General Intention for September.

CLERGY RETREATS.

(Named by the Cardinal Protector and blessed by the Pope for all Associates.) Messenger of the Sacred Heart.

The most sacred and exalted the office the greater is the need of grace from on high to fill it worthily. most august ministry on earth is incontestably that of the priest, whose function is to administer the sacraments, to shrive sinners, and to consecrate the body of our Lord. To prove himself faithful to his sublime mission of pastor and father of souls the priest has to model his life on that of the Priest divinely supereminent, Jesus Christ Himself, so as ever to be a shining example of more than ordinary virtue.

To him more directly than to others among the chosen ones were addressed the words of the Saviour: "You are the salt of the earth" (Matth. v. 13) "You are the light of the world Words, which falling from the lips of Eternal Truth could not be construed as empty praise, but as establishing the norm whereby the excellence of the Christian, and still more of the priest, was to be gauged for all

future time. "A priest is ordained ad exercendam perfectionem — that is, not only to be perfect, but by his own life, and by the action and influence of his life in word and deed on others, to exhibit and to impress on them the perfection of our Divine Lord. The priesthood was ordained to perpetuate three things: the witness of the truths of faith, the administration of the sacraments of grace, and the mind of Jesus Christ.

'The mind of Jesus Christ is not to be manifested in words only, but in the living power of a mind conformed to Ye are the light of the world signifies that, as light manifests itself by its own radiance, so the priest must shine by the light of a holy life reveal-ing a holy mind. 'Ye are the salt of ing a holy mind. the earth signifies the personal pos-session of the sanctity which resists corruption, and the communicating the resistance to others by contact

and influence. "To exercise perfection is to act according to the rule and spirit of perto act, to speak, to judge, to think as the perfect man would exercise perfection is to be and to do what is perfect in the personal and priestly life in piety, humility, charity, self-denial. To exercise is to elicit, to exert, to effect. It is a word of power and energy, of self-command and inward force issuing in outward

The priest, then, is called to show perfection in himself and to exercise it upon others. He is not only saved to save others, but sanctified for their sanctification. St. Gregory of Nazianzen says: "We must first be purified and then purify others; be filled with wisdom and make others wise ; become light and give light; be near to God and lead others to Him ; be sanctified and sanctify; guide others by the hand and counsel them with knowl-(Orat. ii. Sect. lxxi.)

He is set as the light to give light, as the salt to resist corruption, as the good odor of Christ, like the censer between the living and the dead Such is the perfection of the priest hood, and the excellence of its calling is summed up in a few words by Peter A priest has the primacy of Abel, the patriarchate of Abraham, the government of Noe, the order of Melchisedech, the dignity of Aaron, the authority of Moses, the perfection of Samuel, the power of Peter, the unction of Christ." (Serm. lx, ad Sacer. Opp.

Well might poor human nature shrink from the weight of such honors, and, standing appalled before the awful responsibility of so august a calling, exclaim "Grandis sacerdotis dignitas sed grandis ruina!" Well might one ask himself in fear and trembling .- And if I should fall, what could be greater than that fall? stand upon the pinnacle of the Temple needs a supernatural poise and fidelity not to fall, and can I count upon the extraordinary assistance such fidelity

If the responsibility and dangers of the priest be great, the graces vouchsafed him and the helps wherewith he is surrounded are incomparably greater. It was God Himself who called him to His service, for none must venture on the threshold of the sanctuary unbidden.—"Neither doth any man take the honor to him self but he that is called by God as Aaron was." (Hebr. v. 4) But once he has heard and dutifully heeded the voice from on high, he is no longer merely the servant, but becomes God's friend: of this we have Christ's solemn assurance: "I will not now call you servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends, because all things whatsoever I have learned of the Father I have made known to You have not chosen Me, but I you. You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit." (S. John xv. 25, 16.)

Cardinal Manning referring to these words, remarks: "To have been chosen by Him out of all the world is by itself a revelation of His purpose to To call us out of His servants to be His friends; to admit us to the knowledge of His work and will; to make known also to us the communications of the Father ; to have chosen us when we thought not of Him, to have made us capable of serving Him pledge to us that His will is steadfast to save us if we do not betray our-

selves." And again: "In all times of anxiety and fear and doubt and discouragement we may say-God has foreknown and predestinated me to be a priest : He has called and justified and adopted me into the glory of His sons. He has sealed me with the mark of His soldiers and signed me with the character of His priests. He has guided and guarded me in my youth and manhood, and has preserved me to and manhood, and has preserved me to this day, supporting my perseverance by the ever-present and unfailing help of His manifold grace in every time of need. In every change of the warfare which is against me, I know that He wills my salvation. What has He left undone that He could do to save me? One thing He will never do: He will never take away from me And this is my only my free will. And this is my only danger. If I freely betray myself or forsake Him, then I shall perish; but if my will is united with Him, He will guide and guard me, not only from my enemies without, but even from myself. If I only have no will to grieve Him, He will keep me even unto death."

stood

Of all those who are predestinated to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, they come first who share His priesthood and character. They are called to be like Him, that they may be the representatives of His person and the images of His mind. To them, therefore, are given all proportionate and adequate means of the closest conformity with Him.

Among the general means which are inseparable from His sacred char acter there are three which exceed the others in importance, and from which all minor helps derive. The first means to sacerdotal perseverence and perfection is the sacramental grace of the priesthood. Every sacrament confers sanctifying grace; but as each is ordained for a distinct end, a special grace is given by each for the distinct end of each. Nor is this divine help given once for all, but initially, as the opening of a spring from stream flows and multiplies itself into manifold helps in time of need, trial danger and temptation. In the words of St. Thomas: "Sacramental grace adds, beyond the grace commonly called, and beyond the virtues and gifts, a divine help, auxilium divinum, for the attainment of the end of the sacrament." (Summa Theol. iii. q

The second general means is the priesthood itself, for it is a source of sanctification to the priest. It is a restraint and a guard and a shelter against the world. It is a motive and a measure of aspiration. It is a con stant impulse after a higher degree of union with God. A priest is set apar for God's greatest glory; and on all his sacerdotal life, as on all the vessels of the Temple, is written Sanctificatus Domino (Zach. xiv. 21.) The one thing of a priest's life is to dwell near our Lord on the altar, to bear the key of the tabernacle, and to be as a dis ciple ad latus Domini-by the side of his Lord. If the priest be identifie rist Christ Ĥe will with dwell in him reign surround him with an atmosphere of holiness repellent of every influence of evil from without.

The pastoral office also is in itself a discipline of perfection, and is the third general means to be considered. For, first of all, it is a life of abnega tion of self. A pastor has as many obediences to fulfil as he has souls to serve. The good and the evil, the sick and the whole, the young and the old, the wise and the foolish, the worldly and the unworldly-who are not always wise—the penitent and the impenitent, the converting and the unconverted, the lapsed and the relapsed, the obdurate and the defiant, all must be watched over. None may be neglected still less cast off—always, at all times, and in all ways possible. Then again the trials and temper, patience, and self control in bearing with the strange and inconsiderate minds that come to him; and the demands made upon his strength and endurance day and night in the calls of the sick and dying, coming often one after another when for a moment he has gone the rest; the weary and continual importunities of people and letters till the sound of the bell and the knock at the door is a constant foreboding too surely fulfilled: all these things make pastor's life as wearisome, and, strange to say, as isolated as if he were in a desert. No sackcloth so mortifies the body as this life of perpetual selfabnegation mortifies the will. when the will is mortified the servant is like the Master, and his Master is the exemplar of all perfection.

The pastor's office, moreover, is the highest discipline of charity; and charity is the perfection of God and man. It was charity that moved him to become a pastor, and charity binds him to give his life for his flock. Between the beginning and the end of his life charity is the urgent motive which constrains, sustains, and spends all his living powers. Every action of a faithful pastor is prompted habitually, virtually, or actually by charity. And in every action, from the greatest to the least, as charity is elicited into act, it is augmented by increase poured out into the heart by the Holy Ghost, the charity of God. is charity, and he that abideth in charity abideth in God and God in him." (I. St. John IV. 16) But where God abides there is sanctity, for though charity and sanctity are distinct, they are inseparable, coming and going, growing and lessening in intensity together, like light and heat,

is his daily morning was come. Jesus The day begins with the presence of Jesus the altar is the shore of the Eterna not be consoled. World, and Jesus comes at our word. In the Holy Mass we know Him, and yet our eyes are holden. He is in another form. We cannot see Him; but we know that it is the Lord. He makes ready for us and gives us the Bread of Life. If we were to spend a whole life in preparation, one such divine contact with His Presence would be an over payment of all our prayer and penance and purification of Heart. He comes to us, not once in our life only, but morning by morning. Every day begins with Him. If the first hour of every day were spent in the presence — certain though unseen But there is one help which a priest -of our guardian angel or of our cannot do without, and that is his patron saint, our whole day would be estrained and elevated by it. I amiliarity might deaden at last our vivid sense of so near an approach of the supernatural world, and we might cease to realize it. But the Holy Mass is more than all t is. It is the personal

Presence of the Lord of angels and of saints; and yet through familiarity with the exceeding condescension of His great humility, we may gradually lose the vividness of our perception. The Council of Trent teaches us that the Presence of Jesus is above the and order of nature. He is there, God and Man in personal reality and substance; and we, when we hold the Blessed Sacrament in our hands, are in contact with the Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier of the world. Council says again that He is present, not as in a place, but as He is—a sub stance. In the divine order there is no time, and place is not. We are in contact with the eternal world; and that contact is real and substantial and personal, both on His side and on ours. We behold Him face to face by the vision of faith. Beyond this there is nothing but the vision of the blessed. our hearts were prepared as

they might and ought to be by contrition and piety, the sacramental grace of even one Communion would suffice to sanctify us in body, soul and spirit. The virtues which go out from the presence of our Lord into our nearts are measured by our capacity to receive them ; and that capacity is measured by our preparation before we go to the altar, and our habitual union with God.

He becomes the guide of all our living They are elevated by union with Him. As every beat of the hear and every breath we draw is prevented and sustained by His creative power, so He prevents all our thoughts, words and works. Our freedom and our agency are made perfect by union with Him. He is the presiding and Divine Agent who helps us in all things to do His will, but demands of us our whole We live and act personal obedience. and speak of our own freedom ; but our freedom is guided and guarded by His grace and power. He lives in us, and we live in Him. What help can be wanting to a priest who loves his daily It contains all things-Nutrit Mass? præservat, reparat, delectat et auget. He is our food, our shelter, our refresh ment, our delight, and our ever-grow ing strength."

The second (special) help of a priest's life is the Divine Office. Seven times a day the acts of divine worship ascend from the Church throughout the world to the throne of God. Church in warfare, in suffering, and in heaven, adores the ever blessed Trinity with an incessant voice of prayer and praise. The whole Church is the sanctuary, and the Divine Office is the ritual of the choir on earth uniting with the praises, thanksgivings and doxologies which are the rit ual of the choir in heaven. Every priest has his place in this choir, and he makes seven visits to the heavenly

court day by day. " The Divine Office is a part of the divine tradition. It is a perpetual witness for God and for the faith. It has been wrought together by the hands of men; but those men were saints, and their work was wrought under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. The framing of the Ritual may have been the work of human hands; but the materials of which it is com are the words of the of God. The Psalms Spirit and the Scriptures of inspired men under the Old Law and the New, with the writings of the saints, are all interwoven into a wonderful texture of prayer and praise, of worship and witness of the kingdom of God, and of the Communion of Saints. The perpetual revolution of yearly solemnities and festivals-winter and spring, summer and autumn-brings round continually the whole revelation of faith. Prophets and Apostles, Evangel ists and Sain s, speak to us with voices that never die. The whole history of that never die. The whole history of the kingdom of God is always return

spirit, of one who, seven times a day, is in choir with the saints, and before the face of God? Next to the Holy Mass, what greater help to sacerdotal perfection can there be than this?"

We would never end were we to dwell on all the other special helps which abound in the sacerdotal life. We say nothing of the numberles graces the priest derives from his very preaching to others and from the administration of the sacraments-from the confessional in particular. former re-acts with a powerful effect upon the sacred orator. outlines of God's truths in his intellect So much for the general helps; but what, now, are the special means of sustains his will, and it calls down a

self knowledge, for it shows him his own face in a glass by the lives of sinners. It excites contrition within him by the sorrow of penitents, who will It heightens delicacy of conscience when he hears others accuse themselves of omissions and deviations from the will of God. It fosters aspiration by the sight of the fervent whose one desire and effort, in the midst of burdened and restless homes, is to rise higher and higher in union with God; and finally calls for self-accusation at one's own un profitableness from the generosity and fidelity of those who are hindered on every side, and yet, in humility, selfdenial, charity and conformity to God's will, outstrip others who have every gift of time and grace needed for perfection.

spiritual retreat, wherein he tempers his soul anew, from time to time, in mental prayer, and acquires and strengthens the same habit of mental prayer so essential to his perseverance in fervor. By this most salutary ex ercise his will acquires a fixity in the practice of all priestly virtue. It alone a sures the punctual and fervent fulfilment of all the other functions, al ready enumerated, which, in turn, have been classed as special helps. Thanks to the spiritual exercises and mental prayer, these are performed not through custom, nor in a perfunc tory manner, but with a supernatural warmth and a greater fidelity and insistence in times of spiritual arid ity. The same unexceptional authority—Cardinal Manning—from whom we have already so copiously quoted thus insists upon the necessity of mental prayer: "A priest's life is the vita mixta of our Lord, and for our instruction Jesus spent days in toil and nights in prayer. A priest' life is both contemplative and active and these two elements cannot separated without loss and danger Hæc meditare, in his esto, ut profectus tuus manifestus sit omnibus. The things Timethy was to meditate and to live in were all the truths and precept of faith, but most especially 'reading, exhortation and doctrine' - that is, the deposit of the revelation in all it fulness and detail. In reading, our minds terminate upon a book in meditation, our intelligence and our hearts terminate upon is a vital act of faith and desire, to attain a fuller knowledge of God and a closer union with Him in affection and in resolution-that is, in heart and

will. prayer is the realization of the obects of faith-that is, of the world unseen as if it were visible, and of the future as if it were present. realize is to have a vivid and abid ing perception of things unseen as if they were palpable, and things future as if they were already come. We read of Moses that he endured the wrath of Pharao as seeing Him that was invisible. All the terror of the earthly king was lost in the sense of the Divine Preser ce behind the throne which overpowered all human majesty St. Paul says we walk by faith, not by sight; but the objects eternal, the objects of sight are passing away. The invisible world is the substance, the visible world but the To minds that are not super shadow. natural this world, loud and glaring, is palpable, and therefore thought to be The unseen is impalpable, and though not to be denied, yet upon such minds it has no action or constraining The great multitude of men power. live all day long as if there were no unseen world and no world to come. They do not meditate. They say prayers, but their prayers are not mental. The mind does not realize or aspire or stay itself upon God, upon the glory of the ever blessed Trinity, upon the beauty of the Mother of God, upon the rest and joy of the saints, upon the fellowship we have with them now, upon the share which is promised to us in their rest and joy hereafter, upon the pres ence of Jesus with us always, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in every pure and humble soul, above all in the soul of a pure and humble priest, of a faithful and fervent pastor. If we realize these things as the merchant realizes the market-place and his bales of merchandise, or the money lender his securities and his coins of gold, then we shall live in this world, not of it, as those who have risen with Christ (Col., iii. 1.) and are already blessed with Him in heavenly places (Ephes. i. 3). This realization of un-seen and heavenly things is better than all external rules to guard and

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strengthen a priest. It is an internal light and strength, which he carries with thim at all times and in every place, sustaining the sacramental grace of his priesthood: and this is a divine and unfailing help in every peril and need."

The annual retreat is, therefore, an

all important means of santification for the ministers of God's altar; and it is the universal custom in all dioceses to set apart every year a few days to le devoted exclusively to this holy exercise. More than this, for a number of years past, many dioceses in Europe, and notably in France, have estab lished the custom of a monthly retreat. One day, every month, the clergy of a city or of a township meet at the diocesan seminary and there meditate on the points given by a director and attend a conference. Cases of conattend a conference. Cases of con-science are solved, and there is an exchange of thought relative to practical means to be adopted for the greater efficiency of pastoral work in the respective parishes. Concerted action and mutual encouragement in trying circumstances are the result. And after a day spent in the refreshing and invigorating atmosphere of community life, each pastor returns to his flock with a joyful heart and better disposed to sanctify his lonely life by prayer and the exercise of greater zeal for the salvation of souls.

As the Associates of the Apostleship of Prayer should, beyond all others evince a deeper love and a keener in terest for their pastors, who devote themselves with such untiring zeal to their spiritual welfare, they should pray, this month especially, that God may smooth the difficulties which him der the greater extension of these re treats which the Church has so much a heart. These difficulties are far greater in a missionary country where the paucity of priests is more generally felt. But let them not forget to look beyond our own horizon, and pray for the zealous clergy of other countries also, who are more exposed to the open rage and hatred of the enemies of God's Church, as is the case in France and Belgium.

PRAYER. O Jesus! through the most pure heart of Mary, I offer thee all the prayers, work and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of Thy Divine Heart in union with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass in reparation of all sins, and for all requests presented through the Apostleship of Prayer; in particu lar that the Holy Ghost may showe down His choicest graces on our holy and devoted clergy. Amen.

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