrie eleison. \[Lord, have mercy.\]\ *Christe eleison.* \[Christ, have mercy.\]\ *Kyrie eleison.* \[Lord, have mercy.\]\ *Christe, audi nos.* \[Christ, hear us.\]\ *Christe, exaudi nos.* \[Christ, graciously hear us.\]\ *Pater de caelis Deus, miserere nobis.* \[God the Father of heaven, have mercy on us.\]\ *Fili Redemptor mundi Deus, miserere.* \[God the Son, Redeemer of the world, have mercy.\]\ *Spiritus Sancte Deus, miserere.* \[God the Holy Spirit, have mercy.\]\ *Sancta Trinitas unus Deus, miserere.* \[Holy Trinity, one God, have mercy.\]\ *Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis.* \[Holy Mary, pray for us.\]\ *Sancta Dei Genitrix, ora.* \[Holy Mother of God, pray.\]\ *Sancta Virgo virginum, ora.* \[Holy Virgin of virgins.\]\ *Mater Christi* \[Mother of Christ\],\ *Mater divinae gratiae* \[Mother of divine grace\],\ *Mater purissima* \[Mother most pure\],\ *Mater castissima* \[Mother most chaste\],\ *Mater inviolata* \[Mother inviolate\],\ *Mater intemerata* \[Mother undefiled\],\ *Mater immaculata* \[Mother immaculate\],\ *Mater amabilis* \[Mother most amiable\],\ *Mater admirabilis* \[Mother most admirable\],\ *Mater Creatoris* \[Mother of the Creator\],\ *Mater Salvatoris* \[Mother of the Savior\],\ *Virgo prudentissima* \[Virgin most prudent\],\ *Virgo veneranda* \[Virgin most venerable\],\ *Virgo praedicanda* \[Virgin most renowned\],\ *Virgo potens* \[Virgin most powerful\],\ *Virgo clemens* \[Virgin most merciful\],\ *Virgo fidelis* \[Virgin most faithful\],\ *Speculum justitiae* \[Mirror of justice\],\ *Sedes sapientiae* \[Seat of wisdom\],\ *Causa nostrae laetitiae* \[Cause of our joy\],\ *Vas spirituale* \[Spiritual vessel\],\ *Vas honorabile* \[Vessel of honor\],\ *Vas insigne devotionis* \[Singular vessel of devotion\],\ *Rosa mystica* \[Mystical rose\],\ *Turris davidica* \[Tower of David\],\ *Turris eburnea* \[Tower of ivory\],\ *Domus aurea* \[House of gold\],\ *Foederis arca* \[Ark of the covenant\],\ *Janua caeli* \[Gate of heaven\],\ *Stella matutina* \[Morning star\],\ *Salus infirmorum* \[Health of the sick\],\ *Refugium peccatorum* \[Refuge of sinners\],\ *Consolatrix afflictorum* \[Comforter of the afflicted\],\ *Auxilium christianorum* \[Help of Christians\],\ *Regina Angelorum* \[Queen of Angels\],\ *Regina Patriarcharum* \[Queen of Patriarchs\],\ *Regina Prophetarum* \[Queen of Prophets\],\ *Regina Apostolorum* \[Queen of Apostles\],\ *Regina Martyrum* \[Queen of Martyrs\],\ *Regina Confessorum* \[Queen of Confessors\],\ *Regina Virginum* \[Queen of Virgins\],\ *Regina Sanctorum omnium* \[Queen of all Saints\],\ *Regina sine labe originali concepta, ora.* \[Queen conceived without original sin, pray.\]\ *Regina sacratissimi Rosarii, ora.* \[Queen of the most holy Rosary, pray.\]\ *(each invocation answered* ora pro nobis, *pray for us)*

Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, parce nobis, Domine. \[Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, spare us, O Lord.\]\ *Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, exaudi nos, Domine.* \[Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, graciously hear us, O Lord.\]\ *Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, miserere*

nobis. \[Lamb of God, who take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.\]

℟. *Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix.* \[Pray for us, O holy Mother of God.\]\ ℟. *Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.* \[That we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.\]

Oremus. \[Let us pray.\] *Gratiam tuam, quaesumus, Domine, mentibus nostris infunde: ut qui, Angelo nuntiante, Christi Filii tui incarnationem cognovimus, per passionem ejus et crucem ad resurrectionis gloriam perducamur. Per eumdem Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.* \[Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts, that we, to whom the incarnation of Christ your Son was made known by the message of an Angel, may by his passion and cross be brought to the glory of his resurrection. Through the same Christ our Lord. Amen.\]

Salve to Our Lady of the Rosary

Hail, pure Virgin;\ Hail, Virgin Mother;\ Hail, fair Virgin;\ Virgin Queen, hail.

Your shelter, kind and gentle,\ Is sought today\ By the exiles\ In this valley.

We are sinners,\ Whose Mother you are;\ Come then, Lady,\ Do not forsake us.

If for our faults\ We all deserve\ Pains by thousands,\ May your favor save us.

Your sweet Jesus,\ Who is the wonderful fruit\ Of your pure womb,\ Show him to us kindly.

Your beautiful eyes,\ Full of mercies,\ Turn upon us,\ Sovereign Mother.

O clement! O loving!\ May the sad sinner\ Who knocks at your door\ Obtain your favor.

Grant that your Rosary\ May shelter whoever says it,\ Now and at the hour\ Of death.

We all offer you,\ Though the lion rage (1 Pet. 5:8),\ With loving affection,\ Virgin, to say it.

Your Rosary is\ The great chain\ With which you bind\ The infamous dragon (Apoc. 20:1–2).

Your fifteen mysteries\ Are fifteen rose-bushes;\ They are all relief\ For mortals.

Now we beg you,\ Sovereign Mother,\ That in afflictions\ Your mercy may reach us.

The Crown of the Seven Sorrows of Most Holy Mary

By the sign, etc.

O Lord, open my lips.\ And my voice shall proclaim your praise.\ O God, attend to my help and protection.\ And defend me from my enemies.\ Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.\ For ever and ever. Amen.

Preparation. Spotless Virgin, Mother of mercy, full of affliction and bitterness: with the submission of my heart I beg you to enlighten my understanding and kindle my will, so that with a fervent and compassionate spirit I may contemplate the sorrows set out in this holy Crown, and may obtain the graces and favors promised to those who occupy themselves in this holy exercise. Amen.

First Sorrow. I sorrow with you, Lady, for the sorrow you suffered at the prophecy of Simeon, when he told you that your heart would be the target of your Son's passion (Luke 2:35). Grant, my Mother, that I may feel within me the passion of your Son and your sorrows; and I pledge myself to you in memory of this sorrow with an Our Father, seven Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Second Sorrow. I sorrow with you, Lady, for the sorrow you suffered in the flight into Egypt, poor and in need on that long road. Grant, Lady, that I may be free from the persecutions of my enemies; and I pledge myself to you in memory of this sorrow with an Our Father, seven Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Third Sorrow. I sorrow with you, Lady, for the sorrow you suffered at the loss of your Son in Jerusalem for three days. Grant me tears of true sorrow to weep for my faults for the times I have lost my God, and that I may find him for ever; and I pledge myself to you in memory of this sorrow with an Our Father, seven Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Fourth Sorrow. I sorrow with you, Lady, for the sorrow you suffered on seeing your Son with the cross on his shoulders, going to Calvary amid mockery, insults and falls. Grant, Lady, that I may carry patiently the cross of mortification and troubles; and I pledge myself to you in memory of this sorrow with an Our Father, seven Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Fifth Sorrow. I sorrow with you, Lady, for the sorrow you suffered on seeing your Son die nailed to the cross between two thieves. Grant, Lady, that I may live crucified to my vices and passions (Gal. 5:24); and I pledge myself to you in memory of this sorrow with an Our Father, seven Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Sixth Sorrow. I sorrow with you, Lady, for the sorrow you suffered on receiving in your arms that most holy body, dead and drained of blood, with so many wounds. Grant, Lady, that my heart may live wounded with divine love and dead to all that is profane; and I pledge myself to you in memory of this sorrow with an Our Father, seven Hail Marys and a Glory be.

Seventh Sorrow. I sorrow with you, Lady, for the sorrow you suffered in your solitude, when your Son had been buried. Grant, Lady, that I may remain buried to all earthly things and live for you alone; and I pledge myself to you in memory of this sorrow with an Our Father, seven Hail Marys and a Glory be.

In memory and reverence of the tears your most pure eyes shed in the life, passion and death of your Son, I offer you three Hail Marys.

Prayer. Most pure Virgin Mary: pierced with sorrow by the sword Simeon foretold; anxious and in need as you fled into Egypt; sad and troubled as you sought your lost Son; full of bitterness and tears as you met him carrying the cross; afflicted and anguished as you watched him in his agony and death; distressed and tormented with your dead Son in your arms; alone and without comfort as you left him buried: I humbly pray you to obtain for me from his divine Majesty the grace I ask, if it is for the greater glory of God and the good of my soul; and if not, that his most holy will be done in all things, and that I may never offend him. Together with this I beg you to intercede for our Most Holy Father, for peace and concord among Christian princes, the exaltation of the holy Catholic faith, the destruction of heresies, the conversion of unbelievers and the confusion of the Turks. Look with eyes of mercy on your devotees, and grant them very special helps of grace, for the greater glory of God and your own. Amen.

End with the Salve.

An Exhortation to Every Christian to Wear the Scapular, Rosary or Medal of the Most Holy Virgin

It is very useful and praiseworthy to wear or carry the scapular of the most holy Virgin Mary, or the rosary, or some medal, for by this Mary is honored, and we are helped in our needs of body and soul. Countless are the examples one reads in books of the innumerable people who have been cured and even preserved from bodily ills by means of the scapular, rosary or medal of the Virgin Mary. And indeed the power of this practice is so great and so ancient that it is found sketched and foreshadowed in the Old Testament. For we read in the third Book of Kings, chapter 2, verse 26, that Abiathar was spared the death he had deserved, as Solomon told him; and why? Because he had carried the ark, which was a figure or symbol of Mary.

There are many, too, who have been cured of spiritual ills, for by carrying or putting on the medal of the most holy Virgin they have been converted. Very public, well known and almost recent is the famous conversion of the Jew Ratisbonne. And how many, many are converted every day by means of the medals

distributed by the members of the Archconfraternity of the Heart of Mary, while by the same means many, many more are kept in grace and grow in virtue!…

Try, then, dearly beloved Christian, try always to wear the scapular, rosary or medal of most holy Mary. When you get up in the morning kiss it, for it is right that in this you should imitate good children, who kiss their parents' hand when they get up. Do the same at night if you wake, and especially if some temptation troubles you; for then, if you call on Mary in earnest, you have no reason to fear or lose heart. I assure you that if you persevere in calling on her, you will always come out victorious. And not only should you wear the scapular, rosary or medal yourself; you should try to have others wear it too, so that they also may be preserved from all bodily and spiritual evils and share in so great a good.

The Holy Exercise of the Way of the Cross

Notice

The greatest and best of all the devotions practiced by Christian piety, the easiest and least costly means of gaining the priceless treasure of the countless indulgences granted to those who visit in person, in Jerusalem, the stations and the road that led Jesus to Calvary, carrying the wood of the cross on his already weakened shoulders; a devotion within the reach of all kinds of people, without distinction of age, sex or condition, for the very simple reason that it does not require them to leave their homes, families or tasks, since it is enough to practice it in a spirit of faith and compunction: such is the exercise called the *Via Crucis*, by express grant and confirmation of Clement XII.

To persuade all Christians to regard this devotion as an excellent spur to the love we ought to have for Jesus, who did and suffered so much for us, will it not be enough to remember that the most holy Virgin Mary began it in Jerusalem on the very day of the greatest catastrophe mortals have ever witnessed, as soon as she had left the victim of sin and of love, her beloved Son, in the tomb, and continued it for the rest of her life, as Sister Mary of Ágreda affirms?[1] Or to know that, as Louis of Blois assures us, Christ said these words to one of his servants: "There is nothing so pleasing to me as to see souls meditate on my passion with devotion and humility"? Let any Christian take it up earnestly, then, and he will see how true it is that all good things will come to him with it.

If many gather to make it together, it will be very fitting for a priest to go with them; and if that is not possible, let them ask God fervently to deign to grant them a spirit of fervor and devotion, so that they may renew the memory of how much his divine Majesty suffered for us on that painful journey.

Precisely because this practice is so easy, I expect of every good Christian that at least on Sundays, as days consecrated to God, he will regard it as an excellent means of sanctifying the feast, as is already the custom in several towns; though it would be better to make it on Fridays too, and better still every day. The renowned Blessed Leonard of Port Maurice, in the course of his missions, came to a district where almost all the inhabitants made the Way of the Cross every day; and, God be praised for it, he found that by this means they kept themselves clean of sin, advanced in the way of virtue, and laid up a great store of merits for glory. Seeing this, will anyone fail to practice it? And the same Blessed says that to meditate devoutly on the passion of the Redeemer is more useful and meritorious than fasting on bread and water, than scourging oneself till the blood flows, and than reciting all the Psalms of David. I believe, then, and hope that there will be no one who does not give at least a little while to it every day, precisely because it is as meritorious as it is easy and within everyone's reach; for it can be practiced even while working, and without leaving one's place.

It should be noted that some priests are empowered, by grant of His Holiness Gregory XVI, to bless images of Christ before which all the stations can be made and the indulgences gained by those who are physically or

morally prevented from visiting the places or churches appointed for the purpose.

The prayers given at each station are not so necessary that, if they are not said, the indulgences are not gained. They are given only to make this exercise easier for all kinds of people; for it is enough that at each station one meditate on what Christ suffered there, which is what is chiefly required.

Since the first and essential condition for gaining these and other indulgences is to be in the grace of God, before beginning this and similar exercises every Christian should prepare himself with a fervent act of contrition. He may say it as his devotion suggests, or as given below; and at the end the offering, always making the sign of the cross first.

Introduction

By the sign of the holy cross, etc.

Act of Contrition. My Lord Jesus Christ, true God and true man, my Creator, Father and Redeemer, in whom I believe and hope, and whom I love above all things: solely because you are who you are, immense goodness, infinitely merciful, and by the most precious blood you shed for love of me on the holy tree of the cross, I say that I am sorry for having offended you. I am sorry, my God, that I am not sorrier. And even if there were no hell to fear nor glory to hope for, solely because you are who you are I repent, I detest my faults and I am sorry for having sinned; and I would wish, Lord, that every evil, and even death, should come upon me rather than that I should offend you again. I resolve, Lord, never to sin again, and to keep away from the occasions of offending you; and I offer you my life, works and troubles in satisfaction for all my sins. And as I ask it, so I hope in your infinite goodness and mercy that you will forgive me, and give me grace to amend and to persevere in your friendship and grace until the end of my life. Amen.

Offering. Sovereign Lord, with all submission I offer to your divine Majesty all that I shall do, meditate and pray in this holy exercise, that it may be pleasing to you and of some merit to me: chiefly for the intention, ends and motives your Vicars on earth have had in granting all the indulgences I intend to gain by your infinite goodness; and likewise in remission of my sins and of the punishments I deserve for them, and in suffrage for the souls in purgatory, especially those to whom I am particularly bound, according to the order of charity or of justice that I can and must observe, or as may be most pleasing to your divine Majesty. Amen.

First Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this first station, which is the house of Pilate, how, after the Redeemer of the world had been cruelly scourged, that wicked judge pronounced the sentence of death against the Author of life (Acts 3:15). And you will say the following

Prayer. O most gentle Jesus, who with infinite humility and submission willed to suffer like a vile slave, bound with hard chains in the presence of the sacrilegious people, and to await the unjust sentence of death that wicked judge pronounced against your divine Majesty: grant me, Lord, that by your example I may mortify my pride, and that, bearing humbly the affronts of this life, I may be free from the chains of sin with which the enemy wants to bind my soul, so that, freed from them by your grace, I may come to enjoy the delights of glory. Amen.

Say an Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be, and then say:

Lord, I have sinned; I am sorry for having offended you. Mercy, my most sweet Jesus! I resolve with your grace never to sin again. Amen.

Then kiss the ground, with the intention of adoring Christ our Lord by this act of humility, saying:

We adore you, O Christ, and we bless you, because by the holy cross you have redeemed me, a sinner, and the whole world.

Blessed and praised be the passion and death of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and the most pure and Immaculate Conception of most holy Mary, our Mother and Lady, conceived without original sin in the first instant of her being. *And the answer is:* Amen.

All this, from the Our Father to the end, is repeated at each station.

Second Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this second station, the place where they laid the heavy weight of the cross on the weak and delicate shoulders of Jesus. And here say the following

Prayer. O supreme King of glory, who allowed yourself to be handed over to the will of the Jews to be cruelly tormented, and, hearing the furious cries of your enemies, accepted the heavy weight of the cross: I beg you, Lord, that with your grace I may resign my will to yours and gladly carry the cross of penance, so that, doing true penance for my sins, I may come to enjoy for ever the delights of glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Third Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this third station, that this is the place where Jesus, walking with the cross on his shoulders, weeping and sighing, fell to the ground under its enormous weight. And here address to him the following

Prayer. O most loving Jesus, who, tired and weary with the cross, fell to the ground, bowed down by its very heavy weight, so that we might know the gravity of our faults, figured in that wood: I beg your divine clemency to give me grace to rise from sin, and, firm and constant in keeping your commandments, never to cease mortifying my body; and may my occupation be to love you always in this life, so as afterwards to enjoy the sweet fruits of the most holy cross in glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Fourth Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this fourth station, that this is the place where our beloved Jesus, walking with the cross on his shoulders, met his most holy Mother, sad and afflicted, and that as those two true lovers looked at each other they felt their hearts pierced with sorrow and bitterness. And here say the following

Prayer. O sovereign Lady, and Mother the saddest and most afflicted of women: by the cruel sword of sorrow that pierced your heart as you looked on Jesus your Son, the light of his eyes darkened, his face disfigured, tormented with the heavy burden of the cross, and made the reproach of men (Ps. 21:7): obtain for me, most afflicted Mother, since my faults were the cause of so many pains and sorrows, that I may weep for them bitterly, so that, purified by confession and penance, I may be admitted into your company in glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Fifth Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this fifth station, that this is the place where the Jews made Simon of Cyrene help Jesus carry the cross, not out of pity for his Majesty, but for fear he would die on the way, crushed by the cross. And here say the following

Prayer. O most loving Jesus, who for love of me carried the very heavy cross on the road to Calvary, and willed that in the person of the Cyrenean we should help you carry it, so that in this way we might share in the treasures of the cross: give me grace, Lord, to embrace with great devotion and a fervent spirit the cross of self-denial, and to put away vicious habits, so that, following your steps in this way, I may obtain the eternal joys of glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Sixth Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this sixth station, the place where that holy woman called Veronica came out to meet our merciful Jesus. Seeing his Majesty so weary, and his face so disfigured with the sweat, dust, spittle and blows he had received, she was moved to pity and compassion, and taking off her veil she wiped his face with it. And here say the following

Prayer. O most beautiful Jesus, whose face, disfigured with filthy spittle, that devout woman wiped with her veil, leaving your most holy face imprinted on it: I beg you, Lord, to imprint on my soul the image of your face, and to give me favor and grace to keep it always by works of perfect charity, so that I may present it in your eternal glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Seventh Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this seventh station, which is the place of the Judgment Gate,[1] *where the Lord fell to the ground for the second time, now completely exhausted and hurt by the enormous weight of the cross. And here address to him the following*

Prayer. O most holy Jesus: by that great weariness your delicate body felt when, no longer able to bear the very heavy weight of the cross, it made you fall to the ground for the second time, I beg you, Spouse of my soul, to enlighten my understanding, so that I may know the immense weight of the sins I commit; and give me grace so that they may not drag me to eternal punishment, but that the desire to love, serve and praise you may always live in me, in this life and in glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Eighth Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this eighth station, which is the place where some devout women, seeing that Jesus, despite his innocence, was being led publicly to be crucified, wept bitterly; and the Lord consoled them, saying: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me; but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 23:28). And here say the following

Prayer. O divine and sovereign Master, who, walking the road to Calvary amid that immensity of pains, taught the devout women who grieved at your sufferings to weep for themselves and their faults: grant me, Lord, that I may weep for my sins with fervent tears of contrition, and that by them my soul may be purified of the many it has fallen into by sinful works, so that, my spirit purified, I may always be in your friendship and grace and enjoy eternally the delights of glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Ninth Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this ninth station, the place where the Lord fell to the ground for the third time under the great weight of the cross, so that his holy mouth struck the ground; and that, struggling to rise, he could not, but fell again. And here say to him the following

Prayer. O most kind Jesus, who allowed the Jews to trample on your sacred Person, so that they made you fall to the ground for the third time: give me grace, my Lord and God, to bear the injuries of my enemies, and for love of you to deny myself, so that, bearing patiently the troubles and adversities of this life, I may come to enjoy the delights of glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Tenth Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this tenth station, which is the place on Mount Calvary where, when our Redeemer Jesus arrived, they cruelly stripped him of his garments and gave him wine mixed with gall and vinegar to drink (Matt. 27:34). And here say the following

Prayer. O most merciful Jesus, who suffered and allowed the sacrilegious Jews to tear off your holy and royal garments, so that your wounds were opened again and you were left naked before all: I beg your divine goodness, by these sorrows and pains, and by the affliction they caused you in offering you wine mixed with gall, to grant me, Lord, that I may not drink the pleasures, mixed with the gall of sin, that the world offers me; but that, stripped of my self-love, I may follow him who for me suffered to be naked on the tree of the cross, so as to see him afterwards in glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Eleventh Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this eleventh station, the place where our merciful Jesus was stretched on the cross and nailed to it hand and foot, and where his most holy Mother and our Lady, hearing the first blow of the hammer, was left in anguish at the sorrow it caused her. And here say the following

Prayer. O most clement Lord: by that immense love which burned in your heart, and with which you suffered to be stretched on the cross and to have your most holy feet and hands nailed to it, I ask you, my God, by your ineffable Charity, that I may never stretch out my feet and hands to any wickedness; but rather, my heart pierced with your divine love, that I may live always crucified in your holy service by means of grace and infinite mercy, and reign with you afterwards in glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Twelfth Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this twelfth station, the place where, when Our Lord Jesus Christ had been crucified, they let the cross drop with a jolt into the hollow of a rock; and where his loving Mother, seeing him so cruelly treated, was plunged into a sea of sorrows by the anguish the sight of her beloved Son caused her. And here say the following

Prayer. O divine Jesus, spouse of our souls, who, nailed to the holy cross between two thieves, were raised and lifted up in the sight of all the world, and suffered atrocious torments: I beg you, Lord, to heal the ills of my soul, so that, despising the world with its vanities and follies, my spirit may rise to the contemplation of divine and eternal things, and I may love you alone, and for love of you hate the world and myself, until I see you in glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Thirteenth Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this thirteenth station, the place where the Queen of Angels received into her arms the Body of her most loving Son, our Savior, the dead Jesus, when Joseph and Nicodemus took him down from the cross. And here say the following

Prayer. O sovereign Queen of Angels and most sorrowful Mother: by that immensity of pains that flooded your heart when you received from the arms of the cross into your own your most holy Son, dead from the violence of so many torments, I beg you, most loving Mother, to deign to receive my soul into your arms when it leaves the body, and to present it to your most holy Son, so that, remembering what his divine Majesty and you, Lady, suffered for it, he may judge it not as my faults deserve, but according to the infinite merits of his divine blood shed for love of me, and those of your immense sorrows, so that afterwards I may accompany you in the joys of glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Last Station

Consider, Christian soul, at this last station, which is the place of the burial of Christ our Savior. And here say the following

Prayer. O divine and sovereign Redeemer of our souls, who with infinite love willed to suffer so many pains and torments for them, even to dying shamefully on a cross between two thieves, to blot out with your divine blood the sentence of death already signed against us for our faults (Col. 2:14), and finally to be buried, so as afterwards to rise again to immortal life: we beg you, Lord, by the infinite merits of your most holy passion, death and burial, to bury for us in perpetual oblivion all the pleasures of this world, and to keep always alive in our hearts the memory of your most holy passion and death, and the desire to love and serve you in this life, so that after it we may rise again and enter into your glory. Amen.

The rest as at the first station.

Whoever makes this exercise of the Way of the Cross devoutly can gain twenty plenary indulgences, an endless number of partial ones, and set free a soul from purgatory (Ferraris, under Indulgentia*, art. 5).*[1]

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[2] Ven. María de Jesús de Ágreda, *Mística Ciudad de Dios*, part III, book 7.

[3] *Porta Judiciaria*.

[1] Lucius Ferraris, *Prompta bibliotheca canonica* (1746), a standard canonical dictionary.

A Practical Method of Imitating, with a Spirit of Devotion, Jesus Christ Carrying the Cross

The Christian who wishes to follow Jesus Christ carrying the cross must bear in mind that this name *Christian* means the same as disciple or imitator of Christ; and that if he wishes to bear so honorable and noble a title properly, he must do what Jesus charges us in his holy Gospel: namely, that if we wish to imitate him or follow after him, we must oppose or deny ourselves, take up the cross and follow him (Matt. 16:24). By these words, as the commentators explain, Jesus Christ asks of us internal and external mortification if we wish to follow him. Internal mortification is contained in the words *let him deny himself*, that is, let him have no will of his own; and external mortification in these others, *let him take up his cross.*

Mortification, according to the beautiful comparison of St. Francis de Sales, is as necessary to us as salt for preserving meat. Just as without salt dead meat goes bad, ferments and soon becomes food for worms, while with salt it keeps all year, so we with the salt of mortification shall keep ourselves in virtue, and without it we shall be the prey of every vice and in the end shall be wholly lost. And this is why St. Paul said with such

assurance: *Brethren… if you live according to the flesh*, pampering it and not mortifying it, *you shall die*, you will be damned; *but if by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live*, you will be saved (Rom. 8:12–13). Therefore, wishing your spiritual profit, I have thought it very fitting to sketch for you what we understand by the word mortification and how to practice it, so that you may help the Lord carry the cross.

To mortify, then, does not mean to kill, but to subject and to bridle. So the word mortification means the same as an ordering, harmonizing and regulating of the movements of the lower part of man, so that it may always be in harmony with the higher part, as reason enlightened by faith directs.

"What is mortification?" asks a contemplative writer (Fr. Croisset, vol. 2, Friday after Ash Wednesday); and he answers: "It is a death of love, which kills the life of sin, which detaches the soul from the senses, which separates it from its body, and makes it live by the spirit. It is a sacrifice of love: the Holy Spirit is the priest, the body the victim, the heart the altar, penance the knife, love the fire, and glory its fruit. It is a martyrdom of love, without crime and without tyrant, less bloody than that of faith, but longer and more burdensome, though free and in a certain way more voluntary. It is the continuation of the sacrifice of Jesus, which completes his passion (Col. 1:24), makes our bodies members of his own, animates us with his spirit, makes us sharers in his sorrows, merits for us the treasures of his grace, and raises us to the throne of glory." So far that author. And since I think that with what has been said you will already understand that *the lion is not as fierce as they paint him*, and that you will now look with a smile on what used to frighten you, I pass on to its specific division.

Mortification, then, is of two kinds: one of obligation, the other of devotion. Mortification of obligation aims at restraining or removing whatever may hinder us from keeping the precepts of the law of God and the obligations of our state. Mortification of supererogation or devotion tends to deprive oneself of things which, though it is not wrong or sinful to do them, it is nevertheless of great profit to abstain from, so as to offer the Lord a sacrifice very pleasing to him. For example, to look at a pleasant garden or to drink a glass of cool water is not a sin in itself; and yet the benefit to the spirit of depriving oneself of it for love of God and of Mary is incalculable. And I said that the benefit of this kind of mortification is incalculable, because it almost borders on necessity; for it is an established fact that whoever does not know how, or does not want, to mortify himself in matters of supererogation or devotion will not know how, or be able, to do so in matters of obligation either.

This mortification of devotion is divided into active and passive. The active consists in seeking, by one's own choice and out of the great love one has for God and the most holy Virgin, things that cause pain and humiliation, so as to offer them a gift. The passive consists in bearing with patience, resignation and conformity to the will of God all that causes us pain without our having sought or intended it, such as persecutions, slanders, insults, robberies, illnesses, cold, heat and the like. Although internal mortification is the best and noblest, since it is the soul of all the others, to proceed with method we will first give some notions of external mortification, which will open the way to the rest.

External Mortification

Mortification of the Sight

"Part of innocence is to be blind," said Seneca; and in truth we know by sad experience that countless people have plunged into vices and crimes, losing their innocence through the sight. The thought of this drove a pagan philosopher to tear out his eyes with his own hands, as Tertullian relates (*Apologeticum* 46). It is true that a Christian cannot and must not imitate this unhappy man, who tried to avoid some crimes by committing another; but he must mortify his sight in imitation of Jesus Christ our Lord, who always kept his eyes modestly lowered. That is why the Evangelists tell us of the times he raised them, as of something unusual and not customary in him (John 11:41; 17:1). So you will try to mortify your sight in the following

cases:

1. You will abstain from looking at objects that could stir up sinful thoughts in your soul, such as indecent pictures and improper plays, especially if they are accompanied by dancing, which, because of the manner of dress and leaping, must be considered a provoking cause of foul thoughts. And indeed very many who had felt their concupiscence as it were asleep through the whole course of the play, on seeing the dance begin, felt themselves assailed by a crowd of impure thoughts, which, burning them in the fire of lingering delight, made them commit as many mortal sins. Many experience what happened to Alypius, of whom St. Augustine tells us that he went to the theater resolved not to look at anything bad; but once there, he looked, sinned and made others sin (*Confessions* VI, 8). Do not go, then, to those gatherings where those present dress immodestly, to balls, I mean, and evening parties; and when you go through the streets and squares, never fix your eyes on persons of the other sex, especially if they are less decently dressed. And so that your care and caution may be the greater, it is my duty to tell you that there are certain persons whom the devil uses like recruiting flags, whose business is to enlist souls for hell.

2. You will also turn your eyes away from vain, curious and unnecessary things, saying with the Prophet: *Turn away my eyes that they may not behold vanity* (Ps. 118:37). To know how to mortify oneself in these and other things, however innocent and decent they may be in themselves, is a most powerful means of advancing in perfection. We read of St. Francis Borgia that when he hunted with falcons, at the moment they swooped on the prey he lowered his eyes and denied himself the sight of it; and the life of St. Aloysius Gonzaga relates that he denied himself the sight of the most curious spectacles he had to attend out of necessity. Do the same yourself sometimes, especially when you must of necessity walk through the streets, squares and public places. I said sometimes, not always; for to demand that you always did it would be to get nothing, by asking too much. It will cost you some repugnance at first, I know; but afterwards you will find it very easy, and with it peace, joy and merit in this world, and a great reward in the next.

3. When you do not wish to mortify yourself, but to give your eyes some recreation and relief by looking at flowers, trees, gardens, buildings and other decent things of this kind that hold no danger of sin, accustom yourself to raise your spirit to the Creator, thinking that he is the spring and source of all loveliness, beauty and order, and that from him those creatures or objects have received all the loveliness, grace and order you see shining in them. And going a step further, say: If the beauty of the things of the world, which is a place of exile, is so great, what will be that of the heavenly homeland?

Mortification of the Hearing

1. You must try to mortify your hearing by never listening to impure stories, or indecent conversations or songs, which, as St. Paul says, corrupt good manners (1 Cor. 15:33), and which unhappily abound so much in our unfortunate days. The devil uses these indecent and foul-mouthed people as a hook to fish for souls, or as the bird-catcher uses decoys to take innocent and unwary little birds. Oh, how many men and women are heard exclaiming every day: “I would never have sinned, or known of such indecencies, if I had not heard such a conversation, song or expression!” Flee, therefore, from the indecent and the foul-mouthed.

2. You will also guard against listening to backbiting, to the faults of others, and to worldly matters. Even if they did you no other harm, at least they will fill your head with a thousand impertinent things which, rushing in at the time of prayer, Mass and other devotions, will disturb and distract you to the utmost. When you find yourself among people who talk like this, try if you can to distract them by changing the subject or asking them some useful question. If this stratagem does not have the desired effect, go away if you can; and if not, let them understand by a serious and severe face that such conversations do not have your approval. And do not doubt it, they will correct themselves, for the Holy Spirit says: *The north wind driveth away rain, as doth a sad countenance a backbiting tongue* (Prov. 25:23).

Mortification of the Smell

You will mortify your sense of smell by avoiding vain perfumes, such as essences, scented pastilles, balms, scented waters and so on; for whoever uses such things, which belong to the effeminate, shows himself a sensual person. That God, as supreme Lord, should be honored with incense and other aromatic things is very reasonable; but that a mortal, who will soon be the food of worms, fetid, loathsome and abominable, should use them is reprehensible in the extreme. Leave scents alone, then; rather, try to bear patiently the bad smells of hospitals, sickrooms, prisons and so on, not giving up visiting them on that account; for God will reward you for it, as he promises in his holy Gospel (Matt. 25:36).

Mortification of the Tongue

You must take great care to mortify your tongue, so that it does not slip into vain, useless, self-praising or foul words, into curses, blasphemies or other things that may be offensive to God or harmful to yourself or your neighbor. *If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man,* says the apostle St. James (Jas. 3:2). And Origen, explaining these words, says that of one who has the happy lot of keeping free from the sins of the tongue it can be affirmed that he is truly perfect; and it can be presumed that he who has managed to tame his tongue will easily direct and govern his affections. And indeed experience teaches us that the tongue is a university of wickedness (Jas. 3:6), and that even spiritual persons are caught by Satan in the snares of the tongue.

That is why it is indispensable to take exquisite care in governing it, and for this purpose to use the advice of St. Bernard, who says: let what the tongue is to pronounce once pass twice under the file. He means that before you speak you must consider carefully whether what you are going to say is according to the will of God or not, and whether it will profit or harm your neighbor. With this reflection you will avoid many words you would regret having said. Speak little, then, according to the counsel of Seneca, who said: “I have never regretted having kept silent, but I have regretted having spoken.” And the Holy Spirit assures us: *In the multitude of words there shall not want sin* (Prov. 10:19). Keep silent, then, I repeat, and do not speak except out of necessity, charity or obedience. For this you can use the following points:

1. Think that God notes down the words you say, and that he will ask you to account for all of them on the day of judgment, even the idle ones, as he tells us in his holy Gospel (Matt. 12:36).

2. Before speaking, raise your heart to God and ask him for grace not to go too far, saying with the Prophet: *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: and a door round about my lips* (Ps. 140:3), so that I may speak with due circumstances.

3. Flee from the conversations, persons and places in which you know by experience that you slip in your speech or your spirit becomes dissipated.

4. Do not make jokes, or provoke heavy jesting, or use double meanings that may be taken in a bad sense or may grieve your neighbor.

5. Speak simply and candidly and without pretense, but never bring your neighbor’s faults into the open. Even when these are already public and known, or are natural defects, it will always be good to take the better course, which is to keep silent; for no one likes his defects to be published or talked about.

6. Hate disputes, and digging your heels in. When you have to give your opinion, do it modestly and gently, wishing the truth to triumph, and never in order to get your own way, or from an itch to have your whims carried out. On the contrary, if conscience permits, prefer to fall in with the opinion of others rather than to argue, for this is of great spiritual profit; it is well known that it is better to be modest than stubborn. How many quarrels, divisions and sins you will avoid by practicing these counsels!

7. Never say a word that tends to your own praise, nor tell what you have said or done in order to be thought wise, brave or virtuous; for precisely because praise does not sit well in one's own mouth (Prov. 27:2), you would make yourself contemptible. So as not to fail, then, in a matter of such importance, remember that God sees you, hears you, and will ask you to account for all you say.

Mortification of the Taste

The mortification of the taste can be practiced in a thousand ways; and it is so important that St. Gregory does not hesitate to say that whoever does not first try to overcome gluttony will promise himself in vain to overcome the other vices (*Moralia* XXX, 18). Let it be held, then, as an unquestionable maxim, or fundamental principle, that man must not live to eat and drink, but must eat and drink to live. One must eat and drink to sustain nature and not to pamper the senses; and these are the principles that must govern the quantity and quality of food. "Whoever does not mortify himself in eating," said St. Catherine of Siena, "cannot possibly keep his innocence, for Adam was lost through gluttony."

All intemperance in food and drink is harmful to body and soul. It is no longer doubted that the greater part of illnesses are the effect of gluttony. Apoplexies, diarrheas, obstructions, pains of the stomach and of the side, and other ills it would take long to list, commonly have no other cause than excessive food. But these bodily illnesses, though great evils, are very slight compared with the spiritual evils gluttony brings. "It is impossible," said Cassian, "it is impossible for one who is full of food not to experience impure temptations" (*Institutes* V, 6). And this is why the Saints, who valued chastity so highly, restrained gluttony with such care. St. Thomas says that when the devil tempts a person with gluttony and is overcome, he stops tempting him with impurity.[1] St. Jerome, writing to the virgin Eustochium, said to her: "Wine and youth are a double incentive to the desire of unlawful pleasures." And among other things he adds: "I warn you, as one who is the spouse of Jesus Christ, to flee from wine as from poison" (*Letter* 22, 8). And Solomon in the Proverbs says: *Wine is a luxurious thing* (Prov. 20:1), a tinder of incontinence; and then he asks: *Who hath woe?* … *Surely they that pass their time in wine, and study to drink off their cups* (Prov. 23:29–30).

Because Satan, who delights in our misfortune in this world and the next, knows all this, he has had so many taverns, eating-houses, cafés and liqueur factories opened, which are like so many gunpowder factories for making war on chastity and the other virtues; for from impurity are born all evils, even heresy, as our saying has it: *There is no heretic without a woman.*

And so, to free yourself from such great evils, be watchful in eating and drinking. Never go into a tavern, café or eating-house except out of necessity, and do not eat or drink except at the usual hours. Then bless the food before you begin to eat, and when you finish give thanks to God for it. Do not make yourself like those unclean animals that, standing under the oak, gulp down the acorns without raising their heads to see who lavishes the gift on them. Rather, as you begin to take food, raise your thoughts to God, and from time to time say to him inwardly: "Lord, I neither eat nor drink to take delight in these things, but to nourish myself and to have strength to serve you."

But I do not mean by this that it is a fault to take pleasure in food, for that is natural and well ordered by God; but it would be one if one ate for pleasure as the only end. To eat with pleasure is not the same as to eat for pleasure. The first is lawful, for without the incentive of pleasure who would eat? The second is a sin or a fault, because it inverts the order: it places the end in what is only a means or instrument; it enjoys what should only be used; it destroys, in short, the maxim we have laid down, that man must not live to eat and drink, but drink and eat to live.

It is a very praiseworthy act of mortification never to complain of food or drink. That a superior should look out for others is very reasonable; but a private person should never say that something is underdone or overdone, cold or hot, tasteless or too salty. Let him eat what is brought and as it is brought, unless he knows it to be harmful to body or soul, as if it were something that would make him ill, or that went against some

precept. St. Thomas never asked for any particular food, and always said that he was satisfied with what was put before him. St. Ignatius never refused any dish, nor complained even if it was badly cooked and badly prepared. St. John Climacus also ate of everything, and very slowly waited for the others to eat so as to finish together. It is also an excellent mortification to deprive oneself of, or abstain from, those dishes or fruits most suited to one's own taste. Doing it unobtrusively, one can practice many acts of virtue, presenting or offering these sacrifices or gifts to God and carrying the cross of Christ; and so not be like those of whom St. Paul complains with tears, that they are *enemies of the cross of Christ, whose God is their belly* (Phil. 3:18–19).

Mortification of the Touch

Never do or touch anything shameful, for you already know that it is a horrible sin. You will also abstain from the indecent and low habit some have of horseplay or grabbing hold of one another and other such antics, for it is intolerable and unbecoming. Do not forget the saying: *Games of hands are games of boors.* You must not do it, then, not only with persons of the other sex, but not even with those of your own; and not only because it is against good manners, but also because it is against chastity.

Mortification of the Whole Body

The fiercest, cruelest and most fearsome enemy of our soul is our body, or the flesh: both because it is always beside it, and because it is the most stubborn, so that it can be said to lay snares for it every day to make it fall into sin. It is an unbroken colt that easily bolts, that hardly obeys the bit or submits to serve the spirit for which it was made. So, if the rein is slackened even a little, it will not only demand what is just, and what we should reasonably grant it as necessary, but will drag us into passion. We must not forget that we are to look after the body as we would look after a farm animal, to which we would give what is needed to make use of it, and not to pamper it, lest it grow too frisky and refuse the yoke or throw off its load. We must do the same with the body: give it what it needs to live and to work, but not to pamper it, lest it too, growing frisky, become unmanageable and drag us into every disorder, making us live not according to reason but according to passion, like irrational animals, and even worse; for they are endowed with and governed by natural instinct, which, beyond dispute, comes to be lacking in the person who lives according to passion.

When a doctor takes charge of a patient, he at once orders a diet: that he should deprive himself of food and drink, not only in quantity but also in the quality of certain foods he knows to be harmful to him. He also orders him to keep away from unhealthy air and from conversations, and at the same time prescribes the medicines he thinks most suitable for restoring health. In just the same way we must treat our body, sick with passions and evil inclinations. We must begin with the diet, depriving it of, or moderating, those foods or drinks that can stir up or drive on the passions; keep it away from persons and places that may bring it some spiritual harm; and at the same time administer certain mortifications, like so many medicines, under the advice of a prudent and wise director. Or at least we must bear with patience and without complaint the things that mortify us without our seeking them, whether they come from our neighbors, from animals and insects, or lastly from the elements or from nature: for example, to bear with patience and a spirit of penance the cold, and not being able to warm oneself or go near the fire in winter; headache in spring; heat, flies, fleas and so on in summer; mosquitoes or bedbugs in autumn, and so on.

I know a certain person who, when the fleas bite him, speaks to himself in this way: "Look, these creatures bite mortals so because the first and father of them committed a single sin. If, then, for a single sin of one they bite all mortals, with how much more reason should they all bite you, who have committed so many sins?" And he lets them do their job, biting him and feeding on him, bearing this mortification with the greatest patience and in a spirit of penance. If you do not reach so far, because you have less virtue, be at least a little more long-suffering than until now. Think that you will suffer more in hell, where you will go if you have the misfortune to die in mortal sin; or in purgatory, where you will certainly go if you do not mortify yourself now, or do not do penance for venial faults or for the temporal punishment of mortal ones,

even when they have already been confessed. For you will remember that the Catechism says that by the sacrament of Penance the pains of hell are forgiven, but not all the pains of purgatory that the sinner deserves.

It would be good and very useful for you to practice also some voluntary mortification, in imitation of St. Paul, who said: *I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection* (1 Cor. 9:27). But before practicing voluntary mortifications, consult your director about it with humility and docility; and he, taking into account your health, occupations and other circumstances, will tell you what you can do that will be most pleasing to God.

Internal Mortification

The Sensitive Appetite

The sensitive appetite contains two powers, one called irascible and the other concupiscible; these two powers are the seat of the passions. By the word passion we mean the disordered movements of the sensitive appetite, which, being carried toward their objects with a certain impression on the senses, causes such a movement to be called a passion.

There are eleven passions: six of the concupiscible part and five of the irascible. The first six are love, hatred, desire, aversion, joy and sadness. The five of the irascible part are hope, despair, fear, daring and anger.

The passions in themselves are neither good nor bad. They can be compared to the humors of the body, which, if they are well balanced, cause or keep bodily health, but if they fall into disorder, suddenly give rise to illnesses and finally death. So the passions, if they are ruled and ordered by reason, are a mine of moral virtues; but if they fall into disorder, they are a spring of vices, faults and sins. For this reason it is very important to keep them wholly subject to the laws of reason; and if perhaps, without our noticing it, they rise against it like unbroken horses, as soon as we notice it we must bring them under with the reins of that same reason. From keeping the passions mortified in this way follows the priceless good of tranquility of mind and peace of heart, and already in this world one enjoys an anticipated heaven.

Mortification of the Imagination

The imagination cannot be idle; it is important, therefore, to keep it always occupied with useful things. For this the following points will help you:

1. You will try to give it the food of useful and profitable thoughts, taking great care to put away bad thoughts at once; for if you once let them in, you will not drive them out so easily afterwards.

2. Guard the gates of the bodily senses, keeping them shut to all that may harm the soul; for you must know that he labors in vain to mortify the imagination who does not first try to mortify the bodily senses.

3. Never be idle. Try always to be occupied in things of the service of God, the good of your neighbor, and what the duties of your state require; for with the imagination so occupied, it will not lose itself in useless or harmful things.

4. Think that you are in the presence of God, who is that Judge who will judge not only your words and works but also your thoughts. And before this God and Judge, will you dare to think what you would not dare to think before a man who could see into your thoughts?

Mortification of the Understanding

The understanding is the root of all the good and evil in man. Whoever surrenders his own understanding or judgment to God makes him a great sacrifice, especially in the following cases:

1. In putting aside or overcoming sloth or negligence in learning the things of one's obligation, which everyone must know perfectly so as not to incur the displeasure and reprobation of God, as the Apostle says in these words: *If any man know not, he shall not be known* (1 Cor. 14:38).

2. In subjecting one's own opinion or judgment to that of one's superiors, judging right what they command, and always obeying, if what is commanded is not against the law of God.

3. In subjecting one's own judgment or opinion to that of another, even when he is not as wise or is not a superior, except in bad things, for in that case one neither can nor should submit it. But apart from this case, try not to dispute or argue but to give way; for condescension, as St. Francis de Sales says, is the daughter of charity, and begets and nourishes peace and love in families and among other neighbors.

4. In mortifying the desire to know harmful and useless things, whether what forbidden books teach, or what is said by backbiters who like to tell of other people's lives, or what goes on in households or in the town.

5. In not judging the works or words of others, unless the office of superior obliges one to it. For a superior must watch over and be wary about what those subject to him say, do or may do, either to correct them if they have done or spoken wrongly, or to forestall or prevent it. But as for the rest, always judge of others as favorably as possible; and in things evidently bad, always judge with mercy, thinking that we have plenty of defects ourselves, and that if we were in our neighbor's situation and God did not hold us back, we should be worse than he.

Mortification of the Memory

The memory must be mortified in the following things:

1. In restraining vicious thoughts, and trying to forget the wrongs our neighbor may have done us; and doing the same with lewd things one may have seen or heard, and any other bad thing that comes to mind.

2. In shutting the door on all vain and useless thoughts, which fill the soul with fancies and hinder attention in prayer.

3. In giving no place to thoughts, however good they may be, if they come at the wrong time, as for example in prayer, at Mass and in other devotions, if they do not fit those same works. And so that the memory may always be well occupied, there is nothing like practicing being always in the presence of God.

Mortification of Self-Love and of One's Own Will

Venerable Blosius, speaking of the mortification of the will, says that no sacrifice more pleasing can be offered to God than that of one's own will. And elsewhere he says that whoever mortifies his own will to do that of others for the glory or love of God pleases the Lord more than if he fasted for a long time on bread and water and scourged himself most rigorously. And on the contrary, so great is the harm that self-will, unmortified, does to the soul, that St. Bernard says there would be no hell if there were no self-will (*Sermon 3 for Easter*, 3).

The mortification of one's own will is to be practiced in the following cases:

1. In finding out, or taking great care to know, what is the will of God in each work to be done.

2. In asking God for this mortification, distrusting oneself and putting one's confidence in him, thinking that all things can be done with his holy grace (Phil. 4:13).

3. In often saying these ejaculations, or others like them: My God, what will you have me do? (Acts 9:6). Teach me, Lord, to deny my own will and to do yours. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. I want nothing, my God, but what you want. Do with me, Lord, as you please.

4. In trying to do the will of others rather than one's own in those indifferent things that may lawfully be done or not done, or done in this way or that, subjecting oneself to all for love of God. This holy practice is of great profit, because acts of self-subjection are accompanied by acts of other virtues; and if one carefully takes the opportunities that very often present themselves, one will please God greatly and run very swiftly along the way of perfection. In this many persons fail who are reputed spiritual and lovers of perfection, and in reality are very little so. They are excellent and very good as long as they can do what they want and how they want, without the least subjection or contradiction; but offer them a little resistance, cross their will, and you will see them at once throw out sparks of fire and sharp words, pout, show their anger with a frown, ready for outbursts, and quicker to flare up in rage at the first encounter than a match at the rub of a rough surface. To these can be applied the saying that fits them so well: *Saints in the square, and devils at home*; for they are unbearable, since no one can work out how to win them or how to lose them. Unhappy people!

5. In practicing many acts contrary to one's own will, not only in the things to which the will is viciously inclined or which it desires, but also in indifferent things for which one has some liking; and this, properly speaking, is to deny oneself.

6. In trying in all things to take Jesus Christ as one's model, fixing in one's heart a great desire to be humbled and despised by all, and therefore fleeing offices of authority and honor and embracing the lowly and despised ones. Never telling anything that tends to one's own praise, unless the glory of God and the good of one's neighbor require it. When reproved, even if one is innocent, keeping silent and not excusing oneself, offering it all to God and considering that one's own sins, present or past, deserve this and much more. And in all this not wishing to be thought humble and virtuous, but guilty and imperfect.

7. In having a ready and determined will to do not only what superiors command, but also what one knows they want, without waiting for them to say so or command it.

8. In uprooting from the heart all attachment to created things, so that one loves nothing but God, or for God. This detachment from created things is most useful for advancing in perfection. Therefore great care must be taken not to become attached to anything, however small or worthless; for sometimes these things occupy the heart as much as great ones, or more than costly, brilliant and rare things. It follows that, as soon as one feels oneself attached to such trifles or little things, one must deprive oneself of them before the heart sticks to them; for every disordered attachment to creatures shuts the door to the love of God and opens it to self-love. It must be understood that whatever one possesses or uses in this world is to be held without attachment or clinging, always ready to leave it all whenever it seems fitting, and valuing things only so far as they are useful for serving God.

9. In embracing troubles, pains, injuries, affronts and insults with entire resignation to the will of God. To walk toward perfection, this must be done in the following four ways:

1. Suffering things with patience, however hard and difficult they may be, according to the word of St. Paul, who says: *In tribulatione patientes* \[patient in tribulation\] (Rom. 12:12).

2. Suffering not only with patience, but giving thanks to the Lord for the benefit he grants us by letting us taste the chalice he reserved for himself and his most chosen friends.

3. Suffering not only with patience and thanksgiving, but also with joy, in imitation of the Apostles, of whom we read that they went from the presence of the council rejoicing that they had had the happiness of suffering reproach for the name of Jesus (Acts 5:41).

4. Suffering not only with patience, thanksgiving and joy, but also with the desire to suffer more and more for love of Jesus Christ, in imitation of him who, nailed to the cross amid so many bitternesses, insults and pains of death, still burned with thirst to suffer more (John 19:28). And in those who truly love God, in proportion to the liveliness of their love, the desire to suffer is also vehement, so that they count adversities

as glories, as St. Paul affirms of himself: *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ* (Gal. 6:14).

Here you have, O dearly beloved Christian, what you must do if you wish to follow Jesus Christ: you must deny yourself, take up the cross and go after him. Whoever does not practice this will never be perfect. Even if our nature resists it, it is indispensable to make it give way. But how painful it is that this is not done! Jesus Christ has many who follow him to Tabor, but to Calvary, how few! I mean that when he sends prosperity and glory, all are friends of God; but when he sends illnesses, misfortunes or other evils, then they turn their backs on him. Do not be one of their number, but take what he gives you. If he sends you prosperity, give him continual thanks, admiring his goodness; and if he tries you with misfortunes, conform yourself to his will, believing that this is good for you, and that he suffered even more for you without deserving it. And in this way you will at last be able to reach the heavenly glory that I so truly wish you. Amen.

[1] *Summa theologiae* II–II, q. 148, a. 6.

Patience: Means to Acquire It

O Christian! In this valley of tears and pains you are an exile; and this is why patience is as essential to you as the bread you live on. Do you really want it? I promise it to you, without fear that you will prove me wrong, provided you practice the following counsels:

1. When you are angry, keep silent. Do no action and say no word carried away by anger; for afterwards you would not only regret what you had said or done, but perhaps the harm you had caused by your outbursts would already be past remedy.

2. Remember that if God had taken your life when you sinned for the first time, you would now be burning in hell, suffering there much more than you suffer here now. And if you were given the choice between what you suffer now and what you would suffer there, would you not prefer this to hell? Then realize that God is commuting into these pains those you should have suffered there. And will you not bear them?…

3. Raise your thoughts to heaven, and see how great is the glory that awaits you there if you suffer with patience. The sufferings of this life cannot be compared with the glory and reward God will give you for them afterwards (Rom. 8:18). And you must know that, as St. Gregory says, no one can reach the great rewards of heaven except by the way of great trials; and these trials must be borne with patience and in grace, or else they are of no use for going to heaven.

4. Think that no one will be crowned with glory without having suffered with patience and in grace; so that St. John saw that all the Saints in heaven carried palms (Apoc. 7:9), which are the symbol of the martyrdom or patience with which they had borne the pains of this life. Read the lives of the holy men and women, and those of Jesus and Mary, and you will see with what patience they bore slanders, persecutions, privations and every kind of torment, although they were innocent. And you, a wretched sinner, who should have been burning in hell these many years, will you not bear it?

5. Are these examples not enough to quiet you? Then I will set another before your eyes, which I think will move you. Come with me, let us go to Calvary… Do you see those two beside Jesus? They are two thieves. Both suffer the same kind of pains; both are executed there… but what a different end for the two! One passes from the gallows to paradise, and the other from the cross to hell. And why? Because this one despairs impatiently, while the other bears his sentence with patience (Luke 23:39–43). Understand, then, that all men carry their cross in this world; but with this difference: whoever carries it with patience, grace and humility, persuaded that for his sins he deserves that and much more, will go to heaven with the good thief; but whoever carries it raging, blaspheming and despairing will go with the bad thief to rage for an eternity in hell.

6. You will obtain the virtue of patience by asking for it humbly from Jesus and most holy Mary, saying to them for this purpose every morning an Our Father and three Hail Marys. In troubles you will often say: “My Jesus, stand by me; most holy Virgin, help me; let it be for love of God; let it be in discount and satisfaction for my sins.” At night examine whether you have failed during the day; and if you find you have failed, say as many Hail Marys as there were faults.

Notice

For patience to be fruitful and meritorious it is indispensable to bear sufferings in the state of grace; for to one who is in mortal sin, much suffering with patience is of no use for gaining heaven. It is of use only for the earth, I mean for gaining temporal goods. And so that this may be better understood, I will use the same comparison or example with which Jesus Christ exhorted his disciples to patience, telling them that while they live in this world they will be like a woman in labor, who in the act of giving birth suffers intense pains, it is true, but afterwards counts them well spent for the joy of seeing that she has brought a fine child into the world (John 16:21).

Indeed, true Christians, while they are in this world, are like mothers in labor. The pains and troubles inseparable from this valley of tears give them much to suffer and cause them some sadness; but at the end of life they will rejoice to see that they have brought forth such great and good works for the heavenly homeland. But just as the mother who rejoices at the happy outcome of her labor would suffer the bitterest afflictions if, after so much suffering, she saw the fruit of her womb dead, seeing that instead of being a comfort to her it was only to be food for worms: in the same way every Christian brings forth for the heavenly homeland, so to speak, as so many living and most beautiful children, all the good he does and the evil he suffers with patience, if he is in the grace of God. But if he is in mortal sin, the good works he does and the troubles he suffers with patience are like so many children he brings forth amid the pains of this life, but dead children, which serve only as food for the earth, I mean for obtaining earthly and temporal goods, but not heavenly ones, since they are dead works.

Therefore: Patience and Grace. And if at some time there is the frailty of losing this grace or falling into sin, make a fervent act of contrition as soon as possible, and go to confession as soon as one can, so as not to have the unhappy lot of bringing forth so many works dead, of no use for the heavenly homeland. Nevertheless, let the sinner not omit good works and the patient bearing of evils, if only to obtain from God true conversion; but let him be persuaded that, though he does the one and bears the other, as long as he is not in the grace of God he will never merit heaven.

Devotion to St. Joseph

One of the Saints who should inspire the most devotion and confidence in every Christian soul must surely be the glorious St. Joseph. Yes, we should trust him greatly, knowing that God chose him among all men to be the spouse of Mary, who without ceasing to be a virgin was the Mother of Jesus. And since God gives each one graces according to the special end for which he destines him, what great graces he must have granted St. Joseph so that he might fulfill his mission perfectly! What deep humility, what angelic purity, what fervent charity must have shone in St. Joseph, as befitted the only one worthy of his spouse Mary!…

Moreover, St. Joseph was called to a second mission. He was given to Mary not only to protect, shelter and accompany her as her husband, but also so that the mystery of the Incarnation of the Word might be hidden from Satan.[1] *And since this God made man willed to appear as a child, he chose St. Joseph to take the place of a father, and as such to feed him and care for him. All this St. Joseph fulfilled perfectly, and Jesus in return was wholly subject to him (Luke 2:51).*

Now, if on earth he took such good care of the Virgin Mary his spouse and of Jesus the son of Mary, and both were subject to him, it is to be believed that in heaven he will have great influence; that God will have rewarded his constant fidelity a hundredfold; and that Jesus and Mary, in return for his good services, will be pleased to dispatch graces through the intercession of St. Joseph. And it is to be thought that God himself will inspire Christians to ask him for graces, and will say to them what Pharaoh king of Egypt said: Go to Joseph (Gen. 41:55).

Indeed, great and very great is the influence of St. Joseph, as experience shows and as the Doctors of the Church teach, especially St. Thomas, St. Bernardine, St. Francis de Sales, Gerson, Isolano and many others. And St. Teresa, in her Life, says of herself: "Seeing myself so crippled, and at so young an age, and how the doctors of earth had left me, I resolved to have recourse to those of heaven… I took for my advocate and lord the glorious St. Joseph, and commended myself earnestly to him. I saw clearly that, both from this need and from others greater, of honor and loss of soul, this father and lord of mine rescued me, and with more good than I knew how to ask. I do not remember until now ever having asked him anything that he has failed to do… To other Saints the Lord seems to have given grace to help in one need; this glorious Saint, I know by experience, helps in all; and the Lord wishes us to understand that, as he was subject to him on earth (for Joseph, bearing the name of father and being his guardian, could command him), so in heaven he does all that he asks. Some other persons whom I told to commend themselves to him have seen this too… I have not known anyone who is truly devoted to him and renders him particular services who is not seen to be more advanced in virtue… If I were a person who had authority to write, I would gladly go at length into telling in great detail the favors this glorious Saint has done for me and for other persons… I only ask, for the love of God, that whoever does not believe me should try it, and he will see by experience the great good it is to commend oneself to this glorious Patriarch and to have devotion to him…"

It seems to me, O Christian who read this, that you are resolved to be devoted to St. Joseph; and therefore I tell you that true devotion to St. Joseph consists chiefly in having recourse to him with fervent prayers, in purifying the soul by a true confession, in offering him some acts of homage, and in imitating his virtues. St. Joseph is exactly a model from which all states of life have to learn. The unmarried must imitate in St. Joseph his chastity and the way to choose well in marriage; the married, how they are to live with their spouses and the care they must have for their children; priests, how we are to handle Jesus at the altar; and all Christians, how they are to adore him with great care when they go to Communion. We all have to imitate in St. Joseph the love of work, patience in illness and persecution, and devotion to most holy Mary; and finally we must all have recourse to St. Joseph to protect us in life, and especially at the hour of death.

And since one of the things that most move the patriarch St. Joseph to help us is to pray to him his seven greatest sorrows and joys, they are given here, so that you may know how to pray them.

The Prayer of the Seven Greatest Sorrows and Joys of the Patriarch St. Joseph

First of all, say the act of contrition with the greatest fervor, with a firm resolution to go to confession as soon as possible, so seeking the greatest cleanness of soul and heart, saying: "My Lord Jesus Christ…"

O patriarch and glorious St. Joseph! Inspired by a lively faith, I approach your throne of glory, on which I most firmly believe God has placed you through the merits of Jesus and Mary and through your own special merits and virtues. I ask you to obtain for me the grace to be delivered from the seven capital sins, to be firm and constant in the virtues opposed to them, and adorned with the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, and to love Jesus and Mary fervently. And to move your compassionate heart the more, I remind you of the seven greatest sorrows you suffered and the seven joys you had in the company of Jesus and of Mary your most holy spouse, so that, remembering your sorrows and joys, you may have compassion on me and grant me what I ask, and what you know I need in order to love and serve God more and to save my soul. Amen.

First sorrow. I sorrow with you, O patriarch St. Joseph, for the sorrow you had on seeing your most chaste Spouse with child, not knowing the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God; and I rejoice in the joy and gladness you felt on hearing from the Angel of the Lord those most consoling words: *Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost* (Matt. 1:20). In memory of this sorrow and joy I beg you to obtain for me the grace to be free from pride, adorned with the virtue of humility, and enriched with the gift of wisdom. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

Second sorrow. I sorrow with you, O patriarch St. Joseph, for the sorrow you had on seeing Jesus and Mary lodged in a stable; and I rejoice in the joy and gladness it gave you to see Jesus adored by the Angels, shepherds and kings. In memory of this sorrow and joy I beg you to obtain for me the grace to be free from avarice, adorned with the virtue of generosity, and enriched with the gift of understanding. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

Third sorrow. I sorrow with you, O patriarch St. Joseph, for the sorrow you had on seeing the blood Jesus shed on the day of the Circumcision; and I rejoice in the joy and gladness the giving of the name of Jesus caused you. In memory of this sorrow and joy I beg you to obtain for me the grace to be free from lust, adorned with the virtue of chastity, and enriched with the gift of counsel. *Our Father and Hail Mary*.

Fourth sorrow. I sorrow with you, O patriarch St. Joseph, for the sorrow you had on hearing the words of Simeon telling your spouse Mary that a sword of sorrow would pierce her soul; and I rejoice in the joy and gladness you felt on hearing the praises Simeon and Anna gave to Jesus. In memory of this sorrow and joy I beg you to obtain for me the grace to be free from anger, adorned with the virtue of patience, and enriched with the gift of fortitude. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

Fifth sorrow. I sorrow with you, O patriarch St. Joseph, for the sorrow you had on seeing Jesus persecuted by Herod; and I rejoice in the joy and gladness you felt on seeing the idols of Egypt fall. In memory of this sorrow and joy I beg you to obtain for me the grace to be free from gluttony, adorned with temperance, and enriched with the gift of knowledge. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

Sixth sorrow. I sorrow with you, O patriarch St. Joseph, for the sorrow you had on learning that Archelaus reigned in place of Herod (Matt. 2:22); and I rejoice in the joy and gladness your heart felt at being able to live safely in Nazareth. In memory of this sorrow and joy I beg you to obtain for me the grace to be free from envy, adorned with charity, and enriched with the gift of piety. *Our Father and Hail Mary*.

Seventh sorrow. I sorrow with you, O patriarch St. Joseph, for the sorrow you had at having lost Jesus, though without fault; and I rejoice in the joy and gladness you felt on finding him in the temple. In memory of this sorrow and joy I beg you to obtain for me the grace to be free from sloth, adorned with diligence, and enriched with the gift of the fear of God. *Our Father and Hail Mary.*

Jesus, Joseph and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.

The Josephine Salve

Hail, Joseph, just man and full of grace, the Lord is with you, and you are the most fortunate of men for having fed, led and guarded the Virgin Mary and the heavenly fruit of her womb, Jesus.

St. Joseph, virginal spouse of the Mother of God and called the father of Jesus, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death. Amen, Jesus.

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[1] *Ephesians* 19. *Summa theologiae* III, q. 29, a. 1.

Devotion to St. Anthony of Padua

The devotion and confidence the faithful have had in St. Anthony has always been very great, for all see in him a great Saint, favored by God in a special way. His virtues have always been admired: his deep humility, his angelic chastity, his tender love of the child Jesus, his fervent faith in the most holy Sacrament of the altar, his great zeal for the salvation of souls, his energy in convincing heretics, of whom he was truly the hammer, and his fervent charity toward all. Hence so many labors, wonders and miracles; and these he worked not only when he lived and walked on earth, but also now that he lives with God in heaven. He is the comfort of all who call on him with faith and confidence: through his mediation they find lost things, and obtain all they need for body and soul, for time and eternity.

One of the acts of homage in which St. Anthony takes most delight is that his devotees, besides imitating his virtues, should say three Our Fathers and three Hail Marys to the most holy Trinity for the graces it bestowed on him and with which it enriched him, and in memory of the devotion he had to most holy Mary, to the child Jesus and to the most holy Sacrament of the altar.

The Responsory of St. Anthony

(The Si quaeris miracula *of St. Bonaventure, in a Spanish verse paraphrase.)*

If you seek miracles, see\ Death and error banished,\ Misery and the devil put to flight,\ Lepers and the sick made whole.

The sea calms its fury,\ Prisoners are set free,\ Limbs and goods that were lost\ Young and old recover.

Danger withdraws,\ The poor go away relieved;\ Let those who were helped tell it,\ Let the people of Padua say it.

The sea calms its fury,\ Prisoners are set free,\ Limbs and goods that were lost\ Young and old recover.

Glory to the Father,\ Glory to the Son,\ Glory to the Holy Spirit.

The sea calms its fury,\ Prisoners are set free,\ Limbs and goods that were lost\ Young and old recover.

Pray to Christ for us,\ Anthony, glorious and holy,\ That we may thus be made worthy\ Of his promises. Amen.

Prayer. My father St. Anthony, I have always had faith and confidence in you, that you will help and favor me in this that I ask of you, by the Lord whom you loved so much, and by the child Jesus whom you held so many times in your arms. I beg you, blessed Saint, by all the miracles you worked in life and after death, to grant me what I ask, if it is to be for the service of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Here make your petition, and then say an Our Father.

The Duties of Various States of Life

Duties of Heads of Families

1. To support the family according to their state.

2. Not to squander their property on gambling or vanities.

3. To pay servants, day laborers and others their wages duly (Jas. 5:4).

4. To watch over the conduct of their children and dependents.

5. To see that they often hear the word of God and frequent the holy Sacraments.

6. To correct them with prudence.

7. To punish them without the passion of anger, and so on.

8. To treat them kindly.

9. To keep them occupied.

10. To care for them in their illnesses.

11. To edify them by good example.

12. To commend them to God, and to provide them with good teachers, masters and so on.

13. To see to the proper separation between sons and daughters, and between persons of different sex.

14. Not to admit anyone who by his conversation or in any other way could be a cause of scandal to the family.

Duties of Children and Dependents

1. To look upon and regard parents and masters as representatives of God.

2. To love them from the heart.

3. To respect them duly, and to speak well of them, both in their presence and when they are absent.

4. To obey them promptly.

5. To serve them faithfully.

6. To help them in their needs.

7. To bear their defects, always keeping silent.

8. To pray to God for them.

9. To take care of the things of the house.

Duties of Husbands

1. To love their wife as Jesus Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5:25).

2. Not to despise her, for she is his inseparable companion.

3. To direct her as one under his authority.

4. To take care of her, as the guardian of her person.

5. To support her decently.

6. To bear with her in all patience.

7. To care for her with charity.

8. To correct her kindly.

9. Not to ill-treat her in word or deed.

10. To do or say nothing in front of the children, even when they are small, that could be a cause of scandal to them.

Duties of Wives

1. To esteem their husband.

2. To respect him as their head (Eph. 5:23).

3. To obey him as their superior.

4. To care for him with all diligence.

5. To help him with reverence.

6. To answer him gently.

7. To keep silent when he is angry, and while the anger lasts.

8. To bear his defects with patience.

9. To repel all familiarity with others.

10. To cooperate with her husband in the education of their children.

11. Not to waste the things of the house or its goods.

12. To respect her parents-in-law as parents.

13. To be humble with her sisters-in-law.

14. To keep good harmony with all in the house.

Duties of Young Men

1. To attend catechism.

2. To respect the old.

3. To avoid dangerous amusements.

4. To flee idleness and suspect company.

5. Not to come home late at night.

6. To mortify their own body.

7. To flee from love affairs, profane songs and so on.

8. To take nothing secretly, even from their own home.

9. To pray to God and take the advice of prudent men in order to choose rightly the state of life they should take.

Duties of Young Women

1. To observe the greatest modesty in every action.

2. To be very careful in their words.

3. Not to wish to see or be seen.

4. Not to dress vainly.

5. To avoid conversing alone with men.

6. To abhor flirtation, dances, theaters and so on.

7. To love the exercises of piety.

8. Not to be idle for a single moment.

9. To practice some discreet mortification.

Duties of Widows

1. To be an example of virtue to young women and wives.

2. To be a friend of retirement.

3. An enemy of idleness.

4. A lover of mortification.

5. Given to prayer (1 Tim. 5:5).

6. Careful of their good name.

Duties of Landowners

1. To thank God for their goods.

2. Not to put their trust in them.

3. Not to increase them by usury.

4. Not to keep them unjustly.

5. Not to use them to foster any passion.

6. To be charitable to the poor and to the Church.

7. To think often that the rich are in great danger of damnation through the bad use they make of riches (Matt. 19:23–24).

Duties of the Poor

1. To resign themselves to the will of God in their poverty.

2. Not to take what belongs to others, even on the pretext of poverty.

3. To work hard in order to obtain a decent well-being.

4. To try to become rich in eternal goods.

5. To remember that Jesus Christ and most holy Mary were also poor.

Duties of Merchants

1. To be content with a moderate profit.

2. To give everyone just weight and measure.

3. Not to adulterate their goods.

4. Not to corner the whole supply of a commodity, causing misery to the people.

5. To abstain from every kind of fraud or deceit.

6. To be charitable to the poor.

Duties of Craftsmen and Day Laborers

1. To offer to God often all their privations and toil.

2. To work with all diligence and exactness.

3. Not to work on a feast day; not to curse or blaspheme.

4. Not to keep what belongs to others.

5. Not to cause expense or do harm to their masters.

6. Not to waste time.

7. Not to break their word.

8. Not to grumble at work or hold loose conversations, and so on.

Four Counsels of St. Ignatius

1. Keep your heart in God, and God in your heart, as much as you can, thinking of him continually.

2. Let the most holy will of God be the center of all your desires and the beginning of all your actions.

3. Never lose sight of God, in public or in private.

4. Let the life of Jesus Christ be your model in every place and in whatever state you find yourself.

Most Important Maxims

1. You must die, and at the hour you least expect. Whether you think about it or not, whether you believe it or not, you will die and be judged, and you will be saved or damned according to the good or evil you have done; and from this you will not escape, whatever you say or do.

2. And what will it profit you to gain all riches, attain all honors and give the body every pleasure, if you lose your soul? (Matt. 16:26).

3. Riches and honors will stay in the world; the body in the grave, to be eaten by worms; and the soul, if in sin, like that of the rich glutton, in hell, where the Gospel tells us he was buried (Luke 16:22).[1]

[1] Luke 16:22.

Maxims for Each Day of the Month

1. God sees me. God hears me. God will judge me.

2. God is my Creator, my Redeemer, my Benefactor, my Father: shall I dare, then, to offend him?

3. My soul is my own, it is one, it is eternal… woe is me if I lose it!

4. If the soul is saved, all is saved; if the soul is lost, all is lost, and lost for ever.

5. What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? (Matt. 16:26).

6. There is no peace, happiness or contentment for one who lives far from God (Isa. 48:22).

7. Death comes at the hour when it is least expected (Luke 12:40).

8. In an instant one sins, in an instant one dies, and in an instant one falls into hell.

9. As the life, so the death.

10. We are created solely for God and for heaven.

11. All is vanity except to love God.

12. A moment of pleasure… and afterwards?… afterwards an eternity of torments.

13. Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? which of you shall dwell with everlasting burnings? (Isa. 33:14).

14. What would one of the damned do if he had the time I have? And what am I doing?

15. Hell is full of good desires never put into practice.

16. The way to heaven is narrow, and few walk in it; the way to hell is broad, and many follow it (Matt. 7:13–14). We must live with the few in order to be saved with the few.

17. Brief suffering, and eternal joy.

18. Whoever despises venial sins will not be long in falling into mortal ones (Ecclus. 19:1).

19. At the hour of death nothing will console us but good works, and nothing will grieve us but the evil we have done.

20. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory? (Luke 24:26).

21. Christ fasting, I well fed; Christ naked, I well clothed; Christ amid pains, I swimming in delights.

22. Do now what you would wish to have done at the hour of death; for at that moment you will wish to do it, but it will no longer be time.

23. Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation (Matt. 26:41): it is Jesus Christ who warns you.

24. We ought always to pray, and not to faint (Luke 18:1).

25. Without doing violence to oneself, one does not enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 11:12).

26. Woe to the world because of scandals! but more unhappy still is he by whom the scandal cometh (Matt. 18:7). It is Jesus Christ who says it.

27. What comfort do the damned now receive from the pleasures they enjoyed in this world, with which they bought hell?

28. Whoever does not do all he can to save his soul either has no faith or is a madman.

29. To be saved we must have eternity in our head, God in our heart, and the world under our feet.

30. If we wish to enter heaven, let us always remember that the gate of heaven is Mary.

31. Our Guardian Angel is always with us: let us respect his presence, be grateful for his love, trust in his help; and let us have a tender devotion to St. Joseph.

Let us never forget to pray for the blessed souls in purgatory, for the conversion of sinners, and for the needs of the Church and of the State.

Five Spiritual Maxims for Obtaining Final Perseverance in the Divine Service, Which Is the Crown of the Virtues and the End of Our Road to the Heavenly Homeland

It will profit us nothing to take the road to heaven if we do not keep walking along it until we reach the end. A person who wished to go to Madrid would gain nothing by his wishes, or by setting out for that capital, if he stood still on the highway and did not use the other means of getting there. So also, so as not to find yourself cheated at the hour of death, which will be the end of our pilgrimage, you will try, in the business of all businesses, which is eternal salvation, to put into practice these five maxims. If you keep them faithfully, you can be sure that you will happily reach the homeland of the blessed, where you will enjoy God for all eternity. Amen.

The First Is: Rather Die than Sin

Yes, this is how you must be resolved: to leave everything rather than leave God. In this consists the keeping of the first commandment of the law of the Lord. That is why St. Alphonsus Liguori cried out: "Let everything be lost rather than lose God; let the whole world be displeased rather than God."… But if unhappily, given our frailty, you should happen to fall into some mortal sin, do not on that account give way to distrust or inward turmoil, with which the evil spirit tries to deceive you. What you must do is to stir yourself at once to sorrow and contrition for your fault, considering what you have done, and to hate it because it is an offense against a God to whom you owe all your love, because he is your God, your Creator, your Redeemer, your Father… and resolve to confess it as soon as possible.

You must behave like a person who has taken poison, who, to throw it up before it takes his life, tries to take a strong emetic at once. So, if unhappily you commit a mortal sin, you must throw it up at once by means of a holy and sorrowful confession, if you do not want it, like a strong poison, to hurl you into the horrible and eternal grave of hell. Otherwise, fear, Christian: see that you have only one soul, and if you lose it, ah, unhappy you! you will go down into hell, from which you can never come out. Think it over well: for all eternity you must be either happy in heaven or damned in hell… Think that if you are damned, riches, pleasures and honors will profit you nothing, and that with nothing in this world will you be able to change your unhappy lot.

The Second Is: To Keep Away from the Occasions of Sin

If you do not do so, you will certainly sin; for the Holy Spirit says: *He that loveth danger shall perish in it* (Ecclus. 3:27). If you do not want to fall, you must do as the animals do: when they have to pass some spot where they have been hurt or have fallen, they keep away from it, even if they must go round. If you do the opposite, it will happen to you as one sees in a house: however much they clean it and dust it, if they do not kill the spiders, it soon becomes full again, as before, of the webs they spin. Or it will happen to you as to the farmer who has cut the weeds: if he has not pulled them up by the root, they soon sprout again as before. So, if you know that at the dance, at gambling, in amorous conversations with persons of the other sex, in dealings with this or that person, in such a place or such a house, you fell into God's disgrace by offending him, you must flee from there as from a plague-stricken place where you met death.

The Third Is: Prayer to the Lord, and Devotion to Most Holy Mary

Since final perseverance is a very special gift of God, as our Mother the Church teaches (Council of Trent, Session VI, canon 22), and the Almighty grants it, says St. Alphonsus Liguori, only to those who ask for it, St. Thomas teaches that it must always be asked for in order to enter heaven. We must always say to the Lord: *Thy kingdom come* to us, now the kingdom of divine grace, and afterwards that of eternal glory. To obtain these gifts we must make use of devotion to most holy Mary as one of the most powerful means. She is the channel of heaven through which flow all the graces we need to turn from evil and to do good. She is the gate of heaven, as the Church teaches; and no one obtains the Lord's mercy except through her mediation, says St. Germanus, patriarch of Constantinople.[1]

For this reason you must commend yourself every day to most holy Mary and offer her some acts of homage: for example, saying the holy Rosary devoutly, and making some Novena and some fast in her honor, if your health and work allow. If you cannot do these things, deprive yourself at least of some of those you could lawfully do, such as smelling a flower, drinking a glass of water, looking at something or going to some place you would like, and so on. Above all, try to imitate her virtues: humility, meekness, purity, and the love she had for God and her neighbor. I especially charge you to say daily the prayer I have given you among the exercises for each day. Although it is short (which is why you should never leave it out), I assure you that if

you are constant in saying it you will obtain through it grace now and eternal glory afterwards.

The Fourth Is: Frequent Reception of the Holy Sacraments, Especially Holy Communion

They are the channels of divine grace, of that grace which is the medicine that gives health to souls. Jesus Christ instituted them to cure our spiritual illnesses and to preserve us from relapses. Just as a sick man takes medicine to be cured of his ills, and tries to nourish himself with healthy and nourishing foods so as not to relapse into them, so, if you do not want to relapse into your spiritual ailments and die eternally, you must often receive the sacraments of Penance and of the Eucharist: through the first, to obtain the grace of healing for your sins, or to increase this healing grace and their remission if you have already obtained it; and through the second, that grace which nourishes your soul and strengthens it to keep you from falling into sin.

In the sacrament of the Eucharist is found the bread of life. This is the living bread come down from heaven (John 6:51), that bread that contains all sweetness in itself, and of which Jesus Christ himself says that whoever eats it with the proper dispositions will live for ever; this bread is his own body, which he gave for the spiritual life of the human race. Whoever, then, does not eat the body of the Son of God made man, that is, whoever does not receive Communion often, ah, how difficult it is, not to say impossible, for him to live with the life of grace! Would that man or that woman live long who took bodily food only very seldom, for example from year to year?… On the contrary, whoever receives Communion with the proper dispositions (I do not mean those that the majesty of God demands, for these cannot be attained, since God is infinite and we are misery itself; but being in grace and receiving with some fervor), whoever, I say, receives with the proper dispositions and receives often, ah, how full of health and life he runs along the road to heaven! That is why St. Francis de Sales said that in the twenty-five years he had been directing souls, he had found nothing by which they were so sanctified, and almost divinized, as by holy Communion.

But beware of receiving it often while in disgrace with God, with venial sins committed knowingly, out of routine, out of vanity, or for other ends that are not right and honest. Beware… and great beware… of deceiving yourself by deceiving (which costs little) your director, whose permission and advice must always be asked for doing it… Frequent Communion is one of the things most useful to the Christian, most pleasing to most holy Mary, and that most oblige her. So much so that Segneri the Younger says that whoever makes a vow or promise to receive Communion on twelve Sundays in a row (if he already received often before), or for twelve months running, once a month (if he did not receive often before), in honor and glory of most holy Mary, in memory of the twelve stars with which St. John saw her crowned in the Apocalypse (Apoc. 12:1), obtains whatever grace he asks; and if he does not obtain the grace he seeks, it will be because it is not good for him, but then she will grant him another grace greater and more useful than the one he asks, as experience has shown. Would that the faithful, instead of making other vows and promises, made this one! They would certainly better obtain what they seek!…

The Fifth and Last Maxim Is: To Quicken Your Faith That You Are in the Presence of God

This maxim, given by the Most High to the holy patriarch Abraham so that he might be perfect, when he said to him, *Walk before me, and be perfect* (Gen. 17:1), cannot fail, when attentively considered, to give the happiest result. For who does not see at once its great importance? To think and believe these truths: See that God sees you… See that he has present to him even your most hidden thoughts… See that wherever you may wish to hide in order to offend him, you will always be before him; and to want to sin then is beyond understanding…

Would it be possible to find a man who wished to insult a powerful king in his very presence, and before his ministers of justice standing with weapons in hand to avenge him at the slightest sign of his will? Unless he had lost the use of reason, or were blind with a violent passion, I do not think it would be possible. Yet this happens every day, at every hour, at every moment… How many sins are committed every moment, and all in the presence of a God infinite in greatness and majesty!… and in the sight of innumerable creatures, which would all act as ministers of his divine justice if he ordered them to avenge his rights!… The air would stifle the guilty sinner at a mere hint from God; the earth would swallow him up; the water would drown him; the fire would reduce him to ashes… in a word, all creatures would fight on his side against senseless sinners (Wis. 5:21)… Consequently, then, will not this truth, well pondered, be more than enough to keep you from sin?… Quicken, then, your faith in it; for well meditated it will not only keep you from sin, but will make you a saint, and a great saint. So be it.

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[1] St. Germanus of Constantinople (d. c. 733), *Homily on the Dormition* (*In dormitionem* II).

Examples from Various States of Life

Up to now, dear Christian, I have set before you the road you must follow, the means of persevering, and the way you can rise again if unhappily you fall, which is the sacrament of Penance. But this Sacrament requires good dispositions if one is to approach it properly; otherwise, instead of rising you would sink deeper into iniquity, adding to your sins the enormous weight of sacrilege. And if, having confessed badly, you approached the holy table, woe to you! What a further wickedness you would commit! You would make yourself guilty of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and, as St. Paul says, you would eat judgment to yourself (1 Cor. 11:27–29). So, to keep you from so enormous a crime, I shall tell you some examples from various states of life, copied from St. Liguori in his book entitled Instruction for the People.[1]

First Example: A Man Who Made Bad Confessions

He afterwards wished to confess properly and could not; for God himself says it plainly: You shall seek me, and shall not find me, … and you shall die in your sin (John 7:34; 8:21).

St. Liguori says that the annals of the Capuchin Fathers tell of a man who was held to be a person of virtue, but who confessed badly. Having fallen seriously ill, he was urged to confess, and he sent for a certain Father, to whom he said at once: “Father, say that I have confessed; but I do not want to confess.” “And why?” replied the astonished Father. “Because I am damned,” answered the sick man; “for since I never confessed my sins entirely, God, as a punishment, now deprives me of the power to confess well.” Having said this, he began to give terrible howls and to tear his tongue to pieces, saying: “Cursed tongue, that would not confess your sins when you could!” And so, tearing his tongue to pieces and howling horribly, he gave up his soul to the devil; his body turned black as coal, and a frightful noise was heard, together with an intolerable stench.

Second Example: A Young Woman Who Also Died Impenitent and in Despair

Father Martin Delrio relates that in the province of Peru there was a young Indian woman called Catalina, who served a good lady. This lady brought her to be baptized and to frequent the Sacraments. She went to confession often, but kept back sins. When she came to the point of death she confessed nine times, but always sacrilegiously; and after the confessions she told her companions that she was keeping back her sins. They told the lady, who already knew from her dying servant herself that these sins of hers were some impurities. So she informed the confessor, who came back to urge the sick woman to confess everything. But Catalina obstinately refused to tell those faults of hers to the confessor, and came to such a degree of despair that at last she said: “Father, leave me, do not tire yourself any more, for you are wasting your time.” And

turning her back on the confessor, she began to sing profane songs. When she was about to die, and her companions urged her to take the Crucifix, she answered: “What Crucifix or no Crucifix! I do not know him and do not want to know him.” And so she died. From that night such noises and stench began to be felt that the lady was obliged to move house; and afterwards she appeared, already damned, to one of her companions, saying that she was in hell for her bad confessions.

Third Example: A Young Man

In this example one sees clearly the principle: either confession or damnation, *for one who has sinned mortally; and that all good works and penances, without confession going before, are of no use for getting out of the miserable state of sin, unless one has an effective and true desire to confess, if one cannot do so at the time. The reason is evident: mortal sin has an infinite malice; to cure this infinite wound an infinite remedy is absolutely necessary; this infinite remedy is the merits of Jesus Christ applied through the Sacraments. It follows, then, that if one does not receive the Sacraments when one can, or at least does not effectively desire to receive them when one cannot, one never obtains the remedy, as unhappily happened to the unfortunate Pelagius.*

The chronicle of St. Benedict tells of a certain hermit called Pelagius. Set by his parents to keep their flocks, he led an exemplary life, so that everyone called him a saint; and so he lived for many years. When his parents died he sold the little property they had left him and became a hermit. Once, unhappily, he consented to an impure thought. Having fallen into sin, he found himself plunged into a deep melancholy, because the unhappy man did not want to confess it, so as not to lose his reputation for holiness. While he was in this obstinacy a pilgrim passed by who said to him: “Pelagius, confess, and God will forgive you, and you will recover the peace you have lost”; and he vanished. After this Pelagius resolved to do penance for his sin, but without confessing it, flattering himself that God might perhaps forgive him without confession. He entered a monastery, where he was at once very well received because of his good name, and there he led a harsh life, mortifying himself with fasts and penances. At last death came, and he made his confession for the last time; but just as in life he had out of shame left his sin unconfessed, so he left it at death. He received the Viaticum, died, and was buried with the same reputation for holiness.

The following night the sacristan found Pelagius’s body lying on top of the grave. He buried it again; but on the second and third nights he still found it unburied, so he informed the Abbot. The Abbot, together with the other monks, said: “Pelagius, you who were obedient in life, obey also after death. Tell me, on behalf of God: is it perhaps his divine will that your body should be laid in a set-apart place?” And the dead man, with a frightful howl, answered: “Woe is me, for I am damned for a sin I failed to confess! Look, Abbot, at my body!” And at once his body appeared like red-hot iron, sparkling horribly. All at once began to flee; but Pelagius called the Abbot to take from his mouth the consecrated particle that he still had there… When this was done, Pelagius told them to take him out of the church and throw him onto a dunghill; and so it was done.

Fourth Example: The Daughter of a King of England

This case is very like the one before.

Father Francisco Rodríguez relates that in England, when the Catholic religion held sway there, King Augubert had a daughter of such rare beauty that many princes sought her hand. When her father asked her whether she wished to marry, she answered that she had made a vow of perpetual chastity. Her father obtained a dispensation from Rome; but she remained firm in not accepting it, saying that she wanted no other spouse but Jesus Christ. She asked her father only to let her live retired in a solitary house; and since her father loved her, he tried not to displease her and assured her an allowance suited to her rank. As soon as she was in her retreat she began to lead a holy life of fasting, prayer and penance; she frequented the

Sacraments and very often went to a hospital to serve the sick. Leading such a life, and still young, she fell ill and died.

A certain lady who had been her governess, praying one night, heard a great crash, and then saw a soul in the form of a woman in the midst of a great fire, chained by many demons, which said to her: "Know that I am the unhappy daughter of Augubert." "What!" answered the governess, "you damned, after so holy a life?" "Justly I am damned, through my own fault," answered the soul. "And why?" "Know that when I was a girl I liked one of my pages, of whom I was fond, to read me some book. Once, after the reading, this page took my hand and kissed it. The devil began to tempt me, until at last I offended God with that same page. I went to confession; I began to tell my sin, and my indiscreet confessor interrupted me, saying: 'What! Does a queen do this?' Then out of shame I said it had been a dream. Afterwards I began to do penances and give alms, so that God would forgive me, but without confessing. When I was about to die I told my confessor that I had been a great sinner; the confessor answered that I should reject that thought as a temptation. Then I died, and now I find myself damned for all eternity." And saying this she vanished with such a din that it seemed the world was collapsing, leaving in that room such a stench that it lasted for many days.

If this unhappy woman had approached the sacrament of Penance properly, she would be singing songs of praise to the Lord in heaven; but now, through her contemptible and accursed shame, she serves as a firebrand in hell… And how many persons are there of every state, sex and condition who will suffer the same punishment if they do not come contrite to this Sacrament?

Fifth Example: A Married Woman

Very like the one before; St. Liguori also tells it.

Father Serafino Razzi relates that in a city of Italy there was a noble married lady who was held to be a saint. At the point of death she received all the Sacraments, leaving a very good name for virtue. Her daughter prayed to God continually for the repose of her soul. One day, while she was at prayer, she heard a great noise at the door. She turned and saw the horrible figure of a pig of fire giving off an unbearable stench; and such was her terror that she would have thrown herself out of the window, but a voice stopped her, saying: "Daughter, stop! I am your unhappy mother, whom they held to be a saint; but for the sins I committed with your father, which out of shame I never confessed, God has condemned me to hell. Do not pray to God for me any more, for you give me greater torment." And having said this, roaring, she vanished.

Perhaps, dear Christian, you will ask: Is it possible for a damned soul to appear? To this I answer yes; and to remove your doubt I will explain the reasons. Listen, then, and let us go step by step.

You believe the holy Scriptures and the Creed, don't you? Certainly, you will answer, or else I would tell you that you are a heretic. Well, from the Scriptures and the Creed it is clear that our soul is immortal. Natural reason cries out to us that our soul must survive the body, so that the sinner may receive from God the punishment for his sins that he did not receive in this world, and the just man the fitting reward of his virtues; otherwise God would not be just. And this is so clear that even Rousseau confessed it, saying: "Even if there were no other proofs of the immortality of our soul than the triumph of evil and the oppression of virtue here on earth, this alone would remove any doubt I might have about it." You also know and believe, according to the Creed, in the forgiveness of sins: that is, that however many sins a person has committed, if he confesses them well they are all forgiven him; but if he dies without having confessed properly, a single mortal sin is enough to be damned eternally. And just as well-ordered justice on earth (which is a participation in the justice of heaven) has prisons and punishments to lock up and punish wrongdoers, so the justice of heaven has prisons and punishments in purgatory and hell, to punish those who die in sin or not wholly purified.

With these principles laid down, let us use a comparison. Have you seen, or heard tell, that sometimes the judge or the court decrees that one of the prisoners be put out to public shame, and another be flogged

through the most public places? Not all the other prisoners have to be put to shame; and when that one is led out, not all the inhabitants of the world see him, nor even all those of the city through which he is paraded, but only some. Now apply the comparison. God our Lord, supreme judge and absolute master of the living and the dead, can at any hour order, and sometimes has ordered, that some of those locked in the dungeons of hell should come out of that prison, for their own confusion and for our warning and benefit, and appear in the way best suited to the end for which he commands them to appear. And when they appear, it is not necessary for the whole world to see them; it is enough that some see them and tell the rest, so that all, learning from another's misfortune, may take great and special care not to make bad confessions, and through a general confession, with true sorrow and a firm resolution, may amend and make anew all those badly made, so as not to suffer the same unhappy lot afterwards. This is the fruit and benefit you should draw from reading this and other examples.

Sixth Example: A Lady Who for Many Years Kept Back an Impure Sin in Confession

St. Liguori relates, and in more detail Father Antonio Coroccio, that two religious passed through the place where this lady lived. She, who was always waiting for a confessor from outside, asked one of them to hear her confession, and she confessed. As soon as the Fathers had left, the companion told the confessor he had seen that while the lady was confessing many snakes came out of her mouth, and that an enormous serpent had shown its head outside but had gone back in again, and then he saw all the snakes that had come out go in after it. Suspecting what this meant, the confessor went back to the town and to the lady's house, and they told him that as soon as she had entered the room she had died suddenly. For three days in a row they fasted and prayed to God for her, begging the Lord to make the case known to them.

On the third day the unhappy lady appeared to them, damned, riding on a demon in the form of a horrible dragon, with two serpents coiled round her neck that were strangling her and eating her breasts, a viper on her head, two toads on her eyes, burning arrows in her ears, flames of fire in her mouth, and two rabid dogs that were biting her and eating her hands. And giving a sad and frightful groan she said: "I am the unhappy lady whom you confessed three days ago. As I confessed my sins they came out of my mouth like unclean animals; and that enormous serpent which your companion saw put out its head and go back in was the figure of an impure sin I had always kept back out of shame. I wanted to confess it to you, but I did not dare; so it went back in, and with it all the others that had come out. God, tired of waiting so long for me, took my life suddenly and cast me into hell, where I am tormented by the demons in the form of horrible animals. The viper torments my head, for my pride and excessive care in arranging my hair; the toads blind my eyes, for my lustful glances; the burning arrows hurt my ears, for having listened to gossip and obscene words and songs; the fire burns my mouth, for gossip and shameful kisses; I have the serpents coiled round my neck, eating my breasts, for having displayed them provocatively, for the low cut of my dresses and for immodest embraces; the dogs eat my hands, for my evil deeds and foul touches; but what torments me most is the dreadful dragon I ride, which burns my entrails; it is the punishment for my impure sins. Ah, there is no remedy or mercy for me, but torments and eternal pain! Woe to women!" she added; "many of them are damned for four kinds of sin: sins of impurity, finery and adornment, witchcraft, and keeping back sins in confession. Men are damned for every kind of sin, but women chiefly for these four." Having said this, the earth opened, and this wretched woman sank into the depths of hell, where she suffers and will suffer for all eternity.

Reflect, Christian, and consider how God our Lord ordered this unhappy lady to come out of the prison of hell and undergo this shame, so that mortals might know the lot that awaits them if they sin and do not confess well. Would that you drew from reading this terrible example the fruit that others have drawn, making a good confession and amending completely! One author says that this case has converted more

people than two hundred Lents. The missionary Father Jaime Corella made a vow to preach it in all his missions, because of the great benefit it brought the faithful. A prelate even made an endowment so that at certain times of the year this case should be preached or read in church. But woe to you if you do not profit by it! Woe to you if you do not confess all your sins! Woe to you if you go to receive the holy Eucharist badly prepared! It would be better for you not to have been born (Matt. 26:24).

On Sacrilegious Communion

There is hardly a crime that offends God more than sacrilegious Communion. The holy Fathers show it with astonishing words and examples. Whoever receives Communion in mortal sin commits a greater crime than Herod, says St. Augustine; more horrible than Judas, says St. John Chrysostom; more terrible than the Jews committed in crucifying the Savior, say other Saints; and in place of all, St. Paul says: *He shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord* (1 Cor. 11:27); that is, says the Gloss, he will be punished as if he had put the Son of God to death with his own hands.

Sacrilegious Communion is so enormous a crime that God does not wait to punish it in hell, but begins already in this world with illnesses and deaths; so that already in the time of the Apostles, according to St. Paul, many suffered very grave bodily ills because of their sacrilegious Communions, and others died: *Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep* (1 Cor. 11:30). St. Cyprian relates of some in his time that to receive holy Communion unworthily and to be seized with intolerable pains in the bowels until they burst and died was one and the same thing. St. John Chrysostom knew many possessed by the devil because of this crime; and St. Gregory the Pope assures us that the plague did great havoc in Rome because amusements, banquets, shows and impurities had continued in that city after the Easter Communion; and St. Anselm relates the same of his own time, because this precept had been badly kept. We read in the life of St. Bernard that a monk dared to receive Communion in mortal sin; but, terrible thing! hardly had the Saint given him the sacred Host when he burst open like Judas, and like him was damned eternally.

The famous Father Arbiol relates that in a certain town there was a lady who went to confession on a very solemn feast. The confessor, finding her in a voluntary proximate occasion of sin, told her he could not absolve her unless she first separated herself from the occasion, and that on that day she could not receive holy Communion. But she chose to receive it, paying no heed to what the confessor had told her; and the moment she had the sacred Host in her throat it choked her, and she fell dead in the church itself, in the presence of many people.

I could tell you a great number of cases of this kind, not only ancient but also modern, though at present not so many happen. The reason, I believe, is that the good would be held back by fear from frequenting the holy Sacraments; and Jesus, for the love he bears us and for our good, prefers to leave sacrileges visibly unpunished and have the good receive him often, rather than have the good not dare to receive him, frightened by the punishments of the profaners. But if he does not punish the latter visibly, he does so invisibly, with blindness of mind, with hardness of heart and with abandonment in this world, and afterwards in the next with the eternal pains of hell. Commend yourself to most holy Mary, that she may obtain for you the help you need to be able to receive the holy Sacraments often and worthily.

The Bishop Who Saw the Communicants

And so that you may know better how important it is to receive the holy Sacraments with good dispositions, and the different effects they produce, I shall end by telling you another case that is read in the Lives of the Fathers.

There was a very virtuous bishop who, having been told that two persons were living in an illicit relationship, begged the Lord to deign to show him the state of his subjects' consciences. God heard his prayers; and one

day, after he had given holy Communion to a great crowd, he saw that some had faces black as coal, others had eyes that flashed fire, and others were very beautiful and clothed in white. The good prelate repeated his prayer, that God would show him that mystery. At once an Angel appeared to him and said: "Know that those with black faces are the impure and unchaste; those whose eyes flash fire are the misers, usurers and the vengeful; and those you see so beautiful and clothed in white are those who are in grace and adorned with virtues." The two persons accused of the illicit relationship also came to Communion, and he saw them likewise shining and beautiful; so the holy bishop thought he had been deceived. But the Angel told him that all he had been told about them was true, but that, having separated themselves from the occasion and made a good confession, all their sins had been forgiven them; and so they had come well disposed to receive holy Communion, which had produced these wonderful effects in them.

The Fruits of Holy Communion

Therefore, dear brother in Jesus Christ, by the great love I bear you, I beg and charge you never to go to receive holy Communion in mortal sin. But do not be dismayed if you find yourself in that unhappy state: first make a good confession, and, truly repentant, stir yourself to many fervent acts of humility, trust and love; and receiving Communion with this disposition you will be filled with the great and heavenly fruits that the holy Eucharist produces in one who receives it worthily. I wish to tell you the chief of them here, so that you may grow more and more fond of receiving it often.

1. It increases grace.

2. It gives light to the soul, so that it may know good and follow it, and evil and flee it.

3. It quickens faith and hope.

4. It kindles charity.

5. It moderates anger and the other passions, preserving us from sin.

6. It unites us with Jesus Christ.

7. It gives us a spiritual sweetness, through which all works of virtue are done gladly.

8. It drives the demons away, so that they do not tempt us so often.

9. It calms the remorse of conscience.

10. It gives great confidence in God at the hour of death.

11. It nourishes the soul, giving it strength as material bread does the body.

12. Lastly, it gives us special help to persevere in good and reach eternal glory, of which it is a sure pledge; and this glory I wish you with all my heart, as I wish it for myself.

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[1] *exempla*.

The Woes of Hell, or Voices of the Damned, and Remedies to Cure the Evils That Cause So Unhappy a Lot

The Woes of Sennacherib the Blasphemer

Woe, bold blasphemer! I was what you are, and you will be what I am. Once I blasphemed as you blaspheme now; I swore falsely and cursed, and my serpent's tongue spared nothing, for no bridle held it (4 Kings 19:22; Jas. 3:6–8); and… woe! death came when I least feared it, I was judged, and to burn for an eternity in this hell is the punishment to which I am condemned. And will you not learn from my misfortune? Will you

prefer to be unhappy with me rather than amend your life? Woe to you! If you do not change your life you will not escape being what I am now… Woe! woe! woe!

Remedies against Blasphemy, a Sin of Devils

First remedy. In the morning make a firm resolution not to blaspheme, and to this end ask God for the grace through the intercession of the most holy Virgin, saying three Hail Marys to her.

Second remedy. If you grow angry or wrath rises in you, keep silent, or say: "Most holy Virgin, help me"; "God help me"; "Cursed be sin"; for it is as easy to utter good words as bad.

Third remedy. If you happen to blaspheme almost against your will, ask God's forgiveness for it and say a Hail Mary; and if you conveniently can, kiss the ground, tracing a cross on it with your tongue.

Fourth remedy. Flee gambling and those who speak evil; and if you hear someone speaking evil, say: "Hail Mary most pure", and pray to God for them, as the members of the Society of Mary do.

The Woes of Cain the Rancorous

Woe to you, unhappy rancorous man, victim of rage, who not only do not greet your neighbor but will not even look at him, and always speak ill of him! Look… what horror! this place beside me… see where you will end up… the rancor that made me kill my brother brought me to… woe! woe!… Do penance, then; be reconciled; love all men without excluding your enemies; and if not… woe! woe! you will come to add to my pains with your own, through the stench, the narrowness of the place, and the heat you will give off.

Remedies to Cure Hatred and Rancor

First remedy. You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:39).

Second remedy. You will think that the offenses you have done to God are infinitely greater than those your neighbor has done to you; and that God will not forgive you those if you do not forgive these (Matt. 6:14–15). If it seems to you that your neighbor does not deserve forgiveness, forgive him for the love of God, who does deserve it and commands it of you.

Third remedy. Forget as soon as possible the offense your neighbor did you; and if the thought or memory of it rises, cast it from you at once, like a live coal or spark of fire, before it catches.

Fourth remedy. You will remember that you are a Christian, which means a disciple or imitator of Christ; and never forget that Christ suffered scourges, thorns and slanders; that they stripped him of his clothes and nailed him to the cross, and that, hanging from it, the first thing he did was to forgive his enemies and pray for them to his eternal Father (Luke 23:34). Forgive them, then, you too, and pray for them as a Christian. Do not speak ill of them; when you meet them, greet them and help them; assist them in their needs as far as you can.

Fifth remedy. Every day you will say an Our Father and a Hail Mary for those who have offended and wronged you.

The Woes of the Rich Glutton and the Lustful

Sinner who imitate me… woe! look… do you see? Here is the fruit of my pleasures… What pains! Ah! To you time is granted to repent; make use of it; see the torments that await you. Flee theaters, cafés and taverns; throw into the flames those immodest and indecent pictures, books and papers; tear up those clothes that offend modesty; flee gambling, courtships and dances; leave bad company; do not go out at night; do not do immodest things alone or with others; do not speak, tell or sing impure things. If you do… woe! you will be damned like me! woe! woe!

Remedies to Cure Impurity

First remedy. Morning and evening you will beg this precious jewel from the Mother of purity, the most holy Virgin, greeting her for this purpose with three Hail Marys.

Second remedy. As soon as an impure thought arises, reject it at once and say to Mary: "Most holy Virgin, protect me, help me."

Third remedy. Keep away from bad company, dances and courtships; do not touch immodest books or papers even by the cover; do not look at provocative paintings, prints or other objects; and above all beware of making scandalous signs and gestures.

Fourth remedy. You will dress modestly; eat and drink with temperance; utter no indecent words; neither listen to nor join in bad conversations; and do not give your eyes free rein.

Fifth remedy. Remember that God sees you, and that he has power to take your life on the spot and cast you into hell, as happened, among others, to Onan, who died in the very act of an immodest sin, and was damned (Gen. 38:9–10).[1]

Sixth remedy. Frequent the holy Sacraments.

The Woes of the Bad Thief

Woe, Christian, who imitate me in stealing!… woe! look at me… do you not see?… These are the pains that await you if you do not give up the vice of stealing. Do not deceive yourself; understand it once and for all… not only those who rob on the highways are thieves and suffer here with me, but also those who break good faith in buying and selling, not giving just measure or swindling; and also usurers, those who cause loss to others by their unjust expenses and lawsuits, or who do not pay their debts. Woe to you! woe to them! for if you do not confess and restore what belongs to others, you will come… what horror!… to burn here with me.

Remedies to Cure the Vice of Stealing

First remedy. Do not wish for another what you would not wish for yourself. Since you do not like anyone to covet or take what is yours, judge whether your neighbor would wish you to covet or take what is his.

Second remedy. Think often that God looks at your hands and your heart, and that thieves will be cast into the bonfire of hell (1 Cor. 6:10).

Third remedy. Taking what belongs to others breeds poverty, because ill-gotten goods cause well-gotten ones to be lost; through it come illnesses, losses and every kind of evil, and at the very end, hell. And what use is it to gain a whole world, if the devils carry off the soul?

Fourth remedy. Give alms; for just as taking what belongs to others breeds poverty, giving alms from what is your own is a cause of riches (Prov. 19:17).

Fifth remedy. So every day, according to your means, you will give some alms, not out of vanity or ambition, but to relieve your neighbor's miseries. Do not boast of doing good, but do not be ashamed of it either; I mean, neither do it in order to be seen, nor leave off doing it because people are watching you (Matt. 6:1–4; 5:16).

The Woes of Judas the Sacrilegious

Woe, Christian! Do you want to know why I find myself shut up here, devoured by beasts, amid flames, and groaning for ever? Woe! Just to remember it makes me shudder! Its memory terribly increases my torments! I received Communion sacrilegiously, and I sold my Master! Woe to you if you do not confess your sacrilegious Communions and the confessions you made badly by keeping back sins in them; or, if you have

already confessed them, for not having amended or kept away from the proximate occasions and dangers of sin. Woe to you!… Make a general confession as soon as possible, or burn with me for an eternity. Do not be obstinate or turn a deaf ear to the divine inspirations, as I did, and… woe! woe! you will see.

Remedies for Those Who Have Made Sacrilegious Communions and Bad Confessions

First remedy. The first sin you reveal to the confessor should be the one that embarrasses you most; in this way you will confound the tempter.

Second remedy. If shame hinders you, prepare the confessor with this or some similar expression: "Father, I have a certain scruple that I hardly have courage to hint to you." With this he will understand, and will find ways to help you. But if your shame would not let you say even this, then go to another confessor; otherwise you would commit a horrible sacrilege, and would find death where God wishes to give you life or to perfect you in it.

Third remedy. Confessions are often bad not because the truth was lacking, but because amendment was lacking. When the linen comes out of the wash, we say, and rightly, that the wash was bad if it did not remove the stains. In the same way we say that the confession of a person was bad if after confessing we see him with the same vices of blaspheming, cursing, hating, committing impurities, gossiping and so on, as if he had received nothing. Do not deceive yourself: it is not enough to say, "I told the confessor everything". For just as, for a wash to be good, it is not enough to have put all the dirty linen into it, but one must do all that is needed to remove all the dirt from the linen, so for a confession to be good the soul must come out clean of its sins.

Fourth remedy. The cause of most bad confessions is not keeping away from the occasions of sin and not fulfilling the medicinal penances. Keep away, then, from the dangers; do what the confessor directs; practice the means prudence advises; and you will see how marked your amendment will be.

Fifth remedy. Before Communion you will test yourself and see whether you are in grace (1 Cor. 11:28); and after Communion you will stay to give thanks; and take care not to run off from the church at once, in imitation of Judas (John 13:30).

The Cry of All the Damned: Brief Pleasure, Eternal Pain

Sinners… woe! What profit will it bring you to have acquired all riches, attained great honors, given the body every pleasure, taken your revenge to your heart's content, if in the end you lose your soul? Woe! How quickly all this collection of things that now flatters you, lulls you and bewitches you will pass away!… But the eternity of pains that follows what was so brief, woe! who will be able to bear it? who?… Amend, then; confess your sins; and if not… woe! you will bring me no relief, but rather increase the bitterness of my pains, coming to where I am suffering perpetual eternities. Whether you think about it or forget it, whether you believe it or not, you will die, and… woe! you will suffer as I do!

General Remedies for Escaping the Eternal Pains of Hell

1. Morning and evening you will say three Hail Marys to most holy Mary, an Our Father and Hail Mary to your holy Guardian Angel, and another to the Saint of your name.

2. You will think often that God is watching you and listening to you, and that it is in his power to strike you dead and bury you in hell, as he has done with many other sinners.

3. Do not let yourself be deceived by the devil, who will say to you: "Sin, for afterwards you will go to confession." Woe to him who sins trusting that he will confess! For he will not see this evil trust fulfilled; or if he manages to confess, he will confess badly, says Burdoni.

4. You will mortify your faculties and senses: whoever does not know how to mortify himself in what is lawful will know even less how to do so in what is unlawful, and will fall into sin.

5. You will fast out of devotion on some day each week, or at least deprive yourself of some of the things you like most.

6. Every day you will have half an hour or a quarter of an hour of mental prayer.

7. You will have a special devotion to the most holy Virgin Mary.

8. You will frequent the holy Sacraments.

9. You will read good books, and never bad ones; if you have any of these, burn it. Flee bad company, and the places and things you know may be an occasion of sin for you.

10. You will try at all times to keep the precepts of God's law and the duties of your state; and in this way you will be happy for an eternity.

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[1] Gen. 38:10.

Indulgences

Our mother the Church, in her zeal for the happiness of the children she bears in Jesus Christ her spouse, is moved to lead them more often by the attraction of compassion, graces and indulgences than by terror and punishments, however well deserved these may be. So I thought I would be acting according to this spirit of the Church, and entering into her designs, if I gave the faithful, as the completion of this little work, a kind of catalogue of the many indulgences, especially those that all, without distinction of age, sex or condition, can easily gain; so that they may not fail through ignorance to fulfill the prescribed requirements, and so be deprived of so great a good. But first it will be well to give a brief idea of what is meant by this word indulgence, *and of what must be done and avoided in order to gain it.*

What an Indulgence Is

An indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment of sins that have been forgiven. This idea supposes that mortal sin deserves an eternal punishment, which is that of hell, and that venial sin deserves a temporal one, either in this life or in purgatory. If mortal sin has been properly confessed, or, when it cannot be confessed, has been detested with perfect contrition and the resolution to confess it when possible, then by virtue of this contrition or of the sacrament of Penance that punishment is not wiped out entirely, but only so far as it was eternal. It is changed into a temporal punishment of longer or shorter duration, according to the sorrow, love and other dispositions of the one who confessed or made the act of contrition. And this punishment, which we now call temporal, must be satisfied either in this world or in purgatory, as was said of venial sins, already forgiven of course.

This temporal punishment can be satisfied in two ways: personally, or through another, whether in this world or in purgatory. It is paid personally if we ourselves fervently apply ourselves to certain works which, done in the state of grace, are called and are satisfactory, such as prayer, almsgiving and fasting, as the holy council of Trent defined. For, as the council says: "So great is the liberality of the divine bounty that we can make satisfaction to God the Father through the grace of Jesus Christ, not only by the penances we freely undertake to satisfy for sin, or by those imposed on us by the priest in proportion to the offense, but also, and this is a very great proof of his love, by the temporal punishments God sends us and that we bear with resignation."[1] And so with every kind of prayer, vocal or mental; with every kind of hardship, voluntary or forced, whether it comes to us directly from God or from our neighbors, the elements or animals, provided we bear it with resignation; and with every kind of alms, spiritual or bodily, provided we give them for the

love of God, we can satisfy that temporal punishment due to sin already forgiven. And these works may be such that, either by their abundance or by the intensity of the love with which they were done, they have a merit as great as that punishment; and then God is satisfied, and requires nothing more either in this world or the next. This is what is meant by paying personally.

It is paid through another when a friend or benefactor takes our debt on himself and offers to God for it works of the kind just described, or merits already gained. Paying with works was done first by Jesus Christ, and is done now by the just who are our friends, when they pray, fast and give alms and apply their merit to us. Paying with merits already gained is done by the Church, the keeper and dispenser of the merits of Christ, of the most holy Virgin and of the Saints. Since his merit is infinite, and theirs was far more than they needed, it remained in the treasury of the Church; and from this she gives us something to help us pay. I say she *helps* us, because when we can pay something ourselves it would not be just for her to pay everything; so one who did not try for his part to bring forth fruits worthy of penance, or satisfactory works, would not gain indulgences, for it must not be forgotten that indulgences were not instituted to encourage sloth or idleness. So, if the Church gives us from this treasury enough to cancel our debt, we call this amount a *plenary* indulgence; and if she gives us only a fixed sum, we call it a *partial* indulgence.

From what has been said it can be seen that a plenary indulgence is a remission of all punishment, that is, of all that the Church can remit; and therefore whoever has the happy lot of gaining it is left without any debt before God, in this world and in the next.

A partial indulgence is one that remits only the punishment equivalent to what is relaxed by the one who grants it. So when someone gains an indulgence of so many years or days, of forty days for example, it does not mean that forty days of purgatory are taken off, but that he is excused what he could have satisfied with forty days of those penances that the Church once laid down. These penances served as the rule for punishing offenses and were established by her, and so they are called *canonical*. It was laid down, for example, that whoever blasphemed the name of God, of the most holy Virgin, or of any Saint should stand at the church door on seven Sundays during the parish Mass, and on the last of them should stand there without his cloak and barefoot; and that on the seven Fridays before he should fast on bread and water, being forbidden to enter the church all that time. Whoever cursed his parents was to spend forty days on bread and water, and so on.

Now, whoever fulfilled these penances exactly, with humility and in the state of grace, certainly not only satisfied the punishment imposed by the Church, but also merited before God by it the remission of more or less of the temporal punishment that he would have had to satisfy, in this world or the next, for those sins already forgiven. (How much was remitted and how much remained to pay I will not say, because God has not revealed it and we do not know.) This portion of punishment, which he would have paid to God with the forty fasts or with the seven Sundays of standing as a penitent at the church door, is what the Church now applies to him from her treasury when she grants an indulgence of seven days, of forty, and so on, and likewise with the other partial ones. Consequently, whoever is fortunate enough to gain an indulgence of 140,000,000 days (which is roughly what is granted to a member of the Rosary confraternity who says one part of it) gains, and satisfies God, as much as he would by 140,000,000 fasts on bread and water. This is what a plenary indulgence is, and what a partial one is.

The Conditions for Gaining Them

But since the Church does not give out these sums from her treasury without discretion, or, as people say, *a troche y moche* (“helter-skelter”), but under certain conditions, something must be said about them, since sometimes the gaining of indulgences depends on fulfilling them.

These conditions may be considered either as relating to the person who is to gain the indulgences or as relating to the work or works prescribed by the one who grants them. The first include, among others, the

following: (1) to be baptized; (2) to be a subject of the one who grants them; (3) not to be bound by major excommunication; (4) to be in grace, at least when doing the last work or act, when several are required, or when completing it, when there is only one. Consequently, whoever did the works required to gain an indulgence while not baptized, or not a subject of the one who grants it, or excommunicated, or in mortal sin, would not gain it.

The conditions relating to what is prescribed are: (1) that the work or works prescribed be fulfilled entirely and in a morally complete way; (2) that they be done well, without spoiling them with crooked ends, as would be doing them out of vainglory, with voluntary distraction, and so on; (3) that they be done at the time, in the place and in the order prescribed. So, for lack of these conditions, the indulgence would not be gained in the following cases:

1. If through inability or ignorance what is prescribed, or a notable part of it, were omitted, unless it had been commuted into something else by one who has the faculty to do so.

2. If it were done for some end other than that intended by the one who prescribes it.

3. If it were done in another place or order, or at another time than the one laid down; or if we made use of a third person as the principal agent, for example ordering someone else to fast for us or visit the church, or asking him to give the alms from his own money.

4. If something in itself necessary were omitted, even if we or someone else judged it was not.

5. One who, though free of mortal sin, had a venial sin or an attachment to it would not gain the plenary indulgence, because the punishment of a sin that is not forgiven is never remitted. For this reason it is advised, when the Sacraments are required as a condition, that Communion be the last thing done. But it should be noted that when the plenary indulgence is not gained for lack of some requirement, this does not prevent it being gained as a partial one.

6. If, making use of another person even as an instrument to fulfill what is prescribed, that person does not in fact fulfill it: for example, if one hands over a sum to be given to a poor man, and it is not given, the indulgence is not gained.

These defects, I say, prevent the gaining of the indulgence; but the following do not:

1. If the part left unfulfilled is so small that prudent people judge it insignificant: for example a ceremony at Mass, a slight distraction, a small quantity in the matter of fasting, and so on.

2. If the alms given is small, when the one who prescribes it sets no amount.

3. If because of the crowd one cannot go into the church to pray; it is then enough to pray from the door, porch or churchyard.

4. If, provided what is prescribed is done, one did not at that time have the intention of gaining the indulgence, so long as one did not have a contrary intention; for an interpretative intention is enough. For this reason it is very fitting to form from time to time, at the beginning of the day, week or month, the intention of gaining all that one can.

5. If, when visiting an altar or chapel, one does not go up to it in person; it is enough to turn toward it from the place in the church where one is, and to see it or be able to see it.

Although what has been said already gives a fair idea of what indulgences are and of what must be done and avoided to gain them, we shall add, for greater clarity:

1. When an indulgence is granted for the point of death on condition of invoking, for example, the sweet name of Jesus, the confessor does not need to apply it; it is enough that the dying person invoke the name devoutly with the lips, if he can, or with the heart.

2. Although it would be best for the dying person to have hanging from his neck, or in his hands, the Crucifix, rosary, medal and so on to which indulgences for the point of death are attached, this is not absolutely necessary. It is enough that, as its owner, he have it on the bed or near him, even if he neither sees nor touches it. Nor is it absolutely necessary that he keep it so until he expires, though this should always be sought.

3. It is safest to hold that an indulgence granted to the living with the faculty of applying it to the dead cannot be gained unless the living person who is to gain it is in grace. So whoever wishes to apply it, if he is not in that state, should try to put himself in it, either by confession or by an act of contrition with the resolution to confess in due time.

4. The dying can gain many indulgences granted under different titles, for example for different rosaries or different Crucifixes, and this even if they do not know of them or do not remember them.

5. Indulgences granted to the living cannot be applied to the dead unless they are granted with this clause.

6. With one and the same work one can gain many indulgences granted by different persons, if the work serves equally the end each grantor intended. For example, if different persons grant indulgences to whoever reads all or part of a certain book, or to whoever greets an image saying a certain aspiration, then by reading or greeting once one gains them all. The same holds if the prescribed work cannot be repeated on the same day, as when Communion or fasting is prescribed.

Catalogue of the Indulgences Common to All the Faithful

With these notions and remarks laid down, here is the catalogue of the indulgences common to all the faithful.

1. Many indulgences have been granted by the Supreme Pontiffs and other Prelates of the Church to all who devoutly say the most holy Trisagion.

2. Many are the graces obtained, and numberless the indulgences gained, by those who visit the most holy Sacrament.

3. To whoever greets another saying, “Praised be Jesus Christ”, and to whoever answers, “Amen”, or “For ever”, 150 days of indulgence are granted; and to one who had this custom in life, a plenary indulgence is granted at the point of death on devoutly invoking the name of Jesus with the lips, or with the heart if the lips are hindered.

4. To whoever reverently pronounces the name of Jesus or of Mary, 25 days.

5. To whoever says the Litany of the Name of Jesus, 300; and that of the Name of Mary, 200.

6. To whoever hears or celebrates Mass devoutly, 30,800 years, which can be applied to the dead.

7. To whoever says the Our Father and Hail Mary five times in honor of the passion of Christ and the sorrows of most holy Mary, 10,000 years.

8. To whoever says the third part of the Rosary, 5 years and 5 quarantines.[1] Besides, 100 days for each Our Father and 100 for each Hail Mary. Continuing this devotion all year, one may choose a day on which, by confessing, receiving Communion and praying for the intentions of the grantor, one will gain a plenary indulgence that can be applied to the souls in purgatory. But it is a condition that the rosary be blessed by a Dominican Father or by someone with the faculty to do so, and also that the mysteries be said, unless they are not known through simplicity or lack of instruction.

9. To whoever says 15 Our Fathers and Hail Marys for those in mortal sin, each time he does so, the remission of a third of the punishment due for sins already forgiven is granted.

10. To whoever says a Hail Mary, 60 days; a Salve Regina, 40; whoever bows the head at the name of Jesus and Mary, 20; whoever bows it at the *Gloria Patri*, 30; whoever genuflects to the Blessed Sacrament, 200; whoever kisses the cross, 1 year and 40 days; whoever says, "Blessed be the holy and immaculate Conception of the most holy Virgin Mary", 100 years.

11. To whoever accompanies the Viaticum with a light, 7 years and 7 quarantines; without a light, 5 years and 5 quarantines; to whoever, being prevented, sends another with a light, 3 years and 3 quarantines.

12. To whoever, hearing the bell rung in the parish at the elevation of the Blessed Sacrament, kneels and prays, whether at home, in the fields or wherever he is, 1 year; and 2 if he goes to the church for the purpose.

13. To whoever, with the proper dispositions, confesses and receives Communion on any feast day, 5 years each time; if he does so once a month, and on the feasts of Jesus Christ, of the most holy Virgin, of the Apostles and of St. John the Baptist, 10 years each time; and if he does so on the principal feast of his town, a plenary indulgence.

14. To whoever, morning, noon and night, at the signal for prayers, says kneeling (except on Saturday evening and all Sunday, when it is said standing) the *Angelus Domini* with the three Hail Marys, 100 days each time; and on one day of each month, whichever he chooses, by confessing, receiving Communion and praying for the usual intentions of the Church, a plenary indulgence.

- *Note*. From Easter until noon on the Saturday before the feast of the most holy Trinity, instead of the Angelus the antiphon *Regina caeli* \[Queen of heaven\] is to be said standing, without the three Hail Marys; but whoever does not know it may continue with the *Angelus Domini* as during the year.

15. To whoever at night, hearing the bell that gives the signal, says kneeling the *De profundis* \[Out of the depths\] with the verse *Requiem aeternam* \[Eternal rest\], or an Our Father and Hail Mary with the *Requiem aeternam*, for the souls in purgatory, 100 days each time; and if he continues doing so all year, on one day of his choosing, by confessing, receiving Communion and praying for the intentions of the Church, a plenary indulgence.

16. Eighty years are granted to whoever says this prayer: *My Lord Jesus Christ, most sweet Father, by the joy your dear Mother had when you appeared to her on the holy night of the Resurrection, and by the joy she had when she saw you full of glory with the light of the divinity, I ask you to enlighten me with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that I may do your will all the days of my life; for you live and reign for ever and ever. Amen.*

17. To whoever, repentant and having confessed, says or attends Matins of the feast of Corpus Christi, 400 days; 400 for the first Vespers; 100 for the second; 400 for saying or hearing Mass; and 160 for each of the canonical Hours. On each day within the octave, 200 for each Vespers, 200 for each Matins, 200 for each Mass, 80 for each canonical Hour, and 200 for the procession. All these indulgences extend to the feasts of the Immaculate Conception of Mary, of the sweet Name of Jesus (adding five Our Fathers and Hail Marys on this feast) and of the Transfiguration of the Lord; and on the feast of the Visitation of Our Lady, 100 for each Vespers, Matins and Mass, and 40 for each canonical Hour.

18. To whoever, at three in the afternoon on Fridays, hearing the bell that gives the signal, says kneeling five Our Fathers and Hail Marys in memory of the Lord's passion and agony, 100 days.

19. To whoever for a month has half an hour, or at least a quarter of an hour, of mental prayer each day, confessing and receiving Communion on one day of it, a plenary indulgence.

20. To whoever confesses and receives Communion during the days of Carnival and visits the Blessed Sacrament exposed, a plenary indulgence.

21. Whoever for a month makes each day the acts of faith, hope and charity, with piety and devotion and from the heart, may choose one day of it on which, by confessing and receiving Communion, he will gain a

plenary indulgence applicable to the souls in purgatory. And note that any words may be used to make these acts, provided they express the special motives of each of the theological virtues.

22. Saying with an Our Father and Hail Mary the aspirations “Hail, Daughter of God the Father, hail, etc.”, a plenary indulgence each time.

The indulgences belonging to the various Confraternities and religious bodies are not given here, because it is for their members to know them or make them known.

I only exhort all the faithful in common to try to bring forth worthy fruits of penance, and not to be negligent in making use of such priceless treasures, so that with them they may pay what our frailty cannot reach. In this way either they will not go to be purified in purgatory, or their souls will be kept from entering glory for only a very short time after their death. And there may we see one another together. Amen.

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[2] Council of Trent, Session XIV, *Doctrine on the Sacrament of Penance*, chapter 9.

[1] *cuarentena*.

St. Raphael, or the Comfort of the Sick

§ I. Visiting the Sick, and Reflections That May Be Offered Them

To see how great a work of charity it is to visit and help the sick, it is enough to reflect on what Jesus Christ himself tells us of them. In chapter 25 of St. Matthew he assures us that on the day of judgment he will acknowledge before the whole world, as done to his own person, the visits that have been made to the sick, and will decree for them their due reward: *I was sick, and you visited me* (Matt. 25:36).

Let us practice, then, so great a work of charity, visiting not only sick relatives but also strangers, whether in private houses or in hospitals, seeing in them the very person of Jesus Christ. But our visits must not be barren, like those clouds that give no rain and serve only to make the air heavy and oppress living things. We must be like those other clouds that dissolve in abundant rain, which waters the fields and fills the earth with fruitfulness (Jude 12).

There are some whose visits, with their chatter and tactlessness, are a cause of distress and annoyance to the sick and the rest of the household rather than of comfort and relief. We must not do it this way. Rather, if they need it and our means allow, we must try to help them with some bodily alms, or at least with some spiritual help: sympathizing with their situation, commending them to God, giving them wholesome advice and putting before them some devout considerations. We might speak to them in these or similar terms:

1. My brother in Jesus Christ, remember that you are a Christian, which means a disciple and imitator of Jesus Christ. Imitate him now, then, for laid on this bed of pain you can so easily become like him. Say to the eternal Father what the adorable Savior said to him in the worst of his agony in the garden of Gethsemane: *My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt* (Matt. 26:39). Beg the Lord to free you, if it is possible, from the pains and troubles you are in; but tell him that if it pleases him that you suffer them, you accept it, that his most holy will be done, and that in imitation of your divine master Jesus you wish to fulfill it.

2. You know well, my brother, that to be saved it is indispensable to do the will of God, as the divine Master assures us when he tells us in his holy Gospel (Matt. 7:21) that *not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven*. Never forget that every day you have said to God in the Lord’s Prayer: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*. Now the Lord wishes to test whether you said it from the heart, or whether it was only a formula and empty words. If you had a servant who offered himself to you every day and told you he was ready for your service, what

would you say of him if, the moment you ordered him to do something, he began to complain about the order and would not carry it out? We are all servants of the heavenly Father, to whom we owe every service he deigns to require of us; and you in particular have offered yourself thousands of times, every day even, to do his holy will in all things and with all exactness. And can you now complain of the arrangements of his adorable providence? Will you refuse him this proof he asks of your submission to his holy dispositions? Repeat to him, then, very often and with all the sincerity of your heart, these words of the Our Father: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*

3. Bearing illness with patience is no less useful for the body than for the soul. It is useful for the body, because when the sick person is calm he is better disposed for the medicines to work, and so recovers his health sooner; and the soul gains great merit and edifies the household and the visitors. The impatient person, on the contrary, harms his body, causes loss to his soul, and is troublesome and tiresome to everyone.

4. To have patience in illness it is good to think often of the pains of Jesus Christ, whom a prophet with every reason calls *a man of sorrows* (Isa. 53:3). Contemplate him stripped, tied to a pillar, receiving a rain of lashes: who suffers more, you or he?… See how they crown him with thorns… how on Calvary they violently tear off his garments, already stuck to his wounds with clotted blood… how they then stretch him on the hard bed of the cross, how they nail him hand and foot with thick hard nails. What a difference, my brother, between his bed and yours! You on a soft bed, he on a hard wood! You on a soft pillow, he with a bundle of thorns! You lying down and covered, he naked and hanging from three nails! You attended by your household and visited by your friends, he abandoned by his friends and made the plaything of his enemies! If you are thirsty they give you to drink; but in his thirst they give him only gall and vinegar, and heap insults on him! See, then, dear brother: if the innocent Jesus suffers so many pains and sorrows with patience, and even death, why can a poor sinner not bear with resignation a small part of his chalice?

5. My brother, remember that we are exiles, in a valley of tears and miseries. This earth, cursed by the sin of our first parents and by the personal sins we have added, produces nothing but thorns of pains, troubles and death (Gen. 3:17–19). Courage, then, for this exile will soon end; meanwhile we must go through its troubles until we reach the happiness of the heavenly homeland that has been promised us.

6. Courage and patience, my brother. Think that however well ordered your life has been, you will have committed some faults, and with them you could not enter the kingdom of heaven. They must first be purified, either in this world with the pains you suffer or others equivalent to them, or in the next with the terrible pains of purgatory. What a difference between the one and the other! And if you have ever sinned gravely, reflect that you deserved hell, and that if the Lord had taken your life at that moment you would now be, like the rich man of the Gospel, in that place of torments. And how could you dwell with that devouring fire? How could you bear those everlasting burnings? (Isa. 33:14). Consider that God has exchanged those pains for the pains of the illness you are suffering. Bear them with patience and in grace: that is, make a good confession if you have not already done so, putting yourself in grace with the Lord. In that way your very sufferings will be of great merit to you; for if you were not in grace they would be of no use to you for heaven.

7. God our Lord deals with us, my brother, like the good physician, who, when he sees that poultices are of no use to heal the patient, takes to the knife. I mean that when God our Lord sees that neither the warnings and sermons of priests nor his own inspirations succeed in converting and amending the sinner, he makes use of illness. Through it he holds him back from going to the café, the gaming table, the brothel and so on; and he even obliges him to amend his past, and with a good confession, as with a knife, to cut away his most inveterate vices. In a way he deals with him as with Saul, who, after being thrown to the ground, said to the Lord: *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?* and was told to go to Ananias, the Lord's servant; and he obtained health of body and soul (Acts 9:6–18). How many there are who, laid on the bed of pain, have opened their eyes to the light of grace, have made a good confession, have obtained health of body and soul, and in the

end have been saved!

§ II. When the Most Holy Viaticum Should Be Given to the Sick

St. Liguori says that to give the most holy Viaticum to a sick person it is not necessary that he be already given up by the doctors; it is enough that he be in danger of death. And it is even better then, because his mind is clearer, he can prepare himself better, and so can draw more fruit from the holy Sacraments, which produce more or less grace according to the disposition of the one who receives them.

The same St. Liguori says that in the same illness the Viaticum may be given many times to a sick person who is not fasting, at least when an interval of six or eight days has passed.

Children who have the use of reason may very well be given the Viaticum.

Whoever visits and comforts the sick person should try to stir up in his soul the desire to receive the most holy Sacrament, or Viaticum, so that, strengthened with this food of the strong, he may resist the attacks of the devil with greater effort and more abundant grace. He should tell him that in this way he will be united with Jesus our Redeemer, who wishes to visit him so as to pour his graces upon him and soon bring him to the heavenly homeland; or, if the hour of his death has not yet come, to grant him bodily health, if it is good for him. St. Cyril of Alexandria says that the holy Eucharist also drives away illnesses and heals the sick. And St. Gregory Nazianzen tells of his own father that he recovered at the very moment he received holy Communion. I have seen many who improved soon after receiving the Viaticum, and were finally cured.

§ III. When Extreme Unction Should Be Given to the Sick

Since Extreme Unction is the last Sacrament given to man, it is also the spiritual crown of life. Strengthened by it, a man prepares himself to enter the heavenly homeland. It is therefore necessary to give this Sacrament to the sick person while he has not yet lost his reason, so that it may profit him more. That is why the Roman Catechism says that parish priests sin mortally who put off giving Extreme Unction until the sick person has already been given up and is out of his senses.

It has been said that giving the most holy Viaticum can be repeated in the same illness, but the same is not true of Extreme Unction. It cannot be repeated in the same illness, unless the sick person has probably recovered from the first danger and fallen into another like it.

Extreme Unction is lawfully given to children who have the use of reason, even if they cannot yet receive Communion; and if it is doubtful whether they have the use of reason, it may be given to them conditionally.

The sick person should be told that Extreme Unction can give him bodily health, if this is good for the health of his soul; but it does not give this health when it can no longer be recovered by natural means. John Herolt tells of one who revealed after death that if he had received Extreme Unction sooner he would have recovered at once from his illness, but that because he put it off he had died, and had been sentenced to a hundred years of purgatory.

Further, Extreme Unction forgives the remains of sins, and consequently even mortal sins that are hidden or that the sick person does not remember. So the sick person should be taught that, at the very moment his senses are being anointed, he should be sorry for the faults committed through them, and answer with those present: “Amen.”

The sick person must also know that holy Extreme Unction will give him particular help with which, in his last agony, he may repel the force and assaults of hell. It is therefore very probable that whoever refuses to receive this Sacrament commits a grave offense. Thus far the teaching of St. Liguori.

§ IV. Reflections for Those Who, Through Misunderstood and Worse-Practiced Charity, Do Not Dare to Tell the Sick Person to Receive the Holy Sacraments

Relatives sometimes say: “I do not dare tell my sick relative this news…” But I answer that you are failing in charity and in piety. Do piety and charity not oblige you to look to your relative’s good? Why, then, do you not obtain for him so great a good as receiving the holy Sacraments? You tell me you do not do it, not for lack of charity, but because the very love you bear him holds you back and will not let you break this news to him, and you are afraid he will be frightened. Hush, do not tell me that; for your charity is cruelty, a misunderstood charity, and the piety you show your relative is an impious piety. How can it be said that you love your relative if, so as not to upset or frighten him, as you say, you do not warn him to receive the holy Sacraments in good time and with the proper dispositions? If he dies like that without receiving them, or if he does not receive them well because his senses are already clouded, and dies in a bad state, you are the cause of his damnation. Can it be called love to let a relative die without Sacraments, like a dog? Can it be called love to let a relative hurl himself into hell, when heaven could have been obtained for him by means of the holy Sacraments?

To make it clearer that this conduct, which some practice with the sick, is not charity but cruelty, I shall use this comparison. A mother has a young son, gallant and very handsome, whom she loves greatly, and this grateful son returns his mother’s love in kind. But one night, while the son is sleeping, the mother learns that enemies are coming to take her beloved son’s life. What does the good mother do then? It grieves her heart to give her beloved son this fright, but she makes up her mind nonetheless and urges him to flee. She would rather see him seized with terror and safe from his enemies than leave him unfrightened, asleep in his bed, where they would take him by surprise and, finding him off guard, leave him dead, riddled with stab wounds. If you love your relative, why do you not imitate this mother? To spare him a small upset, will you let him die in sin, and be surprised by his enemies and cast into hell? What cruelty is yours! What barbarity!…

Ah, if he could speak to you from hell, he would say to you what a gentleman said to his servant. While traveling he fell into the hands of robbers, who robbed and wounded him and left him half dead, bathed in his own blood and unable to move. The servant, as if to soothe his master’s groans and pitiful cries, said to him: “Ah, sir! I knew there were robbers on this road, and I feared some misfortune; but so as not to frighten you I said nothing.” “Ah, barbarous and inhuman man!” his master cried to him, “would it not have been better to frighten me and make me flee, than to let me fall into the hands of robbers who have robbed me and left me without hope of life?”… Your relative or friend would say as much: “Would it not have been better to frighten me than to let me die without Sacraments, or to wait until I no longer knew what I was doing, and so let me fall into the hands of the infernal robbers, who took away all my hope of salvation and torment me for ever in hell?”…

You say you do not want to frighten your relative or friend by telling him to receive the Sacraments. To this I answer that with those words you pay him a poor compliment, because you treat him as a bad Christian and an enemy of Christ. The reason is evident. A good Christian is not frightened at receiving the holy Sacraments; rather he rejoices and is much comforted, because he knows and believes in their power and efficacy, and because he knows that nothing can help him so much in the situation he is in as the Sacraments well received. If it is good for him, they will give him bodily health; and if not, God will give him the patience and grace he needs to die resigned and joyful in the kiss of the Lord, knowing that he is going to heaven accompanied and even sustained by God himself. That is why it is called *Viaticum*: because it accompanies and sustains us on this journey to a happy eternity. I also said that you treat him as an enemy of Christ, because when friends go to visit their sick friends they do not cause them fright but joy and comfort, and the sick man regards their visit as a proof of true friendship. So if you fear that Christ’s visit to your sick relative will frighten him, you do not regard him as Christ’s friend but as his enemy, since it is the mark of enemies to cause fright.

I tell you frankly that if you truly loved your relative or friend, you would be so far from depriving him of the holy Sacraments or delaying them that there is nothing you would procure for him with such diligence and care. Listen to me, for God's sake, and I will give you briefly some proofs, though not all, for I would never finish. Do you love your relative or friend, or not? If you tell me you do, then you must free him from every evil and procure him every possible good, for in this true love consists. With the Sacraments you can free him from an infinite and eternal evil, which is damnation, and you can procure him an infinite and eternal good, which is salvation. If you do not do it, then, you are the most barbarous and inhuman of men; you are the worst enemy your relative or friend has; you are his traitor, for you imitate Judas, who under pretext of friendship handed his Master over to his enemies. You do the same, for under pretext of friendship you let him fall into the hands of his enemies; for although you do not want to frighten him, as you say, he will not on that account fail to die; and he will die in a bad state, and be damned…

But if you pride yourself on being a true friend, you must not only free him from spiritual evil and procure him good, but also free him from bodily evil and procure him bodily good; and certainly you will obtain this with the holy Sacraments, by which he will recover his lost health, if it is good for him, and be freed from his illness. First I will give you proofs of fact, which cannot be denied. Besides the fact that many authors affirm it, I have seen many who, after receiving the holy Sacraments, have been relieved and have improved, to the point of recovering their health entirely. For now I do not mean that this relief or recovery of health in the sick comes from some miracle or grace of the Sacrament, but that it is a natural, though consequent, effect of the Sacrament.

I shall explain it by the principles of philosophy. Between soul and body there is the most intimate communion you can imagine; so that when the soul is afflicted, sad and grieved, these pains echo in the body, which also becomes afflicted, sad and melancholy; and the reverse. Now, most illnesses consist in a lack of balance or a disorder of the humors. So the body, being thus indisposed, communicates its pain and grief to the soul. Then the soul, which had perhaps been lulled to sleep by passions, vices and sins, wakes up. Like a sea stirred by a terrible hurricane, it is thrown into turmoil; and like a pond whose bottom is full of mud and slime, which when stirred brings up all that filth though before it seemed to have none, so the soul begins to fear the justice of God; and this fear is increased by the memory of the crimes, faults and sins of its past life. Holy Scripture tells us this of Antiochus, who said when he was sick: *But now I remember the evils that I have done in Jerusalem* (1 Mac. 6:12). This happened with Voltaire, with Rousseau, and with very many others I could tell you of; and this fear and fright increase the pain of the body.

In such a state the best, or the only effective, remedy that can be given the sick person is for him to receive the holy Sacraments. For by a good confession that thorn is pulled from his heart, the weight of his sins is lifted from him, the remorse of his conscience ceases, the soul grows calm and begins to enjoy an inexpressible tranquility and joy. Then the soul communicates its tranquility to the body, which recovers its calm and is put in a state to receive the effect of the medicines. These are aids to nature; and when nature is not in a good state, however many remedies are applied nothing is achieved. But if nature is well disposed, tranquil and calm, it lets itself be led as by the hand of the doctors and their medicines, and the sick person easily recovers his lost health.

So far I have spoken by the principles of philosophy. Now I wish to make some use of sacred theology. I tell you that through sin, speaking generally, illnesses and death have come into this world (Rom. 5:12). In particular, I must tell you that very many times God permits them as a punishment for personal sins, and at other times for the conversion of sinners themselves; as we read in holy Scripture of many who opened, through the pain of illness, the eyes that guilt had closed. Now, if the cause is not removed, how will the effect be removed? If the guilt or sin is not wiped out by a good confession, how will even the punishment, which is the illness, be relaxed?

Let us go on. We know that in Communion we receive Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the same who gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf and speech to the dumb, who healed the sick and even raised the dead, as the Gospel tells. We know that the hand of this God-Man is not shortened (Isa. 59:1); that he is the same today as he was then (Heb. 13:8). Why, then, will he not do now what he did then? But take care that it is not lost through our own fault, through lack of faith and trust, as happened to the people of Nazareth, among whom, because of their little faith, Jesus did not work the wonders he worked among others (Matt. 13:58). But those who had faith and trust, even if they were Canaanites or foreigners, recovered their health merely by touching the hem of his garment, however long-standing and stubborn their ailments might be (Matt. 9:20–22; 14:36).

Well then, if it was enough to touch the hem of the Savior's garment with faith and trust, why will his whole body and blood, received into the sick person's breast, not be enough? Alas, very many times it is for lack of faith! And the reason is clear. How can it be said that a relative has faith and trust when he does not do what Jairus, the ruler of the Synagogue, did? Jairus went out of his house to look for Jesus, so that he would come to his house to cure a daughter who was sick (Mark 5:22–23), and so did many others, as the Gospel tells, and Jesus went and cured them at once. Instead of calling Jesus or the holy Sacraments, I repeat, such relatives do all they can to keep him from coming, waiting until the last extremity; and even then it is more out of human respect, so that it may not be said they let him die without Sacraments like a dog, or so that he may not be denied burial in consecrated ground. Human respect then prevails over the faith and trust one ought to have in Jesus Christ.

Ah, if relatives and friends understood this well! Ah, if the sick reflected on it! I am sure they would ask for and procure the holy Sacraments more than they have done until now.

And not only friends and relatives, but doctors too would be more anxious that the sick should receive the Sacraments in time, for two reasons. The first is that it would be more to their own credit to cure the sick after they have received the Sacraments. The other is that I am certain they would obtain more cures than otherwise, for the reasons given. I think doctors would do very well to reflect much on these reasons, so as to prepare with the Sacraments the good success of their remedies. A painter who wants a happy result from his work first of all takes care to prepare the canvas well on which he is to lay the colors, for if he neglects this all the work is lost. In the same way the doctor must try to prepare the sick person well, and the best means are the holy Sacraments.

Besides, the doctors must bear in mind that health is the Lord's (Ecclus. 38:1–15), and that if God does not give it, they may do what they like and they will achieve nothing. This is why there are illnesses that defeat the wisest doctors, who see frustrated the effects of the most effective remedies on which they founded their hope of a happy result. Fortunately the earth of the cemetery is so charitable that it hides and covers everything; and God sometimes permits this to humble pride, so that they may understand that if God does not give health and life, all their efforts are useless.

I know some doctors, and they are very good friends of mine, who, as soon as they are called to visit a sick person, at once invoke on his behalf the most sweet name of Jesus and make use of the intercession of most holy Mary, of St. Raphael, and of the holy physicians Cosmas and Damian. As soon as the illness requires it, they see to it that the sick receive the holy Sacraments; and meanwhile, observing the sick carefully, studying the illness and prescribing at the right time, they obtain the happiest cures. Others, less humble and so satisfied with their knowledge that they think they hold health and life in their hands, see themselves continually defeated and humiliated by their foolish pride.

Notice. See to it that near the sick person's bed there are images of Jesus crucified and of most holy Mary, and also a little holy water, so as to be able to sprinkle his bed and room now and then.

When the sick person is very ill, try to call a priest for his comfort and relief. If this is not possible, at least one of those present should address some short but fervent aspiration to him from time to time. For just as in bodily things he is helped with a spoonful of cordial and medicine, so in spiritual things he should be helped with some aspiration; but always with holy zeal and Christian prudence, so that the poor patient is comforted, not wearied. So he should be told that it is enough for him to follow with his heart the aspirations he hears spoken; and these should be suited to the condition and circumstances of the sick person.

§ V. Affections and Aspirations That May Be Suggested to the Sick Person

My God, I believe in you, for you are infallible truth; I hope in you, for you are boundless mercy; I love you, for you are infinite goodness.

My Lord and my God, I believe all that holy mother the Catholic Church commands us to believe.

Note. Here the helper will say the Creed slowly and devoutly, and the sick person will repeat it in his heart.

My God, I hope from your mercy that you will forgive me all my sins, and grant me grace, and finally glory.

Eternal Father, I ask forgiveness of all my sins by your great goodness and infinite mercy: forgive me, my Father.

My Father, I ask forgiveness of all my sins by the merits of your Son Jesus.

My Father, I ask forgiveness of all my sins by the merits and intercession of most holy Mary, Mother and advocate of sinners.

My Father, I ask forgiveness of all my sins by the merits and intercession of all the Saints and Angels of heaven.

My Father, forgive me all my sins, as I with all my heart forgive all who have offended and wronged me.

O Jesus, my Savior, great God of mercy and goodness! As you forgave the Magdalen and other sinful women, forgive my poor sinful soul; as you forgave the prodigal son, Peter and the good Thief, forgive me too, for I am sorry with all my heart for having offended you.

My Mother, most holy Virgin and Mother of God, have pity on me, help me, obtain for me true contrition for all my sins, for I am sorry in my soul for having committed them.

Note. Here the helper will say the Our Father, Hail Mary, Salve Regina and Act of Contrition slowly and devoutly, and the sick person will follow with his heart.

I am content to lose everything to gain you, my God, who are my all.

My God, when shall I see you face to face and love you with all my heart?

When, my Jesus, shall I be sure of never losing you?

O paradise, O happy homeland, O homeland of love, when shall I see you!… when shall I possess you!…

O eternal God, I hope and long to love you eternally.

Do not let me be separated from you, my God. I desire nothing but you, infinite goodness.

Jesus, my love, was crucified for me: I too wish to die for love of him.

How can I thank you, my God, for so many and such immense benefits as you have given me? I hope to thank you for them eternally in heaven.

I love you, my God, with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind and with all my strength.

Would that I had always loved you, my God; would that I had never offended you!…

Mary, Mother of grace, Mother of love, Mother of mercy, intercede for me.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for me now and at the hour of my death.

St. Joseph, patron of the dying, pray for me.

All you Saints of the heavenly court, pray for me.

Holy Angel my guardian, help me and defend me from my enemies.

All you Angels, help me, accompany me to heaven to sing with you the eternal mercies of God.

Jesus, Joseph and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.

Jesus, Joseph and Mary, protect my soul in my last agony.

Jesus, Joseph and Mary, may my soul rest in peace.

Notice. These aspirations may be repeated, or one may dwell on whichever the sick person likes best.

§ VI. Signs of Approaching Death

Whoever is helping the sick person should know the signs of imminent death, so as to help him more opportunely when he is about to expire. The chief signs are these: when the pulse fails, or is intermittent or irregular; when the breathing is labored; when the eyes are sunken and glassy, or more open than usual; when the nose becomes pinched and whitish at the tip; when he puffs like a bellows; when the face turns sallow, livid and purplish; when the forehead is bathed in a cold sweat; when the sick person picks at the threads and fluff of the sheets; when all the extremities grow cold, and so on.

The nearest signs that the sick person is about to expire are: intermittent or faint breathing; absence of pulse; clenching or grinding of the teeth; a rattle in the throat; a weak sigh or moan; a tear that falls of itself; and a twisting of the mouth, the eyes and the whole body. When the sick person shows any of these last signs, the one helping him will suggest to him fervently, frequently and in a somewhat louder voice the following aspirations:

Into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit (Luke 23:46).

My Jesus, I commend to you this soul of mine, which you redeemed with your most precious blood.

My Jesus, my love, I love you; I am sorry for having offended you.

Oh, would that I had always loved you, would that I had never offended you!

O Mary, Mother of God and my Mother, pray for me now that I am at the hour of my death.

My Jesus, save me.

Mary, my Mother, protect me.

Glorious St. Joseph, help me.

Archangel St. Michael, help me; deliver me from my enemies.

Holy Angel, my guardian, accompany me to the presence of God.

All you Angels, come to my help, for I am in need of you.

All you Saints, help me and obtain for me a good death. Amen.

Notices. While the helper suggests these aspirations to the sick person, the other relatives and friends should kneel before some image of most holy Mary, in the sick person’s room or in another, and say the holy Rosary and the Litany of most holy Mary. In this way they can help the sick person better than by standing round the

bed weeping, groaning and adding to the poor dying person's distress. It will be enough for one or two to stay with him for whatever may be needed, and for the rest to withdraw to pray until he has expired.

As soon as the sick person has died, the priest or one of those present will say to the others who have witnessed his illness and death: "Ladies and gentlemen, my brothers, Mr. N. has just expired. He has just undergone a penalty he incurred from the very moment he began to exist on earth; he has paid a debt we must all pay. The Holy Spirit says that it is good to go to the house of mourning, for there we think of where we must come to (Eccles. 7:3). Indeed, we must all come to this pass; we must all die. But we do not know whether we shall die at home in bed like him, or in some deserted place, lacking everything and helped by no one. We do not know whether our death will be sudden, or gradual like that of our brother, who has had time to receive the holy Sacraments. Perhaps we shall not have time; so we must always be ready and prepared, so that we may be saved, for it would profit us nothing to gain the whole world if we lost our soul. Let us try, then, to live well and holily, exercising ourselves in good works, which are the only treasure we take with us to the next world. The rest, you see: everything must be left behind, as you witness in this gentleman.

"Let us commend the soul of the deceased to God. It is a very good thing that some people do, when someone they love dearly dies: they go at once to confession and Communion and apply to him the merit of the Sacraments they have received. To the same end they offer the Lord the Masses they can hear, give some alms to the poor, and beg them to pray for the soul of the deceased.

"Blessed are those who thus show mercy to the dead, for they shall certainly obtain mercy (Matt. 5:7). This is what they should do, and not other vain customs that some observe, who instead of practicing these works of charity and Christian piety even neglect those of obligation.

"Let the executors not forget to carry out the provisions of the will at once. Let us all fulfill our obligations well, and God in return will give us grace in this world and glory in the next. Amen."

Act of Acceptance of Death

Every Christian should read the following at least once a month and follow it with his heart.

I adore, my God, your eternal being. I place in your hands the being you have given me, which must cease by death at the moment you shall appoint. I accept this death from now on with submission and a spirit of humility, in union with the death my Lord Jesus Christ suffered; and I hope that through this acceptance I shall merit your mercy to pass happily through so terrible a step.

I desire, O my God, to make of myself a sacrifice to you by my death, paying due homage to the greatness of your being by the destruction of mine. I desire my death to be a sacrifice of expiation, which you, O my God, may accept to satisfy your justice for so many offenses; and with this hope I gladly accept all that is most horrible in death to the senses and to nature.

I consent, O my God, to the separation of my soul from my body, in punishment for my having separated myself from you by my sins. I accept the loss of the use of my senses in satisfaction for the offenses I have committed through them.

I accept, Lord, that my body be hidden in the earth and trodden on, to punish the pride with which I have tried to make myself seen by creatures. I accept that they remember me no more, in punishment for the pleasure I have taken in being loved by them. I accept the loneliness and horror of the grave, to make reparation for my dissipations and dangerous amusements. I accept, finally, the reduction of my body to dust and ashes, and that it be food for worms, in punishment for the disordered love I have had for it.

O dust! O worms! I receive you, I esteem you, and I look on you as the instruments of my God's justice to punish the pride and arrogance that have made me rebel against his precepts. Avenge his rights, repair the injuries I have done him, destroy this body of sin, this enemy of God, these members of iniquity, and make

the power of the Creator triumph over the weakness of his unworthy creature. To all this I submit, O my God, as also to the sentence your divine justice may wish to pass on my soul at the moment of my death. Amen.

Recommendation of the Last Hour

Jesus, Lord God of goodness, Father of mercy! I present myself before you with a contrite, humbled and confounded heart, and commend to you my last hour and what awaits me after it.

When my feet, losing their movement, warn me that my course in this world is near its end,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my hands, trembling and numb, can no longer hold the Crucifix, and in spite of myself I let it fall on my bed of pain,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my eyes, glazed and turned by the horror of imminent death, fix their faint and dying gaze on you,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my cold and trembling lips pronounce your adorable name for the last time,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my pale and livid face moves those present to pity and terror, and my hair, bathed in the sweat of death and standing on end, announces that my end is near,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my ears, about to close for ever to the conversations of men, open to hear the irrevocable sentence that will fix my lot for all eternity,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my imagination, troubled by horrible and frightful phantoms, is plunged into mortal anguish, and my spirit, disturbed by fear of your justice at the memory of my iniquities, struggles against the infernal enemy, who would take from me my hope in your mercies and hurl me into the horrors of despair,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my heart, weak and oppressed by the pain of illness, is seized by the fear of death, wearied and exhausted by the efforts it has made against the enemies of my salvation,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When I shed my last tears, signs of my dissolution, receive them, Lord, as a sacrifice of expiation, so that I may die as a victim of penance; and at that terrible moment,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my relatives and friends, gathered around me, tremble at the sight of my condition and call upon you for me,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When, having lost the use of my senses, the whole world disappears from my sight, and I groan amid the anguish of the last agony and the throes of death,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When the last sighs of my heart urge my soul to leave the body, accept them, Lord, as the children of a holy impatience to go to you; and then,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

When my soul, on the edge of my lips, leaves this world for ever and leaves my body pale, cold and lifeless, accept its destruction as a homage I shall pay to your divine Majesty; and in that hour,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

Finally, when my soul appears before you and sees for the first time the splendor of your Majesty, do not cast it from your presence; deign to receive me into the bosom of your mercy, that I may sing your praises eternally; and then, now and always,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

Through the merits and intercession of most holy Mary, Mother and advocate of sinners, who I hope will pray for me at the hour of my death,\ *R.* Merciful Jesus, have compassion on me.

Jesus, Joseph and Mary, I give you my heart and my soul.\ Jesus, Joseph and Mary, protect my soul in my last agony.\ Jesus, Joseph and Mary, may my soul rest in peace.

Prayer of the Sick Person after Recovering His Health

I thank you, my God, for the illness with which you have visited me, and for the health to which you have restored me. You have had mercy on me; you have taken pity on my ills. Grant, Lord, that I may always offer you the sacrifice of your praises and of my health. You did not wish me to perish, and you struck me only to heal me, and to warn me by this that my health and life are wholly yours, and that I must therefore use them only in exercises of penance, piety and charity. This, my Lord and my Father, will be the use I make of them from now on, helped by your divine grace. Do not let me forget, Lord, the danger from which you have delivered me, nor let the love of life grow in me so as to make me forget the resolution I made in my illness: to live well from now on, to receive often the holy sacraments of Penance and Communion, and to exercise myself in works of mercy. Amen.

Notice. As soon as the sick person can leave the house, he will go to hear holy Mass, and will confess and receive Communion in thanksgiving; and he will also visit the image of most holy Mary.

Practical Method of Mental Prayer

Before making mental prayer, implore the grace of the Holy Spirit with the following antiphon, verse and prayer; and do this in all the meditations.

Come, O Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful, and kindle in them the fire of your love.\ *V.* Send forth your spirit, and they shall be created.\ *R.* And you shall renew the face of the earth (Ps. 103:30).

Prayer. O God, who have taught the hearts of your faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to be truly wise and ever to rejoice in his consolation; through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Acts to Be Made Each Day and in Each Meditation

Preparatory prayer. My Lord and God, I most firmly believe that you are present here. I adore you, my God, with all the submission and affection of my heart, and humbly ask your forgiveness for all my sins. I offer you, my Lord and Father, this meditation, and I hope you will grant me the graces I need to make it well. To this same end I turn to you, most holy Virgin my Mother, and to you, Angels and Saints, that you may intercede for me and obtain for me what I need to make this meditation with fruit. Amen.

Then begin, very slowly, the reading of the meditation, regarding it as coming from God and applying its contents to the present state of your soul. In this way each will see what he must amend, reform or improve; in the light of it he will make practical resolutions, and after them the petitions and colloquies, now to the Virgin, now to the Son of God, now to the eternal Father, to obtain the grace needed to do what he resolves and for all he desires.

Conclusion of the meditation. Thanksgiving. I thank you, my God, for the good thoughts, affections and inspirations you have given me in this meditation.

Offering. I offer you the resolutions I have made in it, and ask you for very effective grace to put them into practice; and to this end I beg you, Mary my Mother, and you, Angels and Saints to whom I am devoted, to intercede for me and obtain this grace for me. Amen.

Short Meditations on the Last Things, Arranged for Every Day of the Month, by Father John Peter Pinamonti of the Society of Jesus: How to Make Mental Prayer

The whole cause of a soul's little spiritual progress lies in the lack of meditation. So whoever truly desires to advance the supreme business of his eternal salvation should exercise himself every day in mental prayer, or meditation. To help you do it easily, I offer you this brief instruction.

First, place yourself in the presence of God with an act of lively faith. Second, adore him as present, with all humility. Third, offer yourself with all your affection, and consecrate to him all that you are and can do. Ask him to enlighten your understanding to grasp the truth you are to meditate, and to inflame your will to embrace it. This is called the preparatory prayer.

In the second place you must, with the understanding: first, attentively ponder the words of each point, considering in great detail all that is contained in it; second, examine whether the way you have lived until now has been in keeping with that truth or maxim you are meditating, trying to impress it deeply on your understanding and to persuade yourself of its truth and importance; third, reflect on your present life and see whether you often fail, and on what occasions, until you find the root of your faults so as to pull it up. In these operations of the understanding, which are apprehending, judging and reasoning, meditation properly consists.

In the third place, pass to the affections of the will: first, detesting your past life with true sorrow; second, firmly resolving to practice in time to come what you have known and learned in the present meditation; and third, end with a loving colloquy, speaking with the most holy Trinity, or with Jesus Christ, or with the most pure Virgin, or with your Guardian Angel, or with your patron Saints, repeating acts of love of God, of humility, of resignation, of resolution, and petitions for the graces you most need. These colloquies are the last part of mental prayer.

To make the practice of this meditation easier, I give you the matter, drawn from the Last Things, as so important for not sinning; for, as the Holy Spirit teaches, whoever keeps them in mind will never sin: *Memorare novissima tua, et in aeternum non peccabis* \[Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin\] (Ecclus. 7:40). Each meditation is divided into some points, to instruct the understanding with the knowledge that will help it to spend at least a quarter of an hour each day considering these important truths, so that it may be convinced and undeceived, and the will resolved to seek the salvation of the soul effectively.

By the bowels of Christ I beg you to ponder attentively that on one of these truths, well or badly considered, your happy or unhappy eternity may depend.

If one of these considerations makes a greater impression on your soul and moves it more, dwell on it more slowly, and repeat it the next day, for this will be of great profit and advancement to you. So that great master of prayer, St. Ignatius, directs.

On no account should the whole time be spent in reasonings of the understanding. The chief thing must be to exercise fervent acts of the will: of hatred of sins, of thanksgiving to God for the benefits received, of contempt for the goods of earth, of most firm resolutions to change one's life and to undertake one wholly contrary to the deceitful maxims of the world, to the pleasure of the senses and to the suggestions of the devil.

Repeat continual acts of love of God and hatred of sin. Implore the powerful intercession of the most holy Virgin.

The fruit appointed to be practiced each day is always different. But when you find that one helps you more to overcome some vice or acquire some virtue, keep practicing it, not only the next day but the whole month, if you judge it fitting for the greater glory of God and the good of your soul.

If some day you have no time for meditation, at least read the points of that day two or three times, and you will keep them well in mind. May the Holy Spirit assist you; and pray for one who truly desires your salvation.

Meditations for Each Day of the Month

Day 1. The Importance of Salvation

1. My salvation is a business entirely my own: if I do not think about it, who will think about it for me?

2. It is so much my business that all that I am is at stake in it, my soul and my body. If I do not secure it, who will secure it for me?

3. It is my business, and on it my whole eternity depends. If I do not accomplish it, who will accomplish it for me?

What, then, am I doing? Why do I not apply myself wholly to saving my soul? I have nothing I ought to love more than this one soul; I have nothing more precious than this immortal soul. If once I lose it, I have lost everything for ever.

Resolution and fruit of this meditation. Offer to the most holy Trinity, through the hands of the most pure Virgin, your Guardian Angel and the Saint of the day, all your actions, that they may be directed to the greater glory of God and the salvation of your soul. Say the *Gloria Patri* three times.

Day 2. The Uncertainty of Death

The sentence has been passed: I must die, I must die.

1. But I do not know the time: I may die this hour.

2. I do not know the place: I may die on that occasion.

3. I do not know the manner: I may die in that sin. And I sin so cheerfully! And I fall back so easily! And I do not flee every occasion of sin! What faith is mine!

Resolution and fruit. Make a timetable, setting down what you should do in each hour of the day. The hour you waste may be the last of your life, and that same hour well spent may secure your salvation.

Day 3. The Warning of Death

If I do not die a sudden death, the day will come when they warn me to prepare to die well; and then:

1. Will I have time to confess, when I shall hardly be able to speak because of the gravity of the illness?

2. Will I have time to examine myself, when I shall hardly be in my senses from fright and fear?

3. Will I have the heart to repent, when my conscience is entangled with so many faults? O my God! And what shall I do then?

Resolution and fruit. Make a general confession of your whole life, if you have never made one; and if you have, let it be from the last one, settling the accounts of your soul; and calm through this Sacrament all the remorse of your conscience. Choose a good confessor, and make use of this time the Lord grants you to resolve effectively to amend your bad life.

Day 4. Preparation for Death

What will be good for me to do to prepare for a holy death?

1. What I shall certainly wish I had done at that hour.

2. What I shall probably be unable to do at that hour.

3. What I shall necessarily have to do at that hour in order to be saved: penance for my sins, fervent acts of contrition, most firm resolutions to flee the occasions.

Resolution and fruit. I will try to behave in all the actions of this day as if it were the last of my life. I will repeat acts of contrition for all the sins I have committed, and renew my resolutions to amend. Say seven Our Fathers to St. Joseph.

Day 5. The State of a Dying Man

1. The past afflicts him: so many sins for which he has not done penance.

2. The present saddens him: so many dangers of damnation, and he sees no way of escaping them.

3. The future makes him tremble: he has eternity before his eyes, and does not know which, of glory or of pain. The just will tremble; what shall I do, a wretched sinner? (1 Pet. 4:18).

Resolution and fruit. Go to confession at once, this very day, if you are certain or prudently doubt that you are in mortal sin. And if you think you are in grace, give thanks for this benefit, and beg the Lord and the most holy Virgin to keep you so until death. Say the Litany of the Virgin.

Day 6. The Last Moment of Life

1. At that instant the soul will leave the body and all the pleasures of the senses.

2. At that instant honors will end, riches will end, friends will end.

3. At that moment I may be damned. If this moment in which I live were the last, what would become of me? O moment on which eternity depends!

Resolution and fruit. Examine each hour of the day how you spent the one before, as St. Ignatius did; and take up the holy habit, whenever you hear the clock strike, of turning to the most holy Virgin with a Hail Mary.

Day 7. The Soul Appears at the Judgment

At the instant of my death my soul will be presented at the divine tribunal. I will imagine that I see:

1. At the foot of the bed, Jesus Christ, as a Judge angry with me, who has come to give me the final sentence.

2. On the left hand, the devil, full of glee, who puts before my eyes a great book, so that I may read written in it, minutely, one by one, all the sins of my life.

3. On the right, my Guardian Angel, reading on a small paper the few good works I have done, and with a sad face holding it before my eyes. Oh, what a scene! Oh, what a sight! Oh, what terror!

Resolution and fruit. When you are in bed tonight, lie as a dying man, imagining that you hold the Crucifix in one hand and a lighted candle in the other. Recall these points, and say to yourself: “What would I wish to have done, if this were the last hour of my life?”

Day 8. The Particular Judgment of the Soul

1. The examination will be most rigorous, of all thoughts, all words, all actions, and in great detail. I shall be accused by the devils who tempted me, the companions I scandalized, and my own conscience, which so many times warned me with its remorse.

2. The Judge will be most just, and without mercy. I committed my sins in his sight, and so he himself saw everything, heard everything and knew everything.

3. The sentence will be irrevocable: there will be no excuse, no plea, no appeal; either eternal life or eternal death.

Resolution and fruit. Keep the presence of Christ the Judge very vivid in your imagination all this day; and before beginning any work, say to yourself: “For this action I am about to do, what sentence will be given me?” Before going to bed, say the Hail Mary three times and kiss the ground.

Day 9. The State of the Soul after Death

1. Once the sentence is given, if it is to glory, the soul will go at once, rich in gifts and virtues, with great festivity and accompanied by the holy Angels. Who can understand what joy this will be!

2. If the sentence is to eternal pain, the soul, stripped of all gifts and virtues, will at once be carried off by the devils to hell. Oh, what horrible pain on entering those flames!

3. One of these two sentences must infallibly be given to each one. Which of the two will fall to me?

Resolution and fruit. This evening, after the examination of conscience, reflect on your past life and consider what sentence you have deserved until now, and what you would deserve if it were to be given you before you go to bed. An Our Father, and the *Gloria Patri* three times to the most holy Trinity, prostrate on the ground.

Day 10. The State of the Body after Death

After death, imagine that you see your body.

1. What is it like? A pale corpse, misshapen and frightful. It does not see, it does not feel, it does not move. Alone, and abandoned by all.

2. What is it dressed in? In the meanest rag, or a poor habit. Natural horror makes everyone draw back, so that hardly anyone can be found to go and cover it.

3. Where is it taken? To the church, accompanied by priests, who, having said the prayers, leave it to be thrown into the grave and covered with earth, where everyone will tread on it, and there it will rot and be eaten by worms. And is this the body I treat with such indulgence and delicacy?

Resolution and fruit. Visit the most holy Sacrament, and then go to the cemetery, visit the graves and say five times: “This is the house to which one day they will bring this body of mine to rot and be consumed among worms.” Say the prayer of the holy Shroud for the souls in purgatory.[1]

Day 11. The Record of One’s Life

While I live, the record of my life is being drawn up at every instant, and the day will come when it is read.

1. All the evil I ought not to have done, and yet did, will be read.

2. All the good I ought to have done, and did not do, will be read.

3. On all of it the final sentence will be given me. But what sentence? The one I am preparing by the actions of my life.

Resolution and fruit. Look over your past life and consider your sins of omission: how many good works you failed to do out of human respect or for other reasons, and how many abominations you have committed. Repent of both, and resolve to begin a perfect life. Say the Trisagion to the most holy Trinity.

Day 12. Spurs to Penance

If I have sinned, I am obliged to do penance, am I not? But when shall I do it?

1. After death it is impossible, because there is no more time.

2. At death it is extremely difficult, because there is little time.

3. No other time is in my hands but the present; so either I do penance now, or I must fear from now on that I shall never do it.

Resolution and fruit. Try to give everyone a good example by your actions and to edify them by your advice, seeking by these and by your prayers the salvation of your neighbors. You will say the Rosary for those to whom you may have given occasion to sin, fervently begging the most holy Virgin that no one may be damned because of you.

Day 13. The Signs of the General Judgment

The signs that will precede the judgment are of faith, because our Redeemer foretold them (Matt. 24:29; Luke 21:25–26).

1. They will be very many: the sun darkened and wrapped in thick darkness, the moon eclipsed and stained with blood, the stars falling, the sea roaring, the earth opening in very deep chasms, earthquakes, wars, pestilences, discords and so on.

2. They will be sudden and unexpected: when the world least expects it, when there is most sin in the world, and when the world will no longer have time to amend.

3. They will be terrible: a devouring fire will rain from heaven, burying in its flames men, animals, plants, cities, fortresses, palaces, gardens, in a word the whole world (2 Pet. 3:10). Oh, what a conflagration! If insensible creatures will tremble with dread, what will sinners do then?

Resolution and fruit. On this day you will make three acts: (1) of fear of the divine justice; (2) of contrition for your sins; (3) of reverent and filial recourse to the divine mercy. You will end with three Our Fathers and Hail Marys.

Day 14. The Resurrection of the Body

At the dreadful sound of the angels' trumpets (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:15):

1. This body of mine will infallibly rise again from the very place where it lies buried.

2. To be united again to this my body, the soul will come from heaven or from hell.

3. Once the soul is united to it, the body too will be immortal. But with what immortality? Cursed in that hour will be all the pleasures and delights of this life; blessed for ever will be penance.

Resolution and fruit. Practice some mortification today, such as fasting, a hair shirt and so on; deny yourself some expense; and curb your senses, especially your eyes, turning them from all vain curiosity. Make three crosses on the ground with your tongue, in penance for your bad words.

Day 15. The Coming of the Judge

Jesus Christ will appear in triumph with his court, attended by the Angels, with most holy Mary at one side, accompanied by the Apostles, in majesty upon the clouds (Matt. 24:30; 25:31). Christ Jesus will appear in the character of Judge.

1. As Creator, he will ask me to account for all the gifts and means he granted me to be saved, which I, ungrateful, misused.

2. As Father, he will ask me to account for all the love he spent on me, which I, thankless, returned so badly.

3. As Redeemer, he will ask me to account for all the blood he shed for me, which I, fiercer than the beasts, trampled on many times (Heb. 10:29).

Resolution and fruit. Wear some instrument of penance today, a cross, small chains, a hair shirt or the like, for three hours, in memory of the passion of Jesus Christ. Try to wear a Crucifix on your breast so as to turn to it often, as to a most loving Father, adoring his most holy wounds; and at each you will say an Our Father and a *Gloria Patri*.

Day 16. The Laying Bare of Consciences

1. Not a single one of all the sins I have committed will remain hidden. All will be read out; all will be heard by everyone (Luke 12:2–3). What will my confusion be then!

2. How many hidden sins will then be uncovered, which I never took account of! How many interior sins, which through my own fault I did not notice! What excuse shall I be able to give then?

3. Against all the sins I have committed against God, God will set all the benefits and graces he has given me, throwing in my face that I trampled on his blood, abused his Sacraments, and resisted and despised his inspirations. What will my despair be then!

Resolution and fruit. Withdraw today for at least a quarter of an hour, either to a church or alone before a Crucifix, and examine your conscience well, both as to the sins committed, especially interior ones of desires, affections and complacencies, and as to your past confessions. You will say the *Veni Creator*, or three Creeds to the Holy Spirit that he may enlighten you, and an Act of Contrition.

Day 17. The Separation of the Elect

In this life good and bad live together, and even after death they are buried together. But when the day of judgment comes, it will not be so: the Angels shall go out, and shall separate the wicked from among the just (Matt. 13:49).

1. On the right hand will be the elect; and perhaps I shall see among them those I mocked in this life.

2. On the left hand will be the damned; and perhaps those with whom I sinned (if they have not amended).

3. Which hand will fall to me on that day? (Matt. 25:33).

Resolution and fruit. Take up a tender devotion to the holy Angels, especially your Guardian Angel, so that on that tremendous day he may lead you to the right hand, separating you from the damned. To obtain so important a grace, resolve from now on to obey and follow his holy inspirations. Nine *Gloria Patri* to the nine choirs of Angels.

Day 18. The Final Sentence

When the sinners have been separated from the just, Christ will give the sentence.

1. A sentence that will never be revoked.

2. A sentence that will be carried out at once.

3. A sentence that will be pronounced once for all eternity: eternal curse on him who sinned and never would repent; eternal blessing on him who either never sinned or, if he sinned, did true penance in time (Matt. 25:34, 41).

Resolution and fruit. Say a “station” with your arms in the form of a cross, and repeat three times, prostrate on the ground, the words “I have sinned, Lord, have mercy”, making three acts: (1) of humiliation; (2) of repentance; (3) of fervent supplication to Christ crucified for pardon.

Day 19. The Value of Time

Time is a treasure of the highest value. A single moment is worth so much that in it alone the soul can recover God, who forgives its sin in that moment.

Consider:

1. How much good I can do on this day, and do not do.

2. That this day passes, and will never return.

3. That I must give a very strict account of this day, and I do not think of it. And the same will be true of all the moments of my life. Woe is me, if I have spent them badly!

Resolution and fruit. Try to spend this day with a holy greed to increase your merits by virtuous works, doing them from all the holy motives each of your actions admits of. For example, at Mass make acts of adoration, faith and thanksgiving, and hear it out of religion, charity and obedience. Say the Rosary to the most holy Virgin, asking her for many favors.

Day 20. Hell

What is hell?

1. It is a prison of darkness, where one lives always in strict confinement and chains, without a moment's freedom.

2. It is a house all of fire, where one always burns but never dies.

3. It is a place of all torments, where all pains are suffered, but without ever any relief.

Resolution and fruit. Hold one hand to the fire, or put a finger over the flame of a candle, keeping it there for a short while if you can; and from this gather what the fire of hell will be, compared with which this one is like a painted fire.[2] The *Ave maris stella* or three Salve Reginas.

Day 21. The State of the Damned

What is done in hell?

1. One understands how great an evil sin is, which is so little recognized now.

2. One suffers the penalty of sin, which now troubles us so little.

3. One curses the occasion of sin, which now is not removed. Oh, unhappy life of the sinner, and more so if he was fortunate here!

Resolution and fruit. Remove at once that occasion, that company, that book, game, house and so on that most often makes you fall into sin. Offer yourself to God to suffer any pain in this life to avoid the eternal one. Pray to God and to the most holy Virgin for those who are in mortal sin. The Litany of Our Lady, or the "My Lord Jesus Christ".

Day 22. The Uncertainty of Salvation

1. I have deserved hell if I have sinned, and I do not know for certain whether God has forgiven me.

2. I may be damned, for I can sin again, and I do not know for certain whether, when placed in the occasion, I shall resist without falling.

3. I shall probably be damned if I do not change my habits, and I do not know for certain whether I shall change my life before death. What will become of me if at that moment, even after receiving the Sacraments, I consent to some thought or pleasure in that sin I have so often committed through the habit I have had in my life? What will become of me?

Resolution and fruit. Make an effective resolution to confess at once if you find yourself in sin. Take particular care to amend that sin into which you fall most often, for this makes your salvation more uncertain. Visit an altar of the Virgin and say three Hail Marys in honor of her immaculate Conception.

Day 23. The Number of the Damned

1. It is easy to be damned, because the road to hell is very broad and many go by it. So says Christ our Lord (Matt. 7:13).

2. It is difficult to be saved, because the gate of heaven is narrow and few are they who enter by it. Jesus Christ says it (Matt. 7:14).

3. From the beginning of the world until the present time, the greater part of men have been damned; and, as the Saints teach, the greater part will be damned. What do I judge of myself?[3]

Resolution and fruit. At table, deprive yourself of the dish you like most. Deny yourself some of the recreations you take, even supposing it is lawful. Say on your knees the seven Penitential Psalms and the acts of Faith, Hope and Charity.

Day 24. The Confession of One of the Damned

1. God did very much to save me. How many benefits of nature and of grace to oblige me to love him! How many inspirations, how many warnings, how many Sacraments to guide me on the road to heaven! He caressed me with promises; he frightened me with threats; he urged me to repentance; but my obstinacy frustrated it all.

2. I could have saved myself, and I did not want to. Ah, if I had cut off that occasion at the beginning! If I had profited by that warning! If I had persevered constantly in that resolution! One generous resolution, one decisive cut, one confession in time would have brought me to heaven.

3. Did I want to be damned for nothing? Yes: for a moment's pleasure I am here sentenced to an eternity of torments. Yes: with my eyes open I threw myself into an abyss of flames, in spite of the advice of confessors, the remorse of my conscience and the mercy of God.

Resolution and fruit. (1) Give God many thanks for having had you brought up in a Catholic land, and for having enlightened you with so many inspirations. Recall them now for your repentance, especially those that had to do with the choice of a state of life or a change of habits. (2) Pray to God for those who are in danger of damnation. Say the *Veni Creator Spiritus*, or three Acts of Contrition.

Day 25. Eternal Damnation

What is it to be damned?

1. It is to lose God, and lose him for ever.

2. It is to burn in living flames, and burn for ever.

3. It is to despair without fruit, and despair for ever. O ever! O never! O eternity!

Resolution and fruit. On this day think out some way of mortifying your body: for example, not leaning back when you are seated, keeping one foot raised when you are kneeling, holding your arms in the form of a cross when you pray in private, keeping your eyes on the ground when you walk in the streets, and similar things, which will easily occur to one who wishes to mortify himself. You will say the station to the most holy Sacrament.

Day 26. Not Putting Off Penance

I have sinned; so the decree is already given: either hell or penance. I sin again, and I live content in the hope of being converted. But who will assure me of three things?

1. That I shall have time to do it.

2. That, having time, I shall be in a state to do it.

3. That, having done it, I shall not fall again and be damned.

Resolution and fruit. Look at your hands three times today, and each time say to yourself: “These hands must come to wither and rot.” Get used to making this reflection every morning. By this means St. Dominic converted a sinful woman. Five Our Fathers, Hail Marys and *Gloria Patri* with your arms in the form of a cross.

Day 27. Glory

On first entering heaven, what shall I experience?

1. A sudden flood and enjoyment of all good things, without any admixture of evil. I shall enjoy every contentment without the least pain. Oh, what a great consolation mine will be!

2. All these supreme joys I shall enjoy in the company of Jesus, of the Virgin Mother, and of all the Angels and Saints of heaven. Oh, what delightful and happy fellowship!.

3. I shall enjoy them all, and for all eternity, without fear or any chance of ever losing them. Oh, ineffable beatitude!

Resolution and fruit. In any pain that troubles me, or any pleasure that tempts me, I will say to myself: “Heaven, heaven! Glory, eternal beatitude!”, as St. Philip Neri said when they offered him the cardinal’s purple. By considering the goods of heaven I will learn to despise all those of earth, as St. Ignatius did: “Oh, how vile the earth seems to me when I look at heaven!” You will say devoutly the psalm *Laetatus sum* \[I rejoiced\] (Ps. 121), or three Creeds to the most holy Trinity.

Day 28. The Road to Heaven

There are only two roads to glory: innocence and penance.

1. Have I kept until now my innocence and baptismal grace? Ah, poor me! How many times I have lost it, and perhaps made others lose it, by grave and enormous sins against purity!

2. But for these and other sins, have I done fitting penance? What penance! I have always fled every mortification, seeking my own pleasure and convenience in everything.

3. This being so, do I think and wish to be saved? Yes. But by what road? I must enter by one of these two doors. Innocence I have lost; penance I do not do. How, then, shall I be saved?

Resolution and fruit. Fix your eyes on heaven and consider that most happy homeland, believing that you will live in it eternally if you resolutely follow one of the two roads set before you. The *Te Deum laudamus*, or make the acts of Faith, Hope and Charity.

Day 29. The Winning of Heaven

1. God asks little of me to be saved: only that I keep his holy law, a most easy law, a most just law, and a most sweet law (Matt. 11:30).

2. To this end God helps me, contributing the chief part himself, by the grace of his inspirations, the value of his merits and the efficacy of his examples.

3. This little God rewards with an eternal prize: momentary and light tribulations with eternal joy, brief labors with eternal reward, few pains with eternal glory (2 Cor. 4:17).

Resolution and fruit. Let the thought of the reward spur you to do and suffer great things to obtain it. Say three times the Our Father and Hail Mary, with the *Gloria Patri*, to the most blessed Trinity, that it may deeply imprint this knowledge on your heart.

Day 30. Eternity

1. Man shall go into the house of his eternity (Eccles. 12:5); so I too shall go. Each one builds this house for himself in this life.

2. The devil, with a brief pleasure, invites me to build my eternity in hell, and I consent.

3. God, with a little penance, calls me to build my eternity in heaven, and I resist. O senseless me! How mad I am!

Resolution and fruit. When you are in bed, try to lie awake and motionless on one side for at least half an hour, or with your head resting on a board for some other while. And if this gives you so much pain and weariness, say to yourself: “What, then, will it be to suffer the torments of hell for all eternity?” Repeat this whenever some hardship or mortification comes your way. Say the Hail Mary seven times, in reverence of the seven Sorrows of the Virgin, kissing the ground seven times.

Day 31. The Answers of Conscience

1. For what end has God put me in the world? Solely that I may be saved.

2. How many means has he given me to be saved? Innumerable, in the order of nature and in the order of grace.

3. What have I done until now to be saved? The worst I could, as if I were in the world only to be damned.

Resolution and fruit. (1) Make the general confession of the past month, and examine the state of your soul as to progress in vices or advance in virtues. (2) Be sorry for what you have done badly, and resolve effectively to spend the next month better, considering that it may be the last of your life. Offer to God your whole being, soul and body, faculties and senses, works, words and thoughts; and learn from St. Ignatius, to repeat every morning as soon as you get up, that devout

Prayer. Receive, Lord, all my liberty; receive my memory, understanding and will, with all their exercise. All I have and possess you have given me; and so I return it all to you without any diminution, and hand it over to be governed entirely by your providence. I ask you only to grant me your love and grace; with these I count myself rich enough, and I ask and desire nothing else.

Ad majorem Dei gloriam \[To the greater glory of God\].

Barcelona, 31 May 1858. Let it be reprinted. Joan de Palau y Soler, Vicar General and Governor.[4]

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[1] *oración del santo Sudario*.

[2] *Spiritual Exercises* 65–71.

[3] 1 Tim. 2:4.

[4] *Reimprímase*.