

INTRODUCTION
TO THE
Devout Life

BY
Saint Francis of Sales
BISHOP AND PRINCE OF
GENEVA

Preface by the Author

DEAR reader, I request you to read this Preface for your own satisfaction as well as mine. The flower-girl Glycera was so skilled in varying the arrangement and combination of her flowers, that out of the same kinds she produced a great variety of bouquets; so that the painter Pausias,¹ who sought to rival the diversity of her art, was brought to a standstill, for he could not vary his painting so endlessly as Glycera varied her bouquets. Even so the Holy Spirit of God disposes and arranges the devout teaching which He imparts through the lips and pen of His servants with such endless variety, that, although the doctrine is ever one and the

¹ Pausias of Sicyon (B.C. 368); see Plin. *Hist. Nat.* xxxv. 11-40. A portrait of Glycera, the young flower-girl whom he loved, with a garland of flowers, was one of his masterpieces. It was called the Stephane-plocos [Στεφανη-πλοκος], or garland wreath, and was purchased by L. Lucullus at Athens for two talents.

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same, their treatment of it is different, according to the varying minds whence that treatment flows. Assuredly I neither desire, nor ought to write in this book anything but what has been already said by others before me. I offer you the same flowers, dear reader, but the bouquet will be somewhat different from theirs, because it is differently made up.

Almost all those who have written concerning the devout life have had chiefly in view persons who have altogether quitted the world; or at any rate they have taught a manner of devotion which would lead to such total retirement. But my object is to teach those who are living in towns, at court, in their own households, and whose calling obliges them to a social life, so far as externals are

concerned. Such persons are apt to reject all attempt to lead a devout life under the plea of impossibility; imagining that like as no animal presumes to eat of the plant commonly called Palma Christi, so no one who is immersed in the tide of temporal affairs ought to presume to seek the palm of Christian piety. And so I have shown them that, like as the mother-of-pearl lives in the sea without ever

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absorbing one drop of salt water; and as near the Chelidonian Isles springs of sweet water start forth in the midst of the ocean¹ and as the firemoth² hovers in the flames without burning her wings; even so a true stedfast soul may live in the world untainted by worldly breath, finding a well-spring of holy piety amid the bitter waves of society, and hovering amid the flames of earthly lusts without singeing the wings of its devout life. Of a truth this is not easy, and for that very reason I would have Christians bestow more care and energy than heretofore on the attempt, and thus it is that, while conscious of my own weakness, I endeavour by this book to afford some help to those who are

undertaking this noble work with a generous heart.

It is not however, my own choice or wish which brings this Introduction before the public. A certain soul, abounding in uprightness and virtue, some time since conceived a great desire, through God's Grace, to aspire more earnestly after a devout life, and craved my private help

¹ These islands are in the Mediterranean Sea, in the Gulf of Lycia.

² Πυραυστης.

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with this view. I was bound to her by various ties, and had long observed her remarkable capacity for this attainment, so I took great pains to teach her, and having led her through the various exercises suitable to her circumstances and her aim, I let her keep written records thereof, to which she might have recourse when necessary. These she communicated to a learned and devout Religious, who, believing that they might be profitable to others, urged me to publish them, in which he succeeded the more readily that his friendship exercised great influence upon

my will, and his judgment great authority over my judgment. So, in order to make the work more useful and acceptable, I have reviewed the papers and put them together, adding several matters carrying out my intentions; but all this has been done with scarce a moment's leisure. Consequently you will find very little precision in the work, but rather a collection of well intentioned instructions, explained in clear intelligible words, at least that is what I have sought to give. But as to a polished style, I have not given that a thought, having so much else to do.

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I have addressed my instructions to Philothea,¹ as adapting what was originally written for an individual to the common good of souls. I have made use of a name suitable to all who seek after the devout life, Philothea meaning one who loves God. Setting then before me a soul, who through the devout life seeks after the love of God, I have arranged this Introduction in five parts, in the first of which I seek by suggestions and exercises to turn Philothea's mere desire into a hearty resolution; which she makes after her general confession, by a

deliberate protest, followed by Holy Communion, in which, giving herself to her Saviour and receiving Him, she is happily received into His Holy Love. After this, I lead her on by showing her two great means of closer union with His Divine Majesty; the Sacraments, by which that Gracious Lord comes to us, and mental prayer, by which He draws us to Him. This is the Second Part. In the Third Part I set forth how she should practise certain virtues most suitable to her

¹ The address to Philothea by name has been omitted, as being somewhat stiff and stilted, and the term child or daughter used instead, but the omission in no way alters the sense or application of any sentence.

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advancement, only dwelling on such special points as she might not find elsewhere, or be able to make out for herself. In the Fourth Part I bring to light the snares of some of her enemies, and show her how to pass through them safely and come forth unhurt. And finally, in the Fifth Part, I lead her apart to refresh herself and take breath, and renew her strength, so that

she may go on more bravely afterwards, and make good progress in the devout life. This is a cavilling age, and I foresee that many will say that only Religious and persons living apart are fit to undertake the guidance of souls in such special devout ways; that it requires more time than a Bishop of so important a diocese as mine can spare, and that it must take too much thought from the important duties with which I am charged. But, dear reader, I reply with S. Denis that the task of leading souls towards perfection appertains above all others to Bishops, and that because their Order is supreme among men, as the Seraphim among Angels, and therefore their leisure cannot be better spent. The ancient Bishops and Fathers of the Primitive Church

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were, to say the least, as devoted to their duties as we are, yet they did not refuse to undertake the individual guidance of souls which sought their help, as we see by their epistles; thereby imitating the Apostles, who, while reaping the universal world-harvest, yet found time to gather up certain individual sheaves with special and personal

affection. Who can fail to remember that Timothy, Titus, Philemon, Onesimus, Phekla, Appia, were the beloved spiritual children of S. Paul, as S. Mark and S. Petronilla were of S. Peter (for Baronius and Galonius have given learned and absolute proof that S. Petronilla was not his carnal but spiritual daughter). And is not one of S. John's Canonical Epistles addressed to the "elect lady" whom he loved in the faith?

I grant that the guidance of individual souls is a labour, but it is a labour full of consolation, even as that of harvesters and grape-gatherers, who are never so well pleased as when most heavily laden. It is a labour which refreshes and invigorates the heart by the comfort which it brings to those who bear it; as is said to be the case with those who carry bundles of

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cinnamon in Arabia Felix. It is said that when the tigress finds one of her young left behind by the hunter in order to delay her while he carries off the rest of her cubs, she takes it up, however big, without seeming over-weighted, and speeds only the more swiftly to her lair, maternal love lightening the load. How

much more readily will the heart of a spiritual father bear the burden of a soul he finds craving after perfection carrying it in his bosom as a mother her babe, without feeling weary of the precious burden?

But unquestionably it must be a really paternal heart that can do this, and therefore it is that the Apostles and their apostolic followers are wont to call their disciples not merely their children, but, even more tenderly still, their "little children."

One thing more, dear reader. It is too true that I who write about the devout life am not myself devout, but most certainly I am not without the wish to become so, and it is this wish which encourages me to teach you. A notable literary man has said that a good way to learn is to study, a better to listen, and the best to teach. And S. Augustine, writing to the

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devout Flora,¹ says, that giving is a claim to receive, and teaching a way to learn.

Alexander caused the lovely Campaspe,² who was so dear to him, to be painted by the great Apelles, who, by dint of contemplating her as he drew, so graved her features in his heart

and conceived so great a passion for her, that Alexander discovered it, and, pitying the artist, gave him her to wife, depriving himself for love of Apelles of the dearest thing he had in the world, in which, says Pliny, he displayed the greatness of his soul as much as in the mightiest victory. And so, friendly reader, it seems to me that as a Bishop, God wills me to frame in the hearts of His children not merely ordinary goodness, but yet more His own most precious devotion; and on my part I undertake willingly to do so, as much out of obedience to the call of duty as in the hope that, while fixing the image in others' hearts, my own may haply conceive a holy love; and that if His Divine Majesty sees me deeply in love, He may give her to me in an eternal

¹ This is probably the person mentioned as "our most religious daughter Flora" in S. Augustine's Treatise "On care to be had for the Dead", addressed to his fellow Bishop Paulinus. See *Library of the Fathers, S. Augustine's Short Treatises*, p. 517.

² Plin. *Hist. Nat.* l. xxv. c. 10.

marriage. The beautiful and chaste Rebecca, as she watered Isaac's camels, was destined to be his bride, and received his golden earrings and bracelets, and so I rely on the boundless Goodness of my God, that while I lead His beloved lambs to the wholesome fountain of devotion, He will take my soul to be His bride, giving me earrings of the golden words of love, and strengthening my arms to carry out its works, wherein lies the essence of all true devotion, the which I pray His Heavenly Majesty to grant to me and to all the children of His Church that Church to which I would ever submit all my writings, actions, words, will and thoughts.

ANNECY, S. Magdalene's Day, 1608.

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CHAPTER I.

What true Devotion is.

YOU aim at a devout life, dear child, because as a Christian you know that such devotion is most acceptable to God's Divine Majesty. But seeing that the small errors people are wont to commit in the beginning of any under taking are apt to wax greater as they advance, and to become irreparable at last, it is most important that you should thoroughly understand wherein lies the grace of true devotion;--and that because while there undoubtedly is such a true devotion, there are also many spurious and idle semblances thereof; and unless you know which is real, you may mistake, and waste your

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energy in pursuing an empty, profitless shadow. Arelius was wont to paint all his pictures with the features and expression of the women he loved, and even so we all colour devotion according to our own likings and dispositions. One man sets great value on fasting, and believes himself to be leading a very devout life, so long as he fasts rigorously, although the while his heart is full of bitterness;--and while he will not moisten his lips with

wine, perhaps not even with water, in his great abstinence, he does not scruple to steep them in his neighbour's blood, through slander and detraction. Another man reckons himself as devout because he repeats many prayers daily, although at the same time he does not refrain from all manner of angry, irritating, conceited or insulting speeches among his family and neighbours. This man freely opens his purse in almsgiving, but closes his heart to all gentle and forgiving feelings towards those who are opposed to him; while that one is ready enough to forgive his enemies, but will never pay his rightful debts save under pressure. Meanwhile all these people are conventionally called religious, but nevertheless they are in no true sense really devout. When Saul's servants sought to take David, Michal induced them to suppose that the lifeless figure lying in his bed, and covered with his garments, was the man

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they sought; and in like manner many people dress up an exterior with the visible acts expressive of earnest devotion, and the world supposes them to be really devout and spiritual-minded,

while all the time they are mere lay figures, mere phantasms of devotion.

But, in fact, all true and living devotion presupposes the love of God;--and indeed it is neither more nor less than a very real love of God, though not always of the same kind; for that Love one while shining on the soul we call grace, which makes us acceptable to His Divine Majesty;--when it strengthens us to do well, it is called Charity;--but when it attains its fullest perfection, in which it not only leads us to do well, but to act carefully, diligently, and promptly, then it is called Devotion. The ostrich never flies,--the hen rises with difficulty, and achieves but a brief and rare flight, but the eagle, the dove, and the swallow, are continually on the wing, and soar high;--even so sinners do not rise towards God, for all their movements are earthly and earthbound. Well-meaning people, who have not as yet attained a true devotion, attempt a manner of flight by means of their good actions, but rarely, slowly and heavily; while really devout men rise up to God frequently, and with a swift and soaring wing. In short, devotion is simply

a spiritual activity and liveliness by means of which Divine Love works in us, and causes us to work briskly and lovingly; and just as charity leads us to a general practice of all God's Commandments, so devotion leads us to practise them readily and diligently. And therefore we cannot call him who neglects to observe all God's Commandments either good or devout, because in order to be good, a man must be filled with love, and to be devout, he must further be very ready and apt to perform the deeds of love. And forasmuch as devotion consists in a high degree of real love, it not only makes us ready, active, and diligent in following all God's Commands, but it also excites us to be ready and loving in performing as many good works as possible, even such as are not enjoined upon us, but are only matters of counsel or inspiration. Even as a man just recovering from illness, walks only so far as he is obliged to go, with a slow and weary step, so the converted sinner journeys along as far as God commands him but slowly and wearily, until he attains a true spirit of devotion, and then, like a sound man, he not only

gets along, but he runs and leaps in the way of God's Commands, and hastens gladly along the paths of heavenly counsels and inspirations. The difference between love and devotion is just that which exists between fire and flame;--love

being a spiritual fire which becomes devotion when it is fanned into a flame;--and what devotion adds to the fire of love is that flame which makes it eager, energetic and diligent, not merely in obeying God's Commandments, but in fulfilling His Divine Counsels and inspirations.

CHAPTER II.

The Nature and Excellence of Devotion.

THOSE who sought to discourage the Israelites from going up to the Promised Land, told them that it was "a land which eateth up the inhabitants thereof;"¹ that is, that the climate was so unhealthy that the inhabitants could not live long, and that the people thereof were "men of a great stature," who looked upon the new-comers as mere locusts to be devoured. It is just so, my daughter, that the world runs down true devotion, painting devout people with

gloomy, melancholy aspect, and affirming that religion makes them dismal and unpleasant. But even as Joshua and Caleb protested that not only was the Promised Land a fair and pleasant country, but that the Israelites would take an easy and peaceful possession thereof, so the Holy Spirit tells us through His Saints, and our

¹ Numb. xiii. 32.

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Lord has told us with His Own Lips, that a devout life is very sweet, very happy and very loveable.

The world, looking on, sees that devout persons fast, watch and pray, endure injury patiently, minister to the sick and poor, restrain their temper, check and subdue their passions, deny themselves in all sensual indulgence, and do many other things which in themselves are hard and difficult. But the world sees nothing of that inward, heartfelt devotion which makes all these actions pleasant and easy. Watch a bee hovering over the mountain thyme;--the juices it gathers are bitter, but the bee turns them all to honey,--and so tells the worldling, that though the devout soul finds bitter herbs

along its path of devotion, they are all turned to sweetness and pleasantness as it treads;--and the martyrs have counted fire, sword, and rack but as perfumed flowers by reason of their devotion. And if devotion can sweeten such cruel torments, and even death itself, how much more will it give a charm to ordinary good deeds? We sweeten unripe fruit with sugar, and it is useful in

correcting the crudity even of that which is good. So devotion is the real spiritual sweetness which takes away all bitterness from mortifications; and prevents consolations from disagreeing with the soul: it cures the poor of

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sadness, and the rich of presumption; it keeps the oppressed from feeling desolate, and the prosperous from insolence; it averts sadness from the lonely, and dissipation from social life; it is as warmth in winter and refreshing dew in summer; it knows how to abound and how to suffer want; how to profit alike by honour and contempt; it accepts gladness and sadness with an even mind, and fills men's hearts with a wondrous sweetness.

Ponder Jacob's ladder:--it is a true picture of the devout life; the

two poles which support the steps are types of prayer which seeks the love of God, and the Sacraments which confer that love; while the steps themselves are simply the degrees of love by which we go on from virtue to virtue, either descending by good deeds on behalf of our neighbour or ascending by contemplation to a loving union with God.

Consider, too, who they are who trod this ladder; men with angels' hearts, or angels with human forms. They are not youthful, but they seem to be so by reason of their vigour and spiritual activity. They have wings wherewith to fly, and attain to God in holy prayer, but they have likewise feet wherewith to tread in human paths by a holy gracious intercourse with men; their faces are bright and beautiful, inasmuch as they accept all things gently and sweetly; their heads

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and limbs are uncovered, because their thoughts, affections and actions have no motive or object save that of pleasing God; the rest of their bodies is covered with a light shining garment, because while they use the world and the things of this life, they use all such purely and honestly,

and no further than is needful for their condition --such are the truly devout. Believe me, dear child, devotion is the sweetest of sweets, the queen of virtues, the perfection of love. If love is the milk of life, devotion is the cream thereof; if it is a fruitful plant, devotion is the blossom; if it is a precious stone, devotion is its brightness; if it is a precious balm, devotion is its perfume, even that sweet odour which delights men and causes the angels to rejoice.

CHAPTER III.

Devotion is suitable to every Vocation and Profession.

WHEN God created the world He commanded each tree to bear fruit after its kind;¹ and even so He bids Christians,--the living trees of His Church,--to bring forth fruits of devotion, each one according to his kind and vocation. A different exercise of devotion is required of each--the noble, the artisan, the

¹ Gen. i. 12.

servant, the prince, the maiden and the wife; and furthermore such practice must be modified according to the strength, the calling, and the duties of each individual. I ask you, my child,

would it be fitting that a Bishop should seek to lead the solitary life of a Carthusian? And if the father of a family were as regardless in making provision for the future as a Capucin, if the artisan spent the day in church like a Religious, if the Religious involved himself in all manner of business on his neighbour's behalf as a Bishop is called upon to do, would not such a devotion be ridiculous, ill-regulated, and intolerable? Nevertheless such a mistake is often made, and the world, which cannot or will not discriminate between real devotion and the indiscretion of those who fancy themselves devout, grumbles and finds fault with devotion, which is really nowise concerned in these errors. No indeed, my child, the devotion which is true hinders nothing, but on the contrary it perfects everything; and that which runs counter to the rightful vocation of any one is, you may be sure, a spurious devotion. Aristotle says that the bee sucks honey from flowers without damaging them, leaving them as whole and fresh as it found them;--but true devotion does better still, for it not only hinders no manner of vocation or duty, but, contrariwise, it adorns and beautifies all. Throw precious

stones into honey, and each will grow more brilliant according to its several colour:--and in like manner everybody fulfils his special calling better when subject to the influence of devotion:--family duties are lighter, married love truer, service to our King more faithful, every kind of occupation more acceptable and better performed where that is the guide.

It is an error, nay more, a very heresy, to seek to banish the devout life from the soldier's guardroom, the mechanic's workshop, the prince's court, or the domestic hearth. Of course a purely contemplative devotion, such as is specially proper to the religious and monastic life, cannot be practised in these outer vocations, but there are various other kinds of devotion well-suited to lead those whose calling is secular, along the paths of perfection. The Old Testament furnishes us examples in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, David, Job, Tobias, Sarah, Rebecca and Judith; and in the New Testament we read of St. Joseph, Lydia and Crispus, who led a perfectly devout life in their trades:--we have S. Anne, Martha, S. Monica, Aquila and

Priscilla, as examples of household devotion, Cornelius, S. Sebastian, and S. Maurice among soldiers;--Constantine, S. Helena, S. Louis, the Blessed Amadaeus,¹ and

¹ It is probable that S. Francis here means to indicate Amadeo IX., Duke of Savoy, who died 1472.

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S. Edward on the throne. And we even find instances of some who fell away in solitude,-- usually so helpful to perfection,--some who had led a higher life in the world, which seems so antagonistic to it. S. Gregory dwells on how Lot, who had kept himself pure in the city, fell in his mountain solitude. Be sure that wheresoever our lot is cast we may and must aim at the perfect life.

CHAPTER IV.

The Need of a Guide for those who would enter upon and advance in the Devout Life.

WHEN Tobias was bidden to go to Rages, he was willing to obey his father, but he objected that he knew not the way;--to which Tobit answered, "Seek thee a man which may go with thee:"¹ and even so, daughter, I say to you, If you would really tread the paths of the devout life, seek

some holy man to guide and conduct you. This is the precept of precepts, says the devout Avila,--seek as you will you can never so surely discover God's Will as through the channel of ~~humble obedience so universally~~ taught and practised by all the Saints of olden time. When the

¹ Tob. v. 3.

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blessed Teresa read of the great penances performed by Catherine of Cordova, she desired exceedingly to imitate them, contrary to the mind of her Confessor, who forbade her to do the like, and she was tempted to disobey him therein. Then God spoke to Teresa, saying, "My child, thou art on a good and safe road:-- true, thou seest all this penance, but verily I esteem thy obedience as a yet greater virtue:" --and thenceforth S. Teresa so greatly loved the virtue of obedience, that in addition to that due to her superiors, she took a vow of special obedience to a pious ecclesiastic, pledging herself to follow his direction and guidance, which proved an inexpressible help to her. And even so before and after her many pious souls have subjected their will to God's ministers in

order the better to submit themselves to Him, a practice much commended by S. Catherine of Sienna in her Dialogues. The devout Princess S. Elisabeth gave an unlimited obedience to the venerable Conrad; and one of the parting counsels given by S. Louis to his son ere he died was, "Confess thyself often,--choose a single-minded, worthy confessor, who is able wisely to teach thee how to do that which is needful for thee." ¹ "A faithful friend," we are

¹ "Confesse-toi souvent, eslis un confesseur idoine, qui soit prudhomme, et qui te puisse seurement enseigner a faire les choses qui te seront necessaires."

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told in Holy Scripture, "is a strong defence, and he that hath found such an one hath found a treasure;" ¹ and again: "A faithful friend is the medicine of life; and they that fear the Lord shall find him." ² These sacred words have chiefly reference, as you see, to the immortal life, with a view to which we specially need a faithful friend, who will guide us by his counsel and advice, thereby guarding us against the deceits and snares of the Evil One:--he will be as a storehouse

of wisdom to us in our sorrows, trials and falls; he will be as a healing balm to stay and soothe our heart in the time of spiritual sickness,--he will shield us from evil, and confirm that which is good in us, and when we fall through infirmity, he will avert the deadly nature of the evil, and raise us up again.

But who can find such a friend? The Wise Man answers:--"He that feareth the Lord:" ³ that is to say, the truly humble soul which earnestly desires to advance in the spiritual life. So, daughter, inasmuch as it concerns you so closely to set forth on this devout journey under good guidance, do you pray most earnestly to God to supply you with a guide after His Own Heart, and never doubt but that He will grant you one who is wise and faithful, even should

¹ Eccclus. vi. 14. ² Eccclus. v. 16. ³ Eccclus. vi. 17.

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He send you an angel from Heaven, as He sent to Tobias. In truth, your spiritual guide should always be as a heaven-sent angel to you;--by which I mean that when you have found him, you are not to look upon him, or trust in him or his

wisdom as an ordinary man; but you must look to God, Who will help you and speak to you through this man, putting into his heart and mouth that which is needful to you; so that you ought to hearken as though he were an angel come down from Heaven to lead you thither. Deal with him in all sincerity and faithfulness, and with open heart; manifesting alike your good and your evil, without pretence or dissimulation. Thus your good will be examined and confirmed, and your evil corrected and remedied; --you will be soothed and strengthened in trouble, moderated and regulated in prosperity. Give your guide a hearty confidence mingled with sacred reverence, so that reverence in no way shall hinder your confidence, and confidence nowise lessen your reverence: trust him with the respect of a daughter for her father; respect him with the confidence of a son in his mother. In a word, such a friendship should be strong and sweet; altogether holy, sacred, divine and spiritual. And with such an aim, choose one among a thousand, Avila says;--and I say

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among ten thousand, for there are fewer than one would think

capable of this office. He must needs be full of love, of wisdom and of discretion; for if either of these three be wanting there is danger. But once more I say, ask such help of God, and when you have found it, bless His Holy Name; be stedfast, seek no more, but go on simply, humbly and trustfully, for you are safe to make a prosperous journey.

CHAPTER V.

The First Step must be Purifying the Soul.

"THE flowers appear on the earth,"¹ says the Heavenly Bridegroom, and the time for pruning and cutting is come. And what, my child, are our hearts' flowers save our good desires? Now, so soon as these begin to appear, we need the pruning-hook to cut off all dead and superfluous works from our conscience. When the daughter of a strange land was about to espouse an Israelite, the law commanded her to put off the garment of her captivity, to pare her nails, and to shave her head;² even so the soul which aims at the dignity of becoming the spouse of Christ, must put off the old man, and put on the new man, forsaking sin: moreover,

¹ Cant. ii. 12. ² Deut. xxi. 12.

it must pare and shave away every impediment which can hinder the Love of God. The very first step towards spiritual health is to be purged from our sinful humours. S. Paul received perfect purification instantaneously, and the like grace was conferred on S. Magdalene, S. Catherine of Genoa, S. Pelagia, and some others, but this kind of purgation is as miraculous and extraordinary in grace as the resurrection of the dead in nature, nor dare we venture to aspire to it. The ordinary purification, whether of body or soul, is only accomplished by slow degrees, step by step, gradually and painfully.

The angels on Jacob's ladder had wings, yet nevertheless they did not fly, but went in due order up and down the steps of the ladder. The soul which rises from out of sin to a devout life has been compared to the dawn, which does not banish darkness suddenly, but by degrees. That cure which is gradually effected is always the surest; and spiritual maladies, like those of the body, are wont to come on horseback and express, while they depart slowly and on foot. So that we must needs be brave and patient, my daughter, in this undertaking.

It is a woeful thing to see souls beginning to chafe and grow disheartened because they find themselves still subject to imperfection after having made some attempt at leading a devout life, and well-nigh

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yielding to the temptation to give up in despair and fall back; but, on the other hand, there is an extreme danger surrounding those souls who, through the opposite temptation, are disposed to imagine themselves purified from all imperfection at the very outset of their purgation; who count themselves as full-grown almost before they are born, and seek to fly before they have wings. Be sure, daughter, that these are in great danger of a relapse through having left their physician too soon. "It is but lost labour to rise up early and late take rest," unless the Lord prosper all we do.

The work of the soul's purification neither may nor can end save with life itself;--do not then let us be disheartened by our imperfections,--our very perfection lies in diligently contending against them, and it is impossible so to contend without seeing them, or to overcome without meeting them face toe

face. Our victory does not consist in being insensible to them, but in not consenting to them. Now to be afflicted by our imperfections is certainly not to consent thereto, and for the furtherance of humility it is needful that we sometimes find ourselves worsted in this spiritual battle, wherein, however, we shall never be conquered until we lose either life or courage. Moreover, imperfections and venial sins cannot destroy our spiritual life, which is

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only to be lost through mortal sin; consequently we have only need to watch well that they do not imperil our courage. David continually asks the Lord to strengthen his heart against cowardice and discouragement; and it is our privilege in this war that we are certain to vanquish so long as we are willing to fight.

CHAPTER VI.

The First Purification, namely, from Mortal Sin.

THE first purification to be made is from sin;--the means whereby to make it, the sacrament of penance. Seek the best confessor within your reach, use one of the many little books written in order to help the examination of conscience. ¹ Read some such

book carefully, examining point by point wherein you have sinned, from the first use of your reason to the present time. And if you mistrust your memory, write down the result of your examination.

¹ S. Francis suggests Grenada, Bruno, Arias, Augez, authors little known now, though we have the substance of their teaching in numerous valuable helps for those who are preparing for confession: such as "Pardon through the Precious Blood," "Helps for Confirmation and First Communion" (Masters), "Manual for Confession," "Repentance," (Rev. T. T. Carter), "Hints to Penitents" (Palmer), Brett's "Guide to Faith and Piety," Crake's "Bread of Life" (Mowbray), "Paradise of the Christian Soul," etc.

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Having thus sought out the evil spots in your conscience, strive to detest them, and to reject them with the greatest abhorrence and contrition of which your heart is capable;--bearing in mind these four things:--that by sin you have lost God's Grace, rejected your share in Paradise, accepted the pains of Hell, and renounced God's Eternal Love. You see, my

child, that I am now speaking of a general confession of your whole life, which, while I grant it is not always necessary, I yet believe will be found most helpful in the beginning of your pursuit after holiness, and therefore I earnestly advise you to make it. Not unfrequently the ordinary confessions of persons leading an everyday life are full of great faults, and that because they make little or no preparation, and have not the needful contrition. Owing to this deficiency such people go to confession with a tacit intention of returning to their old sins, inasmuch as they will not avoid the occasions of sin, or take the necessary measures for amendment of life, and in all such cases a general confession is required to steady and fix the soul. But, furthermore, a general confession forces us to a clearer selfknowledge, kindles a wholesome shame for our past life, and rouses gratitude for God's Mercy, Which has so long waited patiently for us;--it comforts the heart, refreshes the spirit, excites

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good resolutions, affords opportunity to our spiritual Father for giving the most

suitable advice, and opens our hearts so as to make future confessions more effectual. Therefore I cannot enter into the subject of a general change of life and entire turning to God, by means of a devout life, without urging upon you to begin with a general confession.

CHAPTER VII.

The Second Purification, from all Sinful Affections.

ALL the children of Israel went forth from the land of Egypt, but not all went forth heartily, and so, when wandering in the desert, some of them sighed after the leeks and onions,--the fleshpots of Egypt. Even so there are penitents who forsake sin, yet without forsaking their sinful affections; that is to say, they intend to sin no more, but it goes sorely against them to abstain from the pleasures of sin;--they formally renounce and forsake sinful acts, but they turn back many a fond lingering look to what they have left, like Lot's wife as she fled from Sodom. They are like a sick man who abstains from eating melon when the doctor says it would kill him, but who all the while longs for

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it, talks about it, bargains when he may have it, would at least

like just to sniff the perfume, and thinks those who are free to eat of it very fortunate. And so these weak cowardly penitents abstain awhile from sin, but reluctantly;- - they would fain be able to sin without incurring damnation;-- they talk with a lingering taste of their sinful deeds, and envy those who are yet indulging in the like. Thus a man who has meditated some revenge gives it up in confession, but soon after he is to be found talking about the quarrel, averring that but for the fear of God he would do this or that; complaining that it is hard to keep the Divine rule of forgiveness; would to God it were lawful to avenge one's self! Who can fail to see that even if this poor man is not actually committing sin, he is altogether bound with the affections thereof, and although he may have come out of Egypt, he yet hungers after it, and longs for the leeks and onions he was wont to feed upon there! It is the same with the woman who, though she has given up her life of sin, yet takes delight in being sought after and admired. Alas! of a truth, all such are in great peril. Be sure, my daughter, that if you seek to lead a devout life, you must not merely forsake sin; but you must further cleanse your

heart from all affections pertaining to sin; for, to say nothing

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of the danger of a relapse, these wretched affections will perpetually enfeeble your mind, and clog it, so that you will be unable to be diligent, ready and frequent in good works, wherein nevertheless lies the very essence of all true devotion. Souls which, in spite of having forsaken sin, yet retain such likings and longings, remind us of those persons who, without being actually ill, are pale and sickly, languid in all they do, eating without appetite, sleeping without refreshment, laughing without mirth, dragging themselves about rather than walking briskly. Such souls as I have described lose all the grace of their good deeds, which are probably few and feeble, through their spiritual languor.

CHAPTER VIII.

How to effect this Second Purification.

THE first inducement to attain this second purification is a keen and lively apprehension of the great evils resulting from sin, by means of which we acquire a deep, hearty contrition. For just as contrition, (so far as it is real,)

however slight, when joined to the virtue of the Sacraments, purges away sin; so, when it

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becomes strong and urgent, it purges away all the affections which cling around habits of sin. A moderate, slight hatred makes men dislike its object and avoid his society; but when a violent, mortal hatred exists, they not only abhor and shun the person who excites it, but they loathe him, they cannot endure the approach of his relations or connexions, nor even his likeness or anything that concerns him. Just so when a penitent only hates sin through a weakly although real contrition, he will resolve to avoid overt acts of sin; but when his contrition is strong and hearty, he will not merely abhor sin, but every affection, every link and tendency to sin. Therefore, my daughter, it behoves us to kindle our contrition and repentance as much as we possibly can, so that it may reach even to the very smallest appearance of sin. Thus it was that the Magdalen, when converted, so entirely lost all taste for her past sin and its pleasures, that she never again cast back one thought upon them; and David declared that he hated

not only sin itself, but every path and way which led thereto. This it is which is that "renewing of the soul" which the same Prophet compares to the eagle's strength.¹ Now, in order to attain this fear and this contrition, you must use the following meditations

¹ Ps. ciii. 5, Bible version.

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carefully; for if you practise them stedfastly, they (by God's Grace) will root out both sin and its affections from your heart. It is to that end that I have prepared them: do you use them one after another, in the order in which they come, only taking one each day, and using that as early as possible, for the morning is the best time for all spiritual exercises;--and then you will ponder and ruminate it through the day. If you have not as yet been taught how to meditate, you will find instructions to that purpose in the Second Part.

CHAPTER IX.

FIRST MEDITATION.

Of Creation.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in the Presence of God.
2. Ask Him to inspire your heart.

Considerations.

1. Consider that but a few years since you were not born into the world, and your soul was as yet non-existent. Where wert thou then, O my soul? the world was already old, and yet of thee there was no sign.

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2. God brought you out of this nothingness, in order to make you what you are, not because He had any need of you, but solely out of His Goodness.

3. Consider the being which God has given you; for it is the foremost being of this visible world, adapted to live eternally, and to be perfectly united to God's Divine Majesty.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Humble yourself utterly before God, saying with the Psalmist, O Lord, I am nothing in respect of Thee--what am I, that Thou shouldst remember me? O my soul, thou wert yet lost in that abyss of nothingness, if God had not called thee forth, and what of thee in such a case?

2. Give God thanks. O Great and Good Creator, what do I not owe Thee, Who didst take me from out that nothingness, by Thy Mercy to make me what I am? How can I ever do enough worthily to praise Thy Holy Name, and render due thanks to Thy Goodness?

3. Confess your own shame. But alas, O my Creator, so far from uniting myself to Thee by a loving service, I have rebelled against Thee through my unruly affections, departing from Thee, and giving myself up to sin, and ignoring Thy Goodness, as though Thou hadst not created me.

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4. Prostrate thyself before God. O my soul, know that the Lord He is thy God, it is He that hath made thee, and not thou thyself. O God, I am the work of Thy Hands; henceforth I will not seek to rest in myself, who am nought. Wherein hast thou to glory, who art but dust and ashes? how canst thou, a very nothing, exalt thyself? In order to my own humiliation, I will do such and such a thing,--I will endure such contempt:--I will alter my ways and henceforth follow my Creator, and realise that I am honoured by His calling me to the being He has given; I will employ it solely to obey His Will, by means of the teaching He has given me, of which I will inquire more through my spiritual Father.

Conclusion.

1. Thank God. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and praise His Holy Name with all thy being, because

His Goodness called me forth from nothingness, and His Mercy created me.

2. Offer. O my God, I offer Thee with all my heart the being Thou hast given me, I dedicate and consecrate it to Thee.

3. Pray. O God, strengthen me in these affections and resolutions. Dear Lord, I commend me, and all those I love, to Thy neverfailing Mercy. OUR FATHER, etc.

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At the end of your meditation linger a while, and gather, so to say, a little spiritual bouquet from the thoughts you have dwelt upon, the sweet perfume whereof may refresh you through the day.

CHAPTER X.

SECOND MEDITATION

Of the End for which we were Created.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself before God.
2. Ask Him to inspire your heart.

Considerations.

1. God did not bring you into the world because He had any need of you, useless as you are; but solely that He might show forth His Goodness in you, giving you His Grace and Glory. And to this end He gave you understanding that you might know Him, memory that you might think of Him, a will that you might love

Him, imagination that you might realise His mercies, sight that you might behold the marvels of His works, speech that you might praise Him, and so on with all your other faculties.

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2. Being created and placed in the world for this intent, all contrary actions should be shunned and rejected, as also you should avoid as idle and superfluous whatever does not promote it.

2. Consider how unhappy they are who do not think of all this,-- who live as though they were created only to build and plant, to heap up riches and amuse themselves with trifles.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Humble yourself in that hitherto you have so little thought upon all this. Alas, my God, of what was I thinking when I did not think of Thee? what did I remember when I forgot Thee? what did I love when I loved Thee not? Alas, when I ought to have been feeding on the truth, I was but filling myself with vanity, and serving the world, which was made to serve me.

2. Abhor your past life. I renounce ye, O vain thoughts and useless cogitations, frivolous and hateful memories: I renounce all

worthless friendships, all unprofitable efforts, and miserably ungrateful self-indulgence, all pitiful compliances.

3. Turn to God. Thou, my God and Saviour shalt henceforth be the sole object of my thoughts; no more will I give my mind to ideas which are displeasing to Thee. All the days of my life I will dwell upon the greatness of Thy

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Goodness, so lovingly poured out upon me. Thou shalt be henceforth the delight of my heart, the resting-place of all my affections. From this time forth I will forsake and abhor the vain pleasures and amusements, the empty pursuits which have absorbed my time;--the unprofitable ties which have bound my heart I will loosen henceforth, and to that end I will use such and such remedies.

Conclusion.

1. Thank God, Who has made you for so gracious an end. Thou hast made me, O Lord, for Thyself, that I may eternally enjoy the immensity of Thy Glory; when shall I be worthy thereof, when shall I know how to bless Thee as I ought?

2. Offer. O Dearest Lord, I offer Thee all my affections and resolutions, with my whole heart and soul.

3. Pray. I entreat Thee, O God, that Thou wouldest accept my desires and longings, and give Thy Blessing to my soul, to enable me to fulfil them, through the Merits of Thy Dear Son's Precious Blood shed upon the Cross for me. OUR FATHER, etc. Gather your little spiritual bouquet.

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CHAPTER XI.

THIRD MEDITATION.

Of the Gifts of God.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in the Presence of God.
2. Ask Him to inspire your heart.

Considerations.

1. Consider the material gifts God has given you--your body, and the means for its preservation; your health, and all that maintains it; your friends and many helps. Consider too how many persons more deserving than you are without these gifts; some suffering in health or limb, others exposed to injury, contempt and trouble, or sunk in poverty, while God has willed you to be better off.
2. Consider the mental gifts He has given you. Why are you not

stupid, idiotic, insane like many you wot of? Again, God has favoured you with a decent and suitable education, while many have grown up in utter ignorance.

3. Further, consider His spiritual gifts. You are a child of His Church, God has taught you to know Himself from your youth. How often has He given you His Sacraments? what inspirations and interior light, what reproofs, He has

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given to lead you aright; how often He has forgiven you, how often delivered you from occasions of falling; what opportunities He has granted for your soul's progress! Dwell somewhat on the detail, see how Loving and Gracious God has been to you.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Marvel at God's Goodness. How good He has been to me, how abundant in mercy and plenteous in loving-kindness! O my soul, be thou ever telling of the great things the Lord has done for thee!

2. Marvel at your own ingratitude. What am I, Lord, that Thou rememberest me? How unworthy am I! I have trodden Thy Mercies under foot, I have abused Thy Grace, turning it

against Thy very Self; I have set the depth of my ingratitude against the deep of Thy Grace and Favour.

3. Kindle your gratitude. O my soul, be no more so faithless and disloyal to thy mighty Benefactor! How should not my whole soul serve the Lord, Who has done such great things in me and for me?

4. Go on, my daughter, to refrain from this or that material indulgence; let your body be wholly the servant of God, Who has done so much for it: set your soul to seek Him by this

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or that devout practice suitable thereto. Make diligent use of the means provided by the Church to help you to love God and save your soul. Resolve to be constant in prayer and seeking the Sacraments, in hearing God's Word, and in obeying His inspirations and counsels.

Conclusion.

1. Thank God for the clearer knowledge He has given you of His benefits and your own duty.

2. Offer your heart and all its resolutions to Him.

3. Ask Him to strengthen you to fulfil them faithfully by the Merits of the Death of His Son.

OUR FATHER, etc. Gather the little spiritual bouquet.

CHAPTER XII.

FOURTH MEDITATION.

On Sin.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in the Presence of God.
2. Ask Him to inspire your heart.

Considerations.

1. Consider how long it is since you first began

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to commit sin, and how since that first beginning sin has multiplied in your heart; how every day has added to the number of your sins against God, against yourself and against your neighbour, by deed, word, thought and desire.

2. Consider your evil tendencies, and how far you have followed them. These two points will show you that your sins are more in number than the hairs of your head, or the sand on the seashore.

3. Apart from sin, consider your ingratitude towards God, which is in itself a sin enfolding all the others, and adding to their enormity: consider the gifts which God has given you, and which you have turned against the Giver; especially the inspirations you have neglected, and the promptings to good which you have frustrated.

Review the many Sacraments you have received, and see where are their fruits. Where are the precious jewels wherewith your Heavenly Bridegroom decked you? with what preparation have you received them? Reflect upon the ingratitude with which, while God sought to save you, you have fled from Him and rushed upon destruction.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Humble yourself in your wretchedness. O my God, how dare I come before Thine Eyes?

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I am but a corrupt being, a very sink of ingratitude and wickedness. Can it be that I have been so disloyal, that not one sense, not one faculty but has been sullied and stained;--not one day has passed but I have sinned before Thee? Was this a fitting return for all my Creator's gifts, for my Redeemer's Blood?

2. Ask pardon;--throw yourself at the Lord's Feet as the prodigal son, as the Magdalene, as the woman convicted of adultery. Have mercy, Lord, on me a sinner! O Living Fountain of Mercy, have pity on me, unworthy as I am.

3. Resolve to do better. Lord, with the help of Thy Grace I will never again give myself up to

sin. I have loved it too well;-- henceforth I would abhor it and cleave to Thee. Father of Mercy, I would live and die to Thee.

4. In order to put away past sin, accuse yourself bravely of it, let there not be one sinful act which you do not bring to light.

5. Resolve to make every effort to tear up the roots of sin from your heart, especially this and that individual sin which troubles you most.

6. In order to do this, resolve stedfastly to follow the advice given you, and never think that you have done enough to atone for your past sin.

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Conclusion.

1. Thank God for having waited till now for you, and for rousing these good intentions in your heart.

2. Offer Him all your heart to carry them to good effect.

3. Pray that He would strengthen you.

CHAPTER XIII.

FIFTH MEDITATION.

Of Death.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in the Presence of God. 2. Ask His Grace. 3. Suppose yourself to be on your deathbed, in the last extremity, without the smallest hope of recovery.

Considerations.

1. Consider the uncertainty as to the day of your death. One day your soul will quit this body-- will it be in summer or winter? in town or country? by day or by night? will it be suddenly or with warning? will it be owing to sickness or an accident? will you have time to make your last confession or not? will your

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confessor or spiritual father be at hand or will he not? Alas, of all these things we know absolutely nothing: all that we do know is that die we shall, and for the most part sooner than we expect.

2. Consider that then the world is at end as far as you are concerned, there will be no more of it for you, it will be altogether overthrown for you, since all pleasures, vanities, worldly joys, empty delights will be as a mere fantastic vision to you. Woe is me, for what mere trifles and unrealities I have ventured to offend my God? Then you will see that what we preferred to Him was nought. But, on the other hand, all devotion and good works will then seem so precious and so sweet:--Why did I not tread that pleasant path? Then what you thought to be little sins will look like huge mountains,

and your devotion will seem but a very little thing.

3. Consider the universal farewell which your soul will take of this world. It will say farewell to riches, pleasures, and idle companions; to amusements and pastimes, to friends and neighbours, to husband, wife and child, in short to all creation. And lastly it will say farewell to its own body, which it will leave pale and cold, to become repulsive in decay.

4. Consider how the survivors will hasten to put that body away, and hide it beneath the

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earth--and then the world will scarce give you another thought, or remember you, any more than you have done to those already gone. "God rest his soul!" men will say, and that is all. O death, how pitiless, how hard thou art!

5. Consider that when it quits the body the soul must go at once to the right hand or the left. To which will your soul go? what side will it take? none other, be sure, than that to which it had voluntarily drawn while yet in this world.

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Pray to God, and throw yourself into His Arms. O Lord, be Thou my stay in that day of

anguish! May that hour be blessed and favourable to me, if all the rest of my life be full of sadness and trial.

2. Despise the world. Forasmuch as I know not the hour in which I must quit the world, I will not grow fond of it. O dear friends, beloved ones of my heart, be content that I cleave to you only with a holy friendship which may last for ever; why should I cling to you with a tie which must needs be broken?

I will prepare for the hour of death and take every precaution for its peaceful arrival; I will thoroughly examine into the state of my conscience, and put in order whatever is wanting.

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Conclusion.

Thank God for inspiring you with these resolutions: offer them to His Majesty: intreat Him anew to grant you a happy death by the Merits of His Dear Son's Death. Ask the prayers of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints. OUR FATHER, etc.

Gather a bouquet of myrrh.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIXTH MEDITATION.

On Judgment.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in the Presence of God.
2. Intreat Him to inspire you.

Considerations.

1. When the time comes which God has appointed for the end of this world, and after many terrible signs and warnings, which will overwhelm men with fear,--the whole earth will be destroyed, and nothing then left.
2. Afterwards, all men, save those already risen, shall rise from the dead, and at the voice

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of the Archangel appear in the valley of Jehoshaphat. But alas, with what divers aspects! for some will be glorious and shining, others horrible and ghastly.

3. Consider the majesty with which the Sovereign Judge will appear surrounded by all His Saints and Angels; His Cross, the Sign of Grace to the good and of terror to the evil, shining brighter than the sun.
4. This Sovereign Judge will with His awful word, instantly fulfilled, separate the evil and the good, setting the one on His Right Hand, the other on His Left--an eternal separation, for they will never meet again.
5. This separation made, the books of conscience will be opened, and all men will behold the malice of the wicked, and how they have contemned God;

as also the penitence of the good, and the results of the grace they received. Nothing will be hid. O my God, what confusion to the one, what rejoicing to the other! Consider the final sentence of the wicked. "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Dwell upon these awful words. "Go," He says--for ever discarding these wretched sinners, banishing them for ever from His Presence. He calls them "cursed:" O my soul, what a curse: a curse involving all other maledictions,

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all possible evil, an irrevocable curse, including all time and eternity; condemning them to everlasting fire. Think what that eternity of suffering implies.

6. Then consider the sentence of the good. "Come," the Judge says--O blessed loving word with which God draws us to Himself and receives us in His Bosom. "Blessed of My Father"--O blessing above all blessings! "inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the beginning of the world." O my God, and that Kingdom will know no end!

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Tremble, my soul, at the thought. O God, who will be my

stay in that hour when the pillars of the earth are shaken?

2. Abhor your sins, which alone can cause you to be lost when that fearful day comes. Surely I will judge myself now, that I be not judged;--I will examine my conscience, accuse, condemn, punish myself, that the Judge may not condemn me then. I will confess my faults, and follow the counsels given me.

Conclusion.

Thank God for having given you means of safety in that terrible Day, and time for repentance.

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Offer Him your heart, and ask for grace to use it well. OUR FATHER, etc.
Gather your bouquet.

CHAPTER XV.

SEVENTH MEDITATION.

Of Hell.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in God's Presence.
2. Humble yourself, and ask His Aid.
3. Picture to yourself a dark city, reeking with the flames of sulphur and brimstone, inhabited by citizens who cannot get forth.

Considerations.

1. Even so the lost are plunged in their infernal abyss;--suffering indescribable torture in every sense and every member; and

that because having used their members and senses for sin, it is just that through them they should suffer now. Those eyes which delighted in impure vicious sights, now behold devils; the ears which took pleasure in unholy words, now are deafened with yells of despair;--and so on with the other senses.

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2. Beyond all these sufferings, there is one greater still, the privation and pain of loss of God's Glory, which is for ever denied to their vision. If Absalom cared not to be released from exile, if he might not see his father's face,¹ how much sorer will it be to be deprived for ever of the blessed vision of God?
3. Consider how insupportable the pains of Hell will be by reason of their eternal duration. If the irritating bite of an insect, or the restlessness of fever, makes an ordinary night seem so long and tedious, how terrible will the endless night of eternity be, where nought will be found save despair, blasphemy and fury!

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Read the Prophet's descriptions of the terrors of the Lord,² and ask your soul whether it can face them--whether you

can bear to lose your God for ever?

2. Confess that you have repeatedly deserved to do so. Resolve henceforth to act differently, and to rescue yourself from this abyss. Resolve on distinct definite acts by which you may avoid sin, and thereby eternal death. Give thanks, offer yourself, pray.

¹ 2. Sam. xiv. 32. ² Isa. xxxiii. 14. "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?"

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CHAPTER XVI.

EIGHTH MEDITATION.

On Paradise.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in the Presence of God.
2. Invoke His Aid.

Considerations.

1. Represent to yourself a lovely calm night, when the heavens are bright with innumerable stars: add to the beauty of such a night the utmost beauty of a glorious summer's day,-- the sun's brightness not hindering the clear shining of moon or stars, and then be sure that it all falls immeasurably short of the glory of Paradise. O bright and blessed

country, O sweet and precious place!

2. Consider the beauty and perfection of the countless inhabitants of that blessed country;-- the millions and millions of angels, Cherubim and Seraphim; the glorious company of Apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, and saints. O blessed company, any one single member ~~of which surpasses all the glory~~ of this world, what will it be to behold them all, to sing with

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them the sweet Song of the Lamb? They rejoice with a perpetual joy, they share a bliss unspeakable, and unchangeable delights.

3. Consider how they enjoy the Presence of God, Who fills them with the richness of His Vision, which is a perfect ocean of delight; the joy of being for ever united to their Head. They are like happy birds, hovering and singing for ever within the atmosphere of divinity, which fills them with inconceivable pleasures. There each one vies without jealousy in singing the praises of the Creator. "Blessed art Thou for ever, O Dear and Precious Lord and Redeemer, Who dost so freely give us of Thine Own Glory," they cry; and He in His turn pours out His

ceaseless Blessing on His Saints.
"Blessed are ye,--Mine own for
ever, who have served Me
faithfully, and with a good
courage."

Affections and Resolutions.

1. Admire and rejoice in the
Heavenly Country; the glorious
and blessed New Jerusalem.
2. Reprove the coldness of your
own heart for having hitherto so
little sought after that glorious
abode. Why have I so long
lingered indifferent to the eternal
happiness set before me? Woe is
me that, for the sake of poor
savourless earthly things, I have
so often forgotten those heavenly

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delights. How could I neglect
such real treasures for mere vain
and contemptible earthly
matters?

3. Aspire earnestly after that
blessed abode. Forasmuch, O
Dear Lord, as Thou hast been
pleased to turn my feet into Thy
ways, never will I again look
back. Go forth, my soul, towards
thy promised rest, journey
unweariedly to that hoped-for
land; wherefore shouldest thou
tarry in Egypt?
4. Resolve to give up such and
such things, which hinder you on
the way, and to do such others as
will help you thitherwards.

Give thanks, offer, pray.

CHAPTER XVII.

NINTH MEDITATION.

On the Choice upon to you
between Heaven and Hell.

Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in the
Presence of God.
2. Humble yourself before Him,
and ask His inspiration.

Considerations.

1. Imagine yourself alone with
your good angel

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in an open plain, as was Tobit on
his way to Rages. Suppose the
Angel to set before you Paradise,
full of delights and joys; and on
the other hand Hell, with all its
torments. Contemplate both,
kneeling in imagination before
your guardian Angel. Consider
that you are most truly standing
between Hell and Paradise, and
that both the one and the other
are open to receive you,
according to your own choice.

2. Consider that the choice you
make in this life will last for ever
in the next.
3. Consider too, that while both
are open to receive you
according to your choice, yet
God, Who is prepared to give the
one by reason of His Justice, the
other by reason of His Mercy, all
the while desires unspeakably

that you should select Paradise; and your good Angel is urging you with all his might to do so, offering you countless graces on God's part, countless helps to attain to it.

4. Consider that Jesus Christ, enthroned in Heaven, looks down upon you in loving invitation: "O beloved one, come unto Me, and joy for ever in the eternal blessedness of My Love!" Behold His mother yearning over you with maternal tenderness--" Courage, my child, do not despise the Goodness of my Son, or my earnest prayers for thy salvation." Behold the Saints, who have left you their example, the

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millions of holy souls who long after you, desiring earnestly that you may one day be for ever joined to them in their song of praise, urging upon you that the road to Heaven is not so hard to find as the world would have you think. "Press on boldly, dear friend,"--they cry. "Whoso will ponder well the path by which we came hither, will discover that we attained to these present delights by sweeter joys than any this world can give."

The Choice.

1. O Hell, I abhor thee now and for ever; I abhor thy griefs and torments, thine endless misery, the unceasing blasphemies and maledictions which thou pourest out upon my God;--and turning to thee, O blessed Paradise, eternal glory, unfading happiness, I choose thee for ever as my abode, thy glorious mansions, thy precious and abiding tabernacles. O my God, I bless Thy Mercy which gives me the power to choose--O Jesus, Saviour, I accept Thine Eternal Love, and praise Thee for the promise Thou hast given me of a place prepared for me in that blessed New Jerusalem, where I shall love and bless Thee for ever.

2. Dwell lovingly upon the example set before you by the Blessed Virgin and the Saints, and strive to follow where they point you. Give

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yourself up to your guardian Angel, that he may be your guide, and gird up your courage anew to make this choice.

CHAPTER XVIII.

TENTH MEDITATION.

How the Soul chooses the
Devout Life.
Preparation.

1. PLACE yourself in the Presence of God.
2. Humble yourself before Him, and ask His Aid.

Considerations.

1. Once more imagine yourself in an open plain, alone with your guardian Angel, and represent to yourself on the left hand the Devil sitting on a high and mighty throne, surrounded by a vast troop of worldly men, who bow bareheaded before him, doing homage to him by the various sins they commit. Study the countenances of the miserable courtiers of that most abominable king:--some raging with fury, envy and passion, some murderous in their hatred;--others pale and haggard in their craving after wealth, or madly pursuing every vain and profitless pleasure;--others sunk and lost in vile, impure

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affections. See how all alike are hateful, restless, wild: see how they despise one another, and only pretend to an unreal self-seeking love. Such is the miserable reign of the abhorred Tyrant.

2. On the other hand, behold Jesus Christ Crucified, calling these unhappy wretches to come to Him, and interceding for them

with all the Love of His Precious Heart. Behold the company of devout souls and their guardian Angels, contemplate the beauty of this religious Kingdom. What lovelier than the troop of virgin souls, men and women, pure as lilies:-- widows in their holy desolation and humility; husbands and wives living in all tender love and mutual cherishing. See how such pious souls know how to combine their exterior and interior duties;--to love the earthly spouse without diminishing their devotion to the Heavenly Bridegroom. Look around--one and all you will see them with loving, holy, gentle countenances listening to the Voice of their Lord, all seeking to enthrone Him more and more within their hearts.

They rejoice, but it is with a peaceful, loving, sober joy; they love, but their love is altogether holy and pure. Such among these devout ones as have sorrows to bear, are not disheartened thereby, and do not grieve overmuch, for their

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Saviour's Eye is upon them to comfort them, and they all seek Him only.

3. Surely you have altogether renounced Satan with his weary

miserable troop, by the good resolutions you have made;--but nevertheless you have not yet wholly attained to the King Jesus, or altogether joined His blessed company of devout ones:--you have hovered betwixt the two.

4. The Blessed Virgin, S. Joseph, S. Louis, S. Monica, and hundreds of thousands more who were once like you, living in the world, call upon you and encourage you.

5. The Crucified King Himself calls you by your own name: "Come, O my beloved, come, and let Me crown thee!"

The Choice.

1. O world, O vile company, never will I enlist beneath thy banner; for ever I have forsaken thy flatteries and deceptions. O proud king, monarch of evil, infernal spirit, I renounce thee and all thy hollow pomp, I detest thee and all thy works.

2. And turning to Thee, O Sweet Jesus, King of blessedness and of eternal glory, I cleave to Thee with all the powers of my soul, I adore Thee with all my heart, I choose Thee now and ever for my King, and with inviolable fidelity I

would offer my irrevocable

service, and submit myself to Thy holy laws and ordinances.

3. O Blessed Virgin Mother of God, you shall be my example, I will follow you with all reverence and respect.

O my good Angel, bring me to this heavenly company, leave me not until I have reached them, with whom I will sing for ever, in testimony of my choice, "Glory be to Jesus, my Lord!"

CHAPTER XIX.

How to make a General Confession.

SUCH meditations as these, my daughter, will help you, and having made them, go on bravely in the spirit of humility to make your general confession;--but I entreat you, be not troubled by any sort of fearfulness. The scorpion who stings us is venomous, but when his oil has been distilled, it is the best remedy for his bite;--even so sin is shameful when we commit it, but when reduced to repentance and confession, it becomes salutary and honourable.

Contrition and confession are in themselves so lovely and sweet-savoured, that they efface the ugliness and disperse the ill savour of sin. Simon the leper called Magdalene a sinner,¹ but

¹ S. Mark xiv. and S. Luke vii.
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our Lord turned the discourse to the perfume of her ointment and the greatness of her love. If we are really humble, my daughter, our sins will be infinitely displeasing to us, because they offend God;--but it will be welcome and sweet to accuse ourselves thereof because in so doing we honour God; and there is always somewhat soothing in fully telling the physician all details of our pain.

When you come to your spiritual father, imagine yourself to be on Mount Calvary, at the Feet of the Crucified Saviour, Whose Precious Blood is dropping freely to cleanse you from all your sin. Though it is not his actual Blood, yet it is the merit of that outpoured Blood which is sprinkled over His penitents as they kneel in Confession. Be sure then that you open your heart fully, and put away your sins by confessing them, for in proportion as they are put out, so will the Precious Merits of the Passion of Christ come in and fill you with blessings. Tell everything simply and with straightforwardness, and thoroughly satisfy your

conscience in doing so. Then listen to the admonitions and counsels of God's Minister, saying in your heart, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." It is truly God to Whom you hearken, forasmuch as He has said to His representatives, "Whoso

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heareth you, heareth Me." ¹ Then take the following protest, as a summary of your contrition, having carefully studied and meditated upon it beforehand: read it through with as earnest an intention as you can make.

CHAPTER XX.

A hearty Protest made with the object of confirming the Soul's resolution to serve God, as a conclusion to its acts of Penitence.

I, THE undersigned,--in the Presence of God and of all the company of Heaven, having considered the Infinite Mercy of His Heavenly Goodness towards me, a most miserable, unworthy creature, whom He has created, preserved, sustained, delivered from so many dangers, and filled with so many blessings: having above all considered the incomprehensible mercy and loving-kindness with which this most Good God has borne with

me in my sinfulness, leading me so tenderly to repentance, and waiting so patiently for me till this-- (present) year of my life, notwithstanding all my ingratitude, disloyalty and faithlessness, by which I have delayed turning to Him, and despising His Grace, have offended Him anew: and

¹ S. Luke x. 16.

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further, remembering that in my Baptism I was solemnly and happily dedicated to God as His child, and that in defiance of the profession then made in my name, I have so often miserably profaned my gifts, turning them against God's Divine Majesty:--I, now coming to myself prostrate in heart and soul before the Throne of His Justice, acknowledge and confess that I am duly accused and convicted of treason against His Majesty, and guilty of the Death and Passion of Jesus Christ, by reason of the sins I have committed, for which He died, bearing the reproach of the Cross; so that I deserve nothing else save eternal damnation. But turning to the Throne of Infinite Mercy of this Eternal God, detesting the sins of my

past life with all my heart and all my strength, I humbly desire and ask grace, pardon, and mercy, with entire absolution from my sin, in virtue of the Death and Passion of that same Lord and Redeemer, on Whom I lean as the only ground of my hope. I renew the sacred promise of faithfulness to God made in my ~~name at my Baptism; renouncing~~ the devil, the world, and the flesh, abhorring their accursed suggestions, vanities and lusts, now and for all eternity. And turning to a Loving and Pitiful God, I desire, intend, and deliberately resolve to serve and love Him now and eternally, devoting my

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mind and all its faculties, my soul and all its powers, my heart and all its affections, my body and all its senses, to His Will. I resolve never to misuse any part of my being by opposing His Divine Will and Sovereign Majesty, to which I wholly immolate myself in intention, vowing ever to be His loyal, obedient and faithful servant without any change or recall. But if unhappily, through the promptings of the enemy, or human infirmity, I should in anywise fail in this my resolution

and dedication, I do most earnestly resolve by the grace of the Holy Spirit to rise up again so soon as I shall perceive my fall, and turn anew, without any delay, to seek His Divine Mercy. This is my firm will and intention,--my inviolable, irrevocable resolution, which I make and confirm without any reserve, in the Holy Presence of God, in the sight of the Church triumphant, and before the Church militant, which is my mother, who accepts this my declaration, in the person of him who, as her representative, hears me make it. Be pleased, O Eternal, All-Powerful, and All-Loving God,-- Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to confirm me in this my resolution, and accept my hearty and willing offering. And inasmuch as Thou hast been pleased to inspire me with the will to make it, give me also the needful strength and grace to keep it. O God, Thou art my God, the

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God of my heart, my soul, and spirit, and as such I acknowledge and adore Thee, now and for all eternity. Glory be to Jesus. Amen.

CHAPTER XXI.

Conclusion of this First Purification.

HAVING made this resolution, wait attentively, and open the ears of your heart, that you may in spirit hear the absolution which the Lord of your soul, sitting on the throne of His Mercy, will speak in Heaven before the Saints and Angels when His Priest absolves you here below in His Name. Be sure that all that company of blessed ones rejoice in your joy, and sing a song of untold gladness, embracing you and accepting you as cleansed and sanctified. Of a truth, my daughter, this is a marvellous deed, and a most blessed bargain for you, inasmuch as giving yourself to His Divine Majesty, you gain Him, and save yourself for eternal life. No more remains to do, save to take the pen and heartily sign your protest, and then hasten to the Altar, where God on His side will sign and seal your absolution, and His promise of Paradise, giving Himself to you in His Sacrament, as a sacred seal placed upon your renewed heart. And thus, dear child,

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your soul will be cleansed from

sin, and from all its affections. But forasmuch as these affections are easily rekindled, thanks to our infirmity and concupiscence (which maybe mortified, but which can never be altogether extinguished while we live), I will give you certain counsels by the practice of which you may henceforth avoid mortal sin, and the affections pertaining thereto. And as these counsels will also help you to attain a yet more perfect purification, before giving them, I would say somewhat concerning that absolute perfection to which I seek to lead you.

CHAPTER XXII.

The Necessity of Purging away all tendency to Venial Sins.

AS daylight waxes, we, gazing into a mirror, see more plainly the soils and stains upon our face; and even so as the interior light of the Holy Spirit enlightens our conscience, we see more distinctly the sins, inclinations and imperfections which hinder our progress towards real devotion. And the selfsame light which shows us these blots and stains, kindles in us the desire to be cleansed and purged therefrom.

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You will find then, my child, that besides the mortal sins and their

affections from which your soul has already been purged, you are beset by sundry inclinations and tendencies to venial sin; mind, I do not say you will find venial sins, but the inclination and tendency to them. Now, one is quite different from the other. We can never be altogether free from venial sin,--at least not until after a very long persistence in this purity; but we can be without any affection for venial sin. It is altogether one thing to have said something unimportant not strictly true, out of carelessness or liveliness, and quite a different matter to take pleasure in lying, and in the habitual practice thereof. But I tell you that you must purify your soul from all inclination to venial sin;--that is to say, you must not voluntarily retain any deliberate intention of permitting yourself to commit any venial sin whatever. It would be most unworthy consciously to admit anything so displeasing to God, as the will to offend Him in anywise. Venial sin, however small, is displeasing to God, although it be not so displeasing as the greater sins which involve eternal condemnation; and if venial sin is displeasing to Him, any clinging which we tolerate to mortal sin is nothing less than a resolution to offend His Divine

Majesty. Is it really possible that
a rightly disposed soul

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can not only offend God, but take
pleasure therein?

These inclinations, my daughter,
are in direct opposition to
devotion, as inclinations to
mortal sin are to love:--they
weaken the mental power, hinder
Divine consolations, and open
the door to temptations;--and
although they may not destroy
the soul, at least they bring on
very serious disease. "Dead flies
cause the ointment to send forth a
stinking savour," says the Wise
Man.¹ He means that the flies
which settle upon and taste of the
ointment only damage it
temporarily, leaving the mass
intact, but if they fall into it, and
die there, they spoil and corrupt
it. Even so venial sins which pass
over a devout soul without being
harboured, do not permanently
injure it, but if such sins are
fostered and cherished, they
destroy the sweet savour of that
soul--that is to say, its devotion.
The spider cannot kill bees, but it
can spoil their honey, and so
encumber their combs with its
webs in course of time, as to
hinder the bees materially. Just
so, though venial sins may not
lose the soul, they will spoil its

devotion, and so cumber its
faculties with bad habits and evil
inclinations, as to deprive it of all
that cheerful readiness which is
the very essence of true devotion;
that is to say, if they are
harboured

¹ Eccles. x. 1.

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in the conscience by delight
taken therein. A trifling
inaccuracy, a little hastiness in
word or action, some small
excess in mirth, in dress, in
gaiety, may not be very
important, if these are forthwith
heeded and swept out as spiritual
cobwebs;--but if they are
permitted to linger in the heart,
or, worse still, if we take pleasure
in them and indulge them, our
honey will soon be spoilt, and the
hive of our conscience will be
cumbered and damaged. But I
ask again, how can a generous
heart take delight in anything it
knows to be displeasing to its
God, or wish to do what offends
Him?

CHAPTER XXIII.

*It is needful to put away all
Inclination for Useless and
Dangerous Things.*

SPORTS, balls, plays, festivities,
pomps, are not in themselves
evil, but rather indifferent

matters, capable of being used for good or ill; but nevertheless they are dangerous, and it is still more dangerous to take great delight in them. Therefore, my daughter, I say that although it is lawful to amuse yourself, to dance, dress, feast, and see seemingly plays,--at the same time, if you are much addicted to these things, they will hinder your devotion, and become

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extremely hurtful and dangerous to you. The harm lies, not in doing them, but in the degree to which you care for them. It is a pity to sow the seed of vain and foolish tastes in the soil of your heart, taking up the place of better things, and hindering the soul from cultivating good dispositions. It was thus that the Nazarites of old abstained not merely from all intoxicating liquors, but from grapes fresh or dried, and from vinegar, not because these were intoxicating, but because they might excite the desire for fermented liquors. Just so, while I do not forbid the use of these dangerous pleasures, I say that you cannot take an excessive delight in them without their telling upon your devotion. When the stag has waxed fat he hides himself amid the thicket,

conscious that his fleetness is impaired should he be in need to fly: and so the human heart which is cumbered with useless, superfluous, dangerous clingings becomes incapacitated for that earnest following after God which is the true life of devotion. No one blames children for running after butterflies, because they are children, but is it not ridiculous and pitiful to see full-grown men eager about such worthless trifles as the worldly amusements before named, which are likely to throw them off their balance and disturb their spiritual life? Therefore, dear child, I would have you cleanse

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your heart from all such tastes, remembering that while the acts themselves are not necessarily incompatible with a devout life, all delight in them must be harmful.

CHAPTER XXIV.

All Evil Inclinations must be purged away.

FURTHERMORE, my daughter, we have certain natural inclinations, which are not strictly speaking either mortal or venial sins, but rather imperfections; and the acts in which they take shape, failings and deficiencies. Thus S. Jerome

says that S. Paula had so strong a tendency to excessive sorrow, that when she lost her husband and children she nearly died of grief: that was not a sin, but an imperfection, since it did not depend upon her wish and will. Some people are naturally easy, some oppositions; some are indisposed to accept other men's opinions, some naturally disposed to be cross, some to be affectionate--in short, there is hardly any one in whom some such imperfections do not exist. Now, although they be natural and instinctive in each person, they may be remedied and corrected, or even eradicated, by cultivating the reverse disposition.

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And this, my child, must be done. Gardeners have found how to make the bitter almond tree bear sweet fruit, by grafting the juice of the latter upon it, why should we not purge out our perverse dispositions and infuse such as are good? There is no disposition so good but it may be made bad by dint of vicious habits, and neither is there any natural disposition so perverse but that it may be conquered and overcome by God's Grace primarily, and then by our

earnest diligent endeavour. I shall therefore now proceed to give you counsels and suggest practices by which you may purify your soul from all dangerous affections and imperfections, and from all tendencies to venial sin, thereby strengthening yourself more and more against mortal sin. May God give you grace to use them.

PART II.

CONTAINING SUNDRY COUNSELS AS TO UPLIFTING THE SOUL TO GOD IN PRAYER AND THE USE OF THE SACRAMENTS.

CHAPTER I.

The Necessity of Prayer.

1. PRAYER opens the understanding to the brightness of Divine Light, and the will to the warmth of Heavenly Love--nothing can so effectually purify the mind from its many ignorances, or the will from its perverse affections. It is as a healing water which causes the roots of our good desires to send forth fresh shoots, which washes away the soul's imperfections, and allays the thirst of passion.

2. But especially I commend earnest mental prayer to you, more particularly such as bears upon the Life and Passion of our Lord. If you contemplate Him

frequently in meditation, your whole soul will be filled with Him, you will

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grow in His Likeness, and your actions will be moulded on His. He is the Light of the world; therefore in Him, by Him, and for Him we shall be enlightened and illuminated; He is the Tree of Life, beneath the shadow of which we must find rest;--He is the Living Fountain of Jacob's well, wherein we may wash away every stain. Children learn to speak by hearing their mother talk, and stammering forth their childish sounds in imitation; and so if we cleave to the Savior in meditation, listening to His words, watching His actions and intentions, we shall learn in time, through His Grace, to speak, act and will like Himself. Believe me, my daughter, there is no way to God save through this door. Just as the glass of a mirror would give no reflection save for the metal behind it, so neither could we here below contemplate the Godhead, were it not united to the Sacred Humanity of our Saviour, Whose Life and Death are the best, sweetest and most profitable subjects that we can possibly select for meditation. It is not without meaning that the

Saviour calls Himself the Bread come down from Heaven;--just as we eat bread with all manner of other food, so we need to meditate and feed upon our Dear Lord in every prayer and action. His Life has been meditated and written about by various authors. I should specially commend

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to you the writings of S. Bonaventura, Bellintani, Bruno, Capilla, Grenada and Da Ponte.¹

3. Give an hour every day to meditation before dinner;--if you can, let it be early in the morning, when your mind will be less cumbered, and fresh after the night's rest. Do not spend more than an hour thus, unless specially advised to do so by your spiritual father.
4. If you can make your meditation quietly in church, it will be well, and no one, father or mother, husband or wife, can object to an hour spent there, and very probably you could not secure a time so free from interruption at home.
5. Begin all prayer, whether mental or vocal, by an act of the Presence of God. If you observe this rule strictly, you will soon see how useful it is.
6. It may help you to say the Creed, Lord's Prayer, etc., in

Latin, but you should also study them diligently in your own language, so as thoroughly to gather up the meaning of these holy words, which must be used fixing your thoughts steadily on their purport, not striving to say many words so much as seeking to say a few with your whole heart. One Our Father

¹ S. Bonaventura, Louis of Grenada, and Da Ponte's works are still available and are admirable helps to meditation. Among more modern works might be suggested Isaac Williams on the Passion, Avrillon's Lent Guide, &c. &c.

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said devoutly is worth more than many prayers hurried over. 7. The Rosary is a useful devotion when rightly used, and there are various little books to teach this. It is well, too, to say pious Litanies, and the other vocal prayers appointed for the Hours and found in Manuals of devotion,--but if you have a gift for mental prayer, let that always take the chief place, so that if, having made that, you are hindered by business or any other cause from saying your wonted vocal prayers, do not be disturbed, but rest satisfied with

saying the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation, and the Creed after your meditation.

8. If, while saying vocal prayers, your heart feels drawn to mental prayer, do not resist it, but calmly let your mind fall into that channel, without troubling because you have not finished your appointed vocal prayers.

~~The mental prayer you have~~
substituted for them is more acceptable to God, and more profitable to your soul. I should make an exception of the Church's Offices, if you are bound to say those by your vocation--in such a case these are your duty.

9. If it should happen that your morning goes by without the usual meditation, either owing to a pressure of business, or from any other cause, (which interruptions you should try

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to prevent as far as possible,) try to repair the loss in the afternoon, but not immediately after a meal, or you will perhaps be drowsy, which is bad both for your meditation and your health. But if you are unable all day to make up for the omission, you must remedy it as far as may be by ejaculatory prayer, and by reading some spiritual book,

together with an act of penitence for the neglect, together with a stedfast resolution to do better the next day.

CHAPTER II.

A short Method of Meditation. And first, the Presence of God, the First Point of Preparation.

IT may be, my daughter, that you do not know how to practise mental prayer, for unfortunately it is a thing much neglected nowadays. I will therefore give you a short and easy method for using it, until such time as you may read sundry books written on the subject, and above all till practice teaches you how to use it more perfectly. And first of all, the Preparation, which consists of two points: first, placing yourself in the Presence of God; and second, asking His Aid. And in order to place your

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self in the Presence of God, I will suggest four chief considerations which you can use at first. First, a lively earnest realisation that His Presence is universal; that is to say, that He is everywhere, and in all, and that there is no place, nothing in the world, devoid of His Most Holy Presence, so that, even as birds on the wing meet the air continually, we, let us go where

we will, meet with that Presence always and everywhere. It is a truth which all are ready to grant, but all are not equally alive to its importance. A blind man when in the presence of his prince will preserve a reverential demeanour if told that the king is there, although unable to see him; but practically, what men do not see they easily forget, and so readily lapse into carelessness and irreverence. Just so, my child, we do not see our God, and although faith warns us that He is present, not beholding Him with our mortal eyes, we are too apt to forget Him, and act as though He were afar: for, while knowing perfectly that He is everywhere, if we do not think about it, it is much as though we knew it not. And therefore, before beginning to pray, it is needful always to rouse the soul to a stedfast remembrance and thought of the Presence of God. This is what David meant when he exclaimed, "If I climb up to Heaven, Thou art there, and if I go

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down to hell, Thou art there also!"¹ And in like manner Jacob, who, beholding the ladder which went up to Heaven, cried out, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I knew it not"²

meaning thereby that he had not thought of it; for assuredly he could not fail to know that God was everywhere and in all things. Therefore, when you make ready to pray, you must say with your whole heart, "God is indeed here."

The second way of placing yourself in this Sacred Presence is to call to mind that God is not only present in the place where you are, but that He is very specially present in your heart and mind, which He kindles and inspires with His Holy Presence, abiding there as Heart of your heart, Spirit of your spirit. Just as the soul animates the whole body, and every member thereof, but abides especially in the heart, so God, while present everywhere, yet makes His special abode with our spirit. Therefore David calls Him "the Strength of my heart;"³ and S. Paul said that in Him "we live and move and have our being."⁴ Dwell upon this thought until you have kindled a great reverence within your heart for God Who is so closely present to you.

The third way is to dwell upon the thought of our Lord, Who in His Ascended Humanity looks

¹ Ps. cxxxix. 7. ² Gen. xxviii. 16.

³ Ps. lxxiii. 26. ⁴ Acts xvii. 28.

down upon all men, but most particularly on all Christians, because they are His children; above all, on those who pray, over whose doings He keeps watch. Nor is this any mere imagination, it is very truth, and although we see Him not, He is looking down upon us. It was given to S. Stephen in the hour of martyrdom thus to behold Him, and we may well say with the Bride of the Canticles, "He looketh forth at the windows, shewing Himself through the lattice."¹

The fourth way is simply to exercise your ordinary imagination, picturing the Saviour to yourself in His Sacred Humanity as if He were beside you just as we are wont to think of our friends, and fancy that we see or hear them at our side. But when the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar is there, then this Presence is no longer imaginary, but most real; and the sacred species are but as a veil from behind which the Present Saviour beholds and considers us, although we cannot see Him as He is.

Make use of one or other of these methods for placing yourself in the Presence of God before you begin to pray;--do not try to use them all at once, but take one at a time, and that briefly and simply.

¹ Cant. ii. 9.

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CHAPTER III.

Invocation, the Second Point of Preparation.

INVOCATION is made as follows: your soul, having realised God's Presence, will prostrate itself with the utmost reverence, acknowledging its unworthiness to abide before His Sovereign Majesty; and yet knowing that He of His Goodness would have you come to Him, you must ask of Him grace to serve and worship Him in this your meditation. You may use some such brief and earnest words as those of David: "Cast me not away from Thy Presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me." ¹ "Shew me Thy Ways, O Lord, and teach me Thy paths." ² "Give me understanding, and I shall keep Thy Law: yea, I shall keep it with my whole heart." ³ "I am Thy servant, O grant me understanding." ⁴ Dwell too upon the thought of your guardian Angel, and of the Saints connected with the special

mystery you are considering, as the Blessed Virgin, S. John, the Magdalene, the good thief, etc., if you are meditating in the Passion, so that you may share in their devout feelings and intention, and in the same way with other subjects.

¹ Ps. li. 11. ² Ps. xxv. 4. ³ Ps. cxix. 34. ⁴ Ps. cxix. 125.

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CHAPTER IV.

The Third Point of Preparation, representing the Mystery to be meditated to Your Imagination.

FOLLOWING upon these two ordinary points, there ere is a third, which is not necessary to all meditation, called by some the local representation, and by others the interior picture. It is simply kindling a vivid picture of the mystery to be meditated within your imagination, even as though you were actually beholding it. For instance, if you wish to meditate upon our Lord on His Cross, you will place yourself in imagination on Mount Calvary, as though you saw and heard all that occurred there during the Passion; or you can imagine to yourself all that the Evangelists describe as taking place where you are. In the same way, when you meditate upon death, bring the circumstances

that will attend your own vividly to mind, and so of hell, or any subjects which involve visible, tangible circumstances. When it is a question of such mysteries as God's Greatness, His Attributes, the end of our creation, or other invisible things, you cannot make this use of your imagination. At most you may employ certain comparisons and similitudes, but these are not always opportune, and I would have you follow a very simple

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method, and not weary your mind with striving after new inventions. Still, often this use of the imagination tends to concentrate the mind on the mystery we wish to meditate, and to prevent our thoughts from wandering hither and thither, just as when you shut a bird within a cage, or fasten a hawk by its lures. Some people will tell you that it is better to confine yourself to mere abstract thought, and a simple mental and spiritual consideration of these mysteries, but this is too difficult for beginners; and until God calls you up higher, I would advise you, my daughter, to abide contentedly in the lowly valley I have pointed out.

CHAPTER V.

Considerations, the Second Part of Meditation.

AFTER this exercise of the imagination, we come to that of the understanding: for meditations, properly so called, are certain considerations by which we raise the affections to God and heavenly things. Now meditation differs therein from study and ordinary methods of thought which have not the Love of God or growth in holiness for their object, but some other end, such as the acquisition of learning or

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power of argument. So, when you have, as I said, limited the efforts of your mind within due bounds,--whether by the imagination, if the subject be material, or by propositions, if it be a spiritual subject,--you will begin to form reflections or considerations after the pattern of the meditations I have already sketched for you. And if your mind finds sufficient matter, light and fruit wherein to rest in any one consideration, dwell upon it, even as the bee, which hovers over one flower so long as it affords honey. But if you do not find wherewith to feed your mind, after a certain reasonable

effort, then go on to another consideration,--only be quiet and simple, and do not be eager or hurried.

CHAPTER VI.

The Third Part of Meditation, Affections and Resolutions.

MEDITATION excites good desires in the will, or sensitive part of the soul,--such as love of God and of our neighbour, a craving for the glory of Paradise, zeal for the salvation of others, imitation of our Lord's Example, compassion, thanksgiving, fear of God's wrath and of judgment, hatred of sin, trust in God's Goodness

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and Mercy, shame for our past life; and in all such affections you should pour out your soul as much as possible. If you want help in this, turn to some simple book of devotions, the Imitation of Christ, the Spiritual Combat, or whatever you find most helpful to your individual wants. But, my daughter, you must not stop short in general affections, without turning them into special resolutions for your own correction and amendment. For instance, meditating on Our Dear Lord's First Word from the Cross, you will no doubt be roused to the desire of imitating

Him in forgiving and loving your enemies. But that is not enough, unless you bring it to some practical resolution, such as, "I will not be angered any more by the annoying things said of me by such or such a neighbour, nor by the slights offered me by such an one; but rather I will do such and such things in order to soften and conciliate them." In this way, my daughter, you will soon correct your faults, whereas mere general resolutions would take but a slow and uncertain effect.

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CHAPTER VII.

The Conclusion and Spiritual Bouquet.

THE meditation should be concluded by three acts, made with the utmost humility. First, an act of thanksgiving;--thanking God for the affections and resolutions with which He has inspired you, and for the Mercy and Goodness He has made known to you in the mystery you have been meditating. Secondly, an act of oblation, by which you offer your affections and resolutions to God, in union with His Own Goodness and Mercy, and the Death and Merits of His Son. The third act is one of petition, in which you ask God to give you a share in the Merits of His Dear Son, and a blessing on

your affections and resolutions, to the end that you may be able to put them in practice. You will further pray for the Church, and all her Ministers, your relations, friends, and all others, using the Our Father as the most comprehensive and necessary of prayers.

Besides all this, I bade you gather a little bouquet of devotion, and what I mean is this. When walking in a beautiful garden most people are wont to gather a few flowers as they go, which they keep, and enjoy their scent during

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the day. So, when the mind explores some mystery in meditation, it is well to pick out one or more points that have specially arrested the attention, and are most likely to be helpful to you through the day, and this should be done at once before quitting the subject of your meditation.

CHAPTER VIII.

Some Useful Hints as to Meditation.

ABOVE all things, my daughter, strive when your meditation is ended to retain the thoughts and resolutions you have made as your earnest practice throughout the day. This is the real fruit of

meditation, without which it is apt to be unprofitable, if not actually harmful--inasmuch as to dwell upon virtues without practising them lends to puff us up with unrealities, until we begin to fancy ourselves all that we have meditated upon and resolved to be; which is all very well if our resolutions are earnest and substantial, but on the contrary hollow and dangerous if they are not put in practice. You must then diligently endeavour to carry out your resolutions, and seek for all opportunities, great or small. For instance, if

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your resolution was to win over those who oppose you by gentleness, seek through the day any occasion of meeting such persons kindly, and if none offers, strive to speak well of them, and pray for them. When you leave off this interior prayer, you must be careful to keep your heart in an even balance, lest the balm it has received in meditation be scattered. I mean, try to maintain silence for some brief space, and let your thoughts be transferred gradually from devotion to business, keeping alive the feelings and affections aroused in meditation as long as possible.

Supposing some one to have received a precious porcelain vessel, filled with a most costly liquid, which he is going to carry home; how carefully he would go, not looking about, but watching stedfastly lest he trip or stumble, or lest he spill any of the contents of his vessel. Just so, after meditation, do not allow yourself forthwith to be distracted, but look straight before you. Of course, if you meet any one to whom you are bound to attend, you must act according to the circumstances in which you find yourself, but even thus give heed to your heart, so as to lose as little as possible of the precious fruits of your meditation. You should strive, too, to accustom yourself to go easily from prayer to all such occupations as your calling or position

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lawfully require of you, even although such occupations may seem uncongenial to the affections and thoughts just before forming part of your prayer. Thus the lawyer should be able to go from meditation to his pleading, the tradesman to his business, the mistress of a family to the cares of her household and her wifely duties, so calmly and

gently as not to be in any way disturbed by so doing. In both you are fulfilling God's Will, and you should be able to turn from one to the other in a devout and humble spirit.

It may be that sometimes, immediately after your preparation, your affections will be wholly drawn to God, and then, my child, you must let go the reins, and not attempt to follow any given method; since, although as a general rule your considerations should precede your affections and resolutions, when the Holy Spirit gives you those affections at once, it is unnecessary to use the machinery which was intended to bring about the same result. In short, whenever such affections are kindled in your heart, accept them, and give them place in preference to all other considerations. The only object in placing the affections after the points of consideration in meditation, is to make the different parts of meditation clearer, for it is a general rule that when affections arise they are never to be checked, but always encouraged to flow freely.

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And this applies also to the acts

of thanksgiving, of oblation and petition, which must not be restrained either, although it is well to repeat or renew them at the close of your meditation. But your resolutions must be made after the affections, and quite at the end of your meditation, and that all the more because in these you must enter upon ordinary familiar subjects and things which would be liable to cause distractions if they were intruded among your spiritual affections. Amid your affections and resolutions it is well occasionally to make use of colloquies, and to speak sometimes to your Lord, sometimes to your guardian Angel, or to those persons who are concerned in the mystery you are meditating, to the Saints, to yourself, your own heart, to sinners, and even to the inanimate creation around, as David so often does in the Psalms, as well as other Saints in their meditations and prayers.

CHAPTER IX.

Concerning Dryness in Meditation.

SHOULD it happen sometimes, my daughter, that you have no taste for or consolation in your meditation, I entreat you not to be

troubled, but seek relief in vocal prayer, bemoan yourself to our Lord, confess your unworthiness, implore His Aid, kiss His Image, if it be beside you, and say in the words of Jacob, "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me;" or with the Canaanitish woman, "Yes, Lord, I am as a dog before Thee, but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table."

Or you can take a book, and read attentively till such time as your mind is calmed and quickened; or sometimes you may find help from external actions, such as prostrating yourself folding your hands upon your breast, kissing your Crucifix,--that is, supposing you are alone. But if, after all this, you are still unrelieved, do not be disturbed at your dryness, however great it be, but continue striving after a devout attitude in God's Sight. What numbers of courtiers appear a hundred times at court without any hope of a word from their king, but merely to pay their homage and be seen of him. Just so, my daughter, we ought to enter upon mental prayer purely to fulfil our duty and testify our loyalty. If it pleases God's Divine Majesty to speak to us, and discourse in our hearts by His Holy Inspirations

and inward consolations, it is doubtless a great honour, and very sweet to our soul; but if He does not vouchsafe such favours, but makes as though

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He saw us not,--as though we were not in His Presence,-- nevertheless we must not quit it, but on the contrary we must remain calmly and devoutly before Him, and He is certain to accept our patient waiting, and give heed to our assiduity and perseverance; so that another time He will impart to us His consolations, and let us taste all the sweetness of holy meditation. But even were it not so, let us, my child, be satisfied with the privilege of being in His Presence and seen of Him.

CHAPTER X.

Morning Prayer.

BESIDES your systematic meditation and your other vocal prayers, there are five shorter kinds of prayer, which are as aids and assistants to the great devotion, and foremost among these is your morning prayer, as a general preparation for all the day's work. It should be made in this wise.

1. Thank God, and adore Him for His Grace which has kept you safely through the night, and if in

anything you have offended against Him, ask forgiveness.

2. Call to mind that the day now beginning

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is given you in order that you may work for Eternity, and make a stedfast resolution to use this day for that end.

3. Consider beforehand what occupations, duties and occasions are likely this day to enable you to serve God; what temptations to offend Him, either by vanity, anger, etc., may arise; and make a fervent resolution to use all means of serving Him and confirming your own piety; as also to avoid and resist whatever might hinder your salvation and God's Glory. Nor is it enough to make such a resolution,--you must also prepare to carry it into effect. Thus, if you foresee having to meet some one who is hottempered and irritable, you must not merely resolve to guard your own temper, but you must consider by what gentle words to conciliate him. If you know you will see some sick person, consider how best to minister comfort to him, and so on.

4. Next, humble yourself before God, confessing that of yourself you could carry out nothing that you have planned, either in

avoiding evil or seeking good. Then, so to say, take your heart in your hands, and offer it and all your good intentions to God's Gracious Majesty, entreating Him to accept them, and strengthen you in His Service, which you may do in some such words as these: "Lord, I lay before Thee

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my weak heart, which Thou dost fill with good desires. Thou knowest that I am unable to bring the same to good effect, unless Thou dost bless and prosper them, and therefore, O Loving Father, I entreat of Thee to help me by the Merits and Passion of Thy Dear Son, to Whose Honour I would devote this day and my whole life."

All these acts should be made briefly and heartily, before you leave your room if possible, so that all the coming work of the day may be prospered with God's blessing; but anyhow, my daughter, I entreat you never to omit them.

CHAPTER XI.

Evening Prayer and Examination of Conscience.

AS I have counselled you before your material dinner to make a spiritual repast in meditation, so before your evening meal you

should make at least a devout spiritual collation. Make sure of some brief leisure before suppertime, and then prostrating yourself before God, and recollecting yourself in the Presence of Christ Crucified, setting Him before your mind with a stedfast inward glance, renew the warmth of your morning's meditation by some hearty

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aspirations and humble upliftings of your soul to your Blessed Saviour, either repeating those points of your meditation which helped you most, or kindling your heart with anything else you will.

As to the examination of conscience, which we all should make before going to bed, you know the rules:

1. Thank God for having preserved you through the day past.
2. Examine how you have conducted yourself through the day, in order to which recall where and with whom you have been, and what you have done.
3. If you have done anything good, offer thanks to God; if you have done amiss in thought, word, or deed, ask forgiveness of His Divine Majesty, resolving to

confess the fault when opportunity offers, and to be diligent in doing better.

4. Then commend your body and soul, the Church, your relations and friends, to God. Ask that the Saints and Angels may keep watch over you, and with God's Blessing go to the rest He has appointed for you. Neither this practice nor that of the morning should ever be omitted; by your morning prayer you open your soul's windows to the sunshine of Righteousness, and by your evening devotions you close them against the shades of hell.

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CHAPTER XII.

On Spiritual Retirement.

THIS is a matter, dear daughter, to which I am very anxious to win your attention, for in it lies one of the surest means of spiritual progress. Strive as often as possible through the day to place yourself in God's Presence by some one of the methods already suggested. Consider what God does, and what you are doing;--you will see His Eyes ever fixed upon you in Love incomparable. "O my God," you will cry out, "why cannot I always be looking upon Thee, even as Thou lookest on me? why do I think so little about Thee? O my soul, thy only

resting-place is God, and yet how often dost thou wander?" The birds have nests in lofty trees, and the stag his refuge in the thick coverts, where he can shelter from the sun's burning heat; and just so, my daughter, our hearts ought daily to choose some resting-place, either Mount Calvary, or the Sacred Wounds, or some other spot close to Christ, where they can retire at will to seek rest and refreshment amid toil, and to be as in a fortress, protected from temptation. Blessed indeed is the soul which can truly say, "Thou, Lord, art my Refuge, my Castle, my

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Stay, my Shelter in the storm and in the heat of the day."

Be sure then, my child, that while externally occupied with business and social duties, you frequently retire within the solitude of your own heart. That solitude need not be in any way hindered by the crowds which surround you-- they surround your body, not your soul, and your heart remains alone in the Sole Presence of God. This is what David sought after amid his manifold labours;--the Psalms are full of such expressions as "Lord, I am ever with Thee. The

Lord is always at my right hand.
I lift up mine eyes to Thee, O
Thou Who dwellest in the
heavens. Mine eyes look unto
God."

There are few social duties of
sufficient importance to prevent
an occasional retirement of the
heart into this sacred solitude.
When S. Catherine of Sienna was
deprived by her parents of any
place or time for prayer and
meditation, Our Lord inspired
her with the thought of making a
little interior oratory in her mind,
into which she could retire in
heart, and so enjoy a holy
solitude amid her outward duties.
And henceforward, when the
world assaulted her, she was able
to be indifferent, because, so she
said, she could retire within her
secret oratory, and find comfort
with her Heavenly Bridegroom.
So she counselled her

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spiritual daughters to make a
retirement within their heart, in
which to dwell. Do you in like
manner let your heart withdraw
to such an inward retirement,
where, apart from all men, you
can lay it bare, and treat face to
face with God, even as David
says that he watched like a
"pelican in the wilderness, or an
owl in the desert, or a sparrow

sitting alone upon the housetop."

¹ These words have a sense
beyond their literal meaning, or
King David's habit of retirement
for contemplation;--and we may
find in them three excellent kinds
of retreats in which to seek
solitude after the Saviour's
Example, Who is symbolised as
He hung upon Mount Calvary by
the pelican of the wilderness,
feeding her young ones with her
blood. ² So again His Nativity in
a lonely stable might find a
foreshadowing in the owl of the
desert, bemoaning and
lamenting: and in His Ascension
He was like the sparrow rising
high above the dwellings of men.
Thus in each of these ways we
can make a retreat amid the daily
cares of life and its business.

¹ Ps. cii. 6, 7.

² The Egyptians used the pelican
as a symbol of parental devotion;
and among the early Christians,
as may be seen in the Catacombs,
it was employed to shadow forth
the deep mysteries of Christ's
love. On many a monumental
brass, church window, or chalice
of old time, occurs this device,
with the motto, "Sic Christus
dilexit nos." "Thus hath Christ
loved us." And so Saint Thomas
in his Eucharistic Hymn "Adoro
Te devote,"--"Pie Pelicane, Jesu

Domine, Me immundum munda,
Tuo sauguine!"

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When the blessed Elzear, Count of Arian-enProvence, had been long separated from his pious and beloved wife Delphine, she sent a messenger to inquire after him, and he returned answer, "I am well, dear wife, and if you would see me, seek me in the Wounded Side of our Dear Lord Jesus; that is my sure dwelling-place, and elsewhere you will seek me in vain." Surely he was a true Christian knight who spoke thus.

CHAPTER XIII.

Aspirations, Ejaculatory Prayer and Holy Thoughts.

WE retire with God, because we aspire to Him, and we aspire in order to retire with Him; so that aspiration after God and spiritual retreat excite one another, while both spring from the one Source of all holy thoughts. Do you then, my daughter, aspire continually to God, by brief, ardent upliftings of heart; praise His Excellence, invoke His Aid, cast yourself in spirit at the Foot of His Cross, adore His Goodness, offer your whole soul a thousand times a day to Him, fix your inward gaze upon Him, stretch out your hands to be led by Him, as a little child to its father, clasp Him to your

breast as a fragrant nosegay,
upraise Him in

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your soul as a standard. In short, kindle by every possible act your love for God, your tender, passionate desire for the Heavenly Bridegroom of souls. Such is ejaculatory prayer, as it was so earnestly inculcated by S. Augustine upon the devout Proba; and be sure, my daughter, that if you seek such nearness and intimacy with God your whole soul will imbibe the perfume of His Perfections. Neither is this a difficult practice,--it may be interwoven with all our duties and occupations, without hindering any; for neither the spiritual retreat of which I have spoken, nor these inward upliftings of the heart, cause more than a very brief distraction, which, so far from being any hindrance, will rather promote whatever you have in hand. When a pilgrim pauses an instant to take a draught of wine, which refreshes his lips and revives his heart, his onward journey is nowise hindered by the brief delay, but rather it is shortened and lightened, and he brings it all the sooner to a happy end, pausing but to advance the better.

Sundry collections of ejaculatory prayer have been put forth, which are doubtless very useful, but I should advise you not to tie yourself to any formal words, but rather to speak with heart or mouth whatever springs forth from the love within you, which is sure to supply you with all

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abundance. There are certain utterances which have special force, such as the ejaculatory prayers of which the Psalms are so full, and the numerous loving invocations of Jesus which we find in the Song of Songs. Many hymns too may be used with the like intention, provided they are sung attentively. In short, just as those who are full of some earthly, natural love are ever turning in thought to the beloved one, their hearts overflowing with tenderness, and their lips ever ready to praise that beloved object; comforting themselves in absence by letters, carving the treasured name on every tree;--so those who love God cannot cease thinking of Him, living for Him, longing after Him, speaking of Him, and fain would they grave the Holy Name of Jesus in the hearts of every living creature they behold. And to such an outpour of love all creation bids

us--nothing that He has made but is filled with the praise of God, and, as says S. Augustine, everything in the world speaks silently but clearly to the lovers of God of their love, exciting them to holy desires, whence gush forth aspirations and loving cries to God. St. Gregory Nazianzen tells his flock, how, walking along the seashore, he watched the waves as they washed up shells and sea weeds, and all manner of small substances, which seemed, as it were, rejected by the sea,

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until a return wave would often wash part thereof back again; while the rocks remained firm and immoveable, let the waves beat against them never so fiercely. And then the Saint went on to reflect that feeble hearts let themselves be carried hither and thither by the varying waves of sorrow or consolation, as the case might be, like the shells upon the seashore, while those of a nobler mould abide firm and immoveable amid every storm;--whence he breaks out into David's cry, "Lord, save me, for the waters are gone over my soul; deliver me from the great deep, all Thy waves and storms are gone over me;" for he was

himself then in trouble by reason
of the ungodly usurpation of his
See by Maximus.

When S. Fulgentius, Bishop of
Ruspe, heard Theodoric, King of
the Goths, harangue a general
assembly of Roman nobles, and
beheld their splendour, he
exclaimed, "O God, how glorious
must Thy Heavenly Jerusalem
be, if even earthly Rome be
thus!"¹ And if this world can
afford so much gratification to
mere earthly lovers of vanity,
what must there be in store
hereafter for those who love the
truth?

¹ Was it in imitation of this that
the hymn was written?

"If thus Thy lower works are
fair,--
If thus Thy gl