distance; nevertheless, I entered well, and held on by some dead fern-stems, and did hope that no one would shoot me.

But while I was hugging myself like this, with a boyish manner of reasoning, my joy was like to have ended in sad grief both to myself and my mother, and haply to all honest folk who shall love to read this history. For, hearing a noise in front of me, like a coward not knowing where, but afraid to turn round or think of it, I felt myself going down some deep passage into a pit of darkness. It was no good to catch the sides, the whole thing seemed to go with me. Then, without knowing how, I was leaning over a night of water.

This water was of black radiance, as are certain diamonds, spanned across with vaults of rock, and carrying no image, neither showing marge nor end, but centered (as it might be) with a bottomless indrawal.

With that chill and dread upon me, and the sheer rock all around, and the faint light heaving wavily on the silence of this gulf, I must have lost my wits and gone to the bottom, if there were any.

But suddenly a robin sung (as they will do after dark, toward spring) in the brown fern and ivy behind me. I took it for our little Annie's voice (for she could call any robin), and gathering quick warm comfort, sprung up the steep way toward the starlight. Climbing back, as the stones glided down, I heard the cold greedy wave go lapping, like a blind black dog, into the distance of arches and hollow depths of darkness.

CHAPTER IX

THERE IS NO PLACE LIKE HOME

I can assure you, and tell no lie (as John Fry always used to say, when telling his very largest), that I scrambled back to the mouth of that pit as if the evil one had been after me. And sorely I repented now of all my boyish folly, or madness it might well be termed, in venturing, with none to help, and nothing to compel me, into that accursed valley. Once let me get out, thinks I; and if ever I get in again, without being cast in by neck and by crop, I will give our new-born donkey leave to set up for my school-master.

How I kept that resolution we shall see hereafter. It is enough for me now to tell how I escaped from the den that night. First I sat down in the little opening which Lorna had pointed out to me, and wondered whether she had meant, as bitterly occurred to me, that I should run down into the pit, and be drowned, and give no more trouble. But in less than half a minute I was ashamed of that idea, and remembered how she was vexed to think that even a loach should lose his life. And then I said to myself, "Now surely she would value me more than a thousand loaches; and what she said must be quite true about the way out of this horrible place."

Therefore I began to search with the utmost care and diligence, although my teeth were chattering, and all my bones beginning to ache with the chilliness and the wetness. Before very long the moon appeared over the edge of the mountain, and among the trees at the top of it; and then I espied rough steps, and rocky, made as if with a sledge hammer, narrow, steep and far asunder, scaped here and there in the side of the entrance, and then round a bulge of the cliff, like the marks upon a great brown loaf, where a hungry child has picked at it. And higher up, where the light of the moon shone broader upon the precipice, there seemed to be a rude broken track, like the shadow of a crooked stick thrown upon a house-wall.

Herein was small encouragement; and at first I was minded to lie down and die; but it seemed to come amiss to me. God has His time for all of us; but He seems to advertise us when He does not mean to do it. Moreover, I saw a movement of lights at the head of the valley, as if lanterns were coming after me, and the nimbleness given thereon to my heels was in front of all meditation.

Straightway I set foot in the lowest stirrup (as I might almost call it), and clung to the rock with my nails, and worked to make a jump into the second stirrup. And I compassed that too, with the aid of my stick; although, to tell you the truth, I was not at that time of life so agile as boys of smaller frame are, for my size was growing beyond my years, and the muscles not keeping time with it, and the joints of my bones not closely hinged, with staring at one another. But the step-hole was the hardest of all, and the rock swelled out on me over my breast, and there seemed to be no attempting it, until I espied a good stout rope hanging in a groove of shadows, and just managed to reach the end of it.

How I climbed up, and across the clearing, and found my way home through the Bagworthy forest, is more than I can remember now, for I took all the rest of it then as a dream, by reason of perfect weariness. And, indeed, it was quite beyond my hopes to tell so much as I have told; for at first beginning to set it down, it was all like a mist before me. Nevertheless, some parts grew clearer, as one by one I remembered them, having taken a little soft cordial, because the memory frightens me.

For the toil of the water, and danger of laboring up the long cascade or rapids, and then the surprise of the fair young maid, and terror of the murderers, and desperation of getting away—all these are much to me even now, when I am a stout church-warden, and sit by the side of my fire, after going through many far worse adventures, which I will tell, God willing. Only the labor of writing is such (especially so as to construe and challenge a reader on parts of speech, and hope to be even with him); that by this pipe which I hold in my hand, I ever expect to be beaten, as in the days when old Doctor Twiggs, if I made a bad stroke in my exercise, shouted aloud with a sour joy, "John Ridd, sirrah, down with your small-clothes!"

Let that be as it may, I deserved a good beating that night, after making such a fool of myself, and grinding good fustian to pieces. But when I got home, all the supper was in, and the men setting at the white table, and mother, and Annie, and Lizzie near by, all eager, and offering to begin (except, indeed, my mother, who was looking out of the door-way), and by the fire was Betty Muxworthy, scolding, and cooking, and tasting her work, all in a breath, as a man would say. I looked through the door from the dark by the wood-stack, and was half of a mind to stay out like a dog, for fear of the rating and reckoning; but the way my dear mother was looking about, and the browning of the sausages, got the better of me.

But nobody could get out of me where I had been all the day and evening; although they worried me never so much, and longed to shake me to pieces, especially Betty Muxworthy, who never could learn to let well alone. Not that they made me tell any lies, although it would have served them right almost for intruding on other people's business; but that I just held my tongue, and ate my supper rarely, and let them try their taunts and jibes, and drove them almost wild, after supper, by smiling exceedingly knowingly. And, indeed, I could have told them things, as I hinted once or twice; and then poor Betty and our little Lizzie were so mad with eagerness, that between them I went into the fire, being thoroughly overcome with laughter and my own importance.

Now what the working of my mind was (if, indeed, it worked at all, and did not rather follow suit of body) it is not in my power to say; only that the result of my adventure in the Doone Glen was to make me dream a good deal of nights, which I had never done much before, and to drive me, with tenfold zeal and purpose, to the practice of bullet-shooting. Not that I ever expected to shoot the Doone family, one by one, or even desired to do so, for my nature is not revengeful; but that it seemed to be somehow my business to understand the gun, as a thing I must be at home with.

I could hit the barn now capitally well with the spanish matchlock, and even with John Fry's blunderbuss, at ten good land-yards distance, without any rest for my fusil. And what was very wrong of me, though I did not see it then, I kept John Fry there, to praise my shots, from dinner-time often until the gray dusk, while he all the time should have been at work spring-plowing upon the farm. And, for that matter, so should I have been, or at any rate driving the horses; but John was by no means loath to be there, instead of holding the plow-tail. And indeed one of our old sayings is—

"For pleasure's sake I would liefer wet
"Than ha' ten lumps of gold for each one of my sweat."

And again, which is not a bad proverb, though unthrifty and unlike a Scotsman's—

God makes the wheat grow greener,
While farmer be at his dinner."

And no Devonshire men, or Somerset either (and I belong to both of them), ever thinks of working harder than God likes to see him.

Nevertheless, I worked hard at the gun, and by the time that I had sent all the church-roof gutters, so far as I honestly could cut them, through the red pine door, I began to long for a better tool that would make less noise and throw straighter. But the sheep-shearing came, and the hay season next, and then the harvest of small corn, and the digging of the root called "batata" (a new but good thing in our neighborhood, which our folk would have made into "taties") and then the sweating of the apples, and turning of the cider-press, and the stacking of the firewood, and netting of the woodcocks, and the springles to be minded in the garden and by the hedgerows, where blackbirds hop to the mole-hills in the white October mornings, and gray birds come to look for snails at the time when the sun is rising.

It is wonderful how time runs away, when all these things and a great many others come in to load him down the hill and prevent him from stopping to look about. And I for my part can never conceive how people who live in small towns and cities, where neither lambs nor birds are (except in some shop windows) nor growing corn, nor meadow-grass, nor even so much as a stick to cut or a stile to climb and sit down upon—how these poor folk get through their lives without being utterly weary of them, and dying from pure indolence, is a thing God only knows, if His mercy allows Him to think of it.

How the year went by I know not, only that I was abroad all day, shooting, or fishing, or minding the farm, or riding after some stray beast, or away by the sea-side below Glenthorne, wondering at the great waters, and resolving to go for a sailor. For in those days I had a firm belief, as many other strong boys have, of being born for a seaman. And indeed I had been in a boat nearly twice; but the second time mother found it out, and came and drew me back again; and after that she cried so badly, that I was forced to give my word to her to go no more without telling her.

But Betty Muxworthy spoke her mind quite in a different way about it, the while she was wringing my hosen, and clattering to the drying-horse.

"Zailor, ees fai! ay and zarve un raight. He can't kape out o' the watter here, whur a' must goo vor to vaind un, zame as a gurt to-ad squalloping, and mux up till I be wore out, I be, wi' the very saight of's braiches. How will un ever baide aboard zhip, wi' the watter zinging out under un, and comin' up splash when the wind blow. Latt un goo, missus, latt un goo, zay I for wan, and old Davy wash his clouts for un."

And this discourse of Betty's tended more than my mother's prayers, I fear, to keep me from going. For I hated Betty in those days, as children always hate a cross servant, and often get fond of a false one. But Betty, like many active women, was false by her crossness only; thinking it just for the moment perhaps, and rushing away with a bucket; ready to stick to it, like a clenched nail, if beaten the wrong way with argument; but melting over it, if you left her, as stinging soap, left alone in a basin, spreads all abroad without bubbling.

But all this is beyond the children, and beyond me too for that matter, even now in ripe experience; for I never did know what women mean, and never shall except when they tell me, if that be in their power. Now let that question pass. For although I am now in a place of some authority, I have observed that no one ever listens to me when I attempt to lay down the law, but all are waiting with open ears until I do enforce it. And methinks he who reads a history cares not much for the wisdom or folly of the writer (knowing well that the former is far less than his own, and the latter vastly greater), but hurries to know what the people did, and how they got on about it. And this I can tell, if any one can, having been myself in the thick of it.

The fright I had taken that night in Glen Doone satisfied me for a long time thereafter; and I took good care not to venture even in the fields and woods of the outer farm, without John Fry for company. John was greatly surprised and pleased at the value I now set upon him; until, what betwixt the desire to vaunt and the longing to talk things over, I gradually laid bare to him nearly all that had befallen me—except, indeed, about Lorna, whom a sort of shame kept me from mentioning. Not that I did not think of her again; but of course I was only a boy as yet, and therefore inclined to despise young girls, as being unable to do anything, and only meant to listen to orders. And when I got along with the other boys, that was how we always spoke of them, if we deigned to speak at all, as beings of a lower order, only good enough to run errands for us, and to nurse boy-babies.

And yet my sister Annie was in truth a great deal more to me than all the boys of the parish, and of Brendon and Countisbury put together: although at the time I never dreamed it, and would have laughed if told so. Annie was of a pleasing face, and very gentle manner, almost like a lady, some people said; but without any airs whatever, only trying to give satisfaction. And if she failed, she would go and weep without letting anyone know it, believing the fault to be all her own, when mostly it was of others. But if she succeeded in pleasing you, it was beautiful to see her smile, and stroke her soft chin in a way of her own, which she always used when taking note how to do the right thing again for you. And then her cheeks had a bright clear pink, and her eyes were as blue as the sky in spring, and she stood as upright as a young apple tree, and no one could help but smile at her, and pat her brown curls approvingly; whereupon she always courtesied. For she never tried to look away when honest people gazed at her; and even in the court-yard she would come and help to take your saddle, and tell (without your asking her) what there was for dinner.

And afterward she grew up to be a very comely maiden, tall, and with a well-built neck, and very fair white shoulders, under a bright cloud of curling hair. Alas! poor Annie, like most of the gentle maidens—but tush, I am not come to that yet; and for the present she seemed to me little to look at, after the beauty of Lorna Doone.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE SACREDNESS OF THE COMMON LIFE

There are times when the Catholic layman, while willing, as he must always be, to "obey them that bear the rule over" him in the Church, and to listen to their teachings as to "the oracles of God," feels a desire natural and it is to be hoped, lawful to present, so to speak, his side of the case. He desires, that is, to remind his spiritual pastors and masters with, of course, the utmost deference, that piety, love of God, and devotion to His service are not necessarily confined to clergy and religious; that the common life "in the world," as the phrase is, has, or ought to have, its own sacredness, its own peace, its own sanctity.

Most especially will he be thus disposed on hearing a discourse on the privileges, graces and blessings of the religious life. "It is almost impossible," he is told, "to love God in the world as in the cloister, almost impossible to attain to so great a measure of grace." To such a statement he will answer, humbly and unhesitatingly: "Granted." Yet, as he calls to mind saints he has known in the world—his own mother it may be—he will venture to lay stress on "almost." It is indeed, as he knows to his own cost, "almost impossible." The difficulty is of the very essence of the common life, springing from that "law of sin in our members" of which St. Paul speaks, and marks more than all else, one may say, the distinction between the religious and the layman. "Almost"; still, "with God all things are possible."

This distinction between the cloistered life and life in the world is, in a very real sense, as old as Christianity itself, though it is one of very gradual growth and development. Neither Scripture nor the Church, one may say—I write under correction—recognizes the distinction explicitly. The very "counsels of perfection"—the rules of life to be found in the Gospels and Epistles—are addressed evidently to all "who profess and call themselves" followers of Christ, just as the Collects, Secret Prayers, and post-Communions of the Missal are intended for the use and edification of every one of the Church's children. Yet, since the distinction exists, it is well that we should trace it back to its beginnings. It dates, indeed, from the day when "a certain woman named Martha" received Our Lord into her house at Bethany; though St. Augustine takes Martha as the type of our earthly life, Mary of our eternal; thus explaining the betterness of Mary's choice, and the words, "which shall not be taken away from her."

"The good part," however (St. Jerome in the Vulgate, calls it "the best") chosen by Mary, has commonly been interpreted as signifying the religious life, with its calm, its peace, its immutability; and Martha's cares "about much serving," the life in the world. Yet, as St. Augustine is careful to point out in the sermon referred to, both Martha and Mary were "pleasing to Our Lord, both beloved, both disciples"; and St. John, who, we can not doubt, was a frequent guest in the house of Bethany, states of set purpose, as one may say—*vigilanti verbo*, weighing his words,—that "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." It was as if, speaking reverently, he foresaw that Martha might be misunderstood, and the common life made of too little account.

Martha, therefore—the type of the true "valiant woman," the active housewife, of many cares and responsibilities; a little hurt, it may be, at being "left to serve alone"; a little inclined even to envy her sister's choice of "an easier life,"—is mentioned by name as dear to that Master for Whom nothing she could do was good enough to satisfy her loving hospitality. How could it be, seeing that she loved Him, and realized, in some measure at least, who He was? If, then, Mary's choice had been rightly taken as, in a sense, the beginning, as it is the norm, of the religious life, Martha's affectionate, zealous service may equally be taken as symbolizing the sacredness of that common life which, in the Providence of God, most Christians are called upon to lead. It shows also that either life may be, and is, pleasing to Our Lord; more, that in either life, as He ordains it, we may serve Him equally well and be equally dear to Him.

But this, it will be said, is "almost impossible"; or, if possible, would put the common life on a level with the religious in such matters as grace, fervor and devotion. Not so; the insistence is rather on the sacredness of the common life, on its being, when rightly lived—since it is God's choice for the majority of His children—as pleasing and as acceptable to Him as life in the cloister. Nor, when we ask why it should be "almost impossible" for Martha to love God as well as Mary, to attain to the same measure of grace and devotion, is it any sufficient answer to say: "Because Martha has deliberately chosen the pleasures of the world, and Mary has renounced them." Apart from the fact that such an answer takes no account of the multitude of men and women to whom, it may be said, no choice of the religious rather than the common life was ever possible, yet who serve God faithfully—whose lives are full of crosses and martyrdoms known to Him only—does any follower of Christ, man or woman, "deliberately choose the pleasures of the world"? Would not the very act of such a choice cut him or her off from Christ absolutely and utterly, and amount to apostasy, since "the friendship of the world is enmity with God?"

Mary's renunciation is of the very essence of the Christian life, without which indeed it can not be said to have begun. "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, can not be My disciple." The difference surely consists in this, that the religious renounces and forsakes "all that he hath," not only in will but in fact, makes both an habitual and an actual renunciation; whereas the Christian in the world renounces and forsakes in will only, habitually, as the theologians say. "Which," Venerable Bede tells us, "is rightly done when a man, having renounced all he has for the Lord's sake, labors, nevertheless, in the work of his hands"—his life duties, we may say—"that he may have wherewith to live and to give alms."

But there is another and a greater renunciation required of every follower of Christ. "Let him deny himself." It is St. Gregory who points out, in one of his homilies, that it is, perhaps, not so difficult to renounce what we have, but that it is "very difficult for a man to renounce himself" (*abnegare semetipsum.*) It is in this latter renunciation that the essence of the Christ-life consists; without which, as without charity, without the love of God, its only possible, its only sufficient motive, all other renunciation "profiteth nothing."

It is in this renunciation, moreover—this crucifixion with Christ, as St. Paul calls it; this utter annihilation of self, this hating, to use Our Lord's words, of our own souls—that we shall find the true sacredness of the common life; its approximation, one may even say its assimilation, to the life of the cloister. For what, after all, is the religious life but the Christ-life lived more intensively, more perfectly, than it can be lived in the world? So at least St. Benedict, the father of Western monasticism, seems to have understood it, when providing that the houses of his Rule should be examples of "the life of the Gospel,"—examples which others were to follow, according to the possibilities of the state wherein God should have placed them. But to say that the Christ-life thus understood is "almost impossible" for those living, by God's ordinance, in the world, is surely, if I may venture to say so, to set limits—or to seem to set them—to His grace. To say, further, that any Christian "deliberately chooses the pleasures of the world," is a contradiction in terms. The Christian, in any true sense, can make no such choice.

In matters of this kind, we must necessarily revert to first principles, if we would avoid misunderstandings. To some extent, as in defining the essentials of the Christian life, we have already done so; but there is more than this to be considered. Not only does no true follower of Christ, man or woman, "deliberately choose the pleasures of the world," but neither the one nor the other can, in the strict sense, choose his or her state in life.

And this, altogether irrespective of the purely human aspect of the matter,—of the fact that circumstances, training, family, and other considerations, do, for the most part, practically leave us no real choice of a state in life, however inclined we may be to believe otherwise. If self-denial, self renunciation, is of the very essence of Christianity, it must, if words have any meaning, include—or rather it must begin; continue, and end with an utter abnegation and utter annihilation of that will whereon self ultimately rests. "I came not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." That is the Master's example, and "the servant is not above his Lord." "Be it done unto me according to Thy word." That is His Blessed Mother's. How, then, shall they who call themselves His followers and her children have any choice or will of their own?

But, again, there is more than this. The desire of peace, the longing to be hidden "in His tabernacle," in the very secret of it, "from the strife of tongues"—to leave the "much serving" and the many cares which trouble, and sit at the Master's feet—is strong at times in all of us, most of all in those who labor and are heavy laden, to whom the years have come "in which thou shalt say: I have no pleasure in them." So strong that we cry out with David: "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away, and be at rest!" Or, with Thomas a Kempis: "I long for the joy of peace; the peace of Thy children I earnestly crave." So strong, indeed is this desire, that the religious life, as we view it, seems as the very paradise of God. "Blessed are they who dwell in Thy house!"

Yet, though "it is not given to all to leave the world and to serve God in a monastery," it is possible for all, even in the common life, to attain to some measure of the peace of His children, since it is to all that He says, "Come unto Me . . . and you shall find rest to your souls"; to all that He offers peace. "My peace I give unto you." It is possible, that is, for all to live, as a certain writer says, in "the cloister of the heart," if they will only give it the key into the keeping of Him "Who shutteth and no man openeth." And, while this desire of peace does not—thank God!—assail or influence those fervent young hearts whom the Master calls into His "closed garden" at the very dawn of day, who give themselves to Him in the cloister in the best years of their lives, still, it is no less true that such desire, when it comes to any one of us, is of God's sending, to bring us, when all other calls remain unheeded, back to Himself. It is there, and there only, that we shall learn the sacredness of whatever state He may have called us to.

This sacredness must, moreover, evidently, extend to the duties of that state, be they what they may, since state and duties are of God's ordering, and belong to Him. And, for women at least, to speak with necessary plainness, the two primary duties are, normally, those of wifehood and motherhood; even as they are, seemingly, those most in danger of being forgotten or lost sight of,—their divine immeasurable sacredness, especially.

As, wasteful woman, she who may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing man can not choose but pay
How has she cheapened paradise;

How given for naught her priceless gift,
How spoiled the bread and spilled the wine,
Which, spent with due, respective thrift,
Had made brutes men, and men divine.

Note that I do not say the highest duty but the primary, the most general, the most necessary; since the fulfilment of the highest—that of the service of God in the cloister—is, obviously, reserved for the comparatively few. But, whether it be these fundamental duties or other less important and seemingly trifling ones, hardly, as we think, to be dignified by the name of "duties," the Christ-life, whether in the world or in religion, consists chiefly in their faithful accomplishment. This is what Keble meant when he wrote that—

The trivial round, the common task,
Will furnish all we ought to ask;
Room to deny ourselves,—a road
To bring us daily nearer God.

What other end can we desire to attain? Our success surely will depend on the use of the means within our reach, not in vain longings for those God has seen fit to give to others. Saintly George Herbert's prayer, in his poem "The Elixir," is to the same effect:

Teach me, my God and King,
In all things Thee to see;
And what I do in anything,
To do it as for Thee.

This, of course, is but another form of St. Paul's injunction to all Christians, to "do all things to the glory of God." Herbert's elaboration of it is, however, worth quoting further:

A servant, with this clause,
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room as for Thy laws,
Makes that and th' action fine.

This sacredness of the common life has, moreover, one standard, and one only, by which it is to be measured. "As He who hath called you is holy, so be ye also holy in all manner of conversation." Further, it is to this sacredness, this perfection of the Christ-life in the world—which St. Paul defines as "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,"—that we must look for that increase of vocations to the priesthood and to the cloister which we all profess to desire. The principles of that life are, and must be, the same in all three states—the world, the sanctuary, and religion—as, speaking with all reverence, they were the same in our Lord's own life, whether in the carpenter's shop at Nazareth, or in his active ministry; obedience, reverence, self-forgetfulness, devotion, love to God and man. And since family life, the relation of parents and children, is the norm of all Christian life, in the world as in the cloister, it is well to insist on its sacredness—a sacredness which the Son of God raised to a divine standard when "He went down to Nazareth and was subject unto" Mary and Joseph—to the creatures He had made. All our best relationships, indeed, are based on this. The true king is the father of his people; the schoolmaster's best claim to obedience is that he stands, as we say, "in the place of a parent;" the superior of a religious house has no more honored name than that of abbot or abbess, father or mother: the Vicar of Christ himself is "our Holy Father the Pope;" even "pope" meaning just that—papa.

If it be true, then, that a man is what his mother makes him, what better training could there be for the future monk or priest than that which his Master was pleased to undergo at Nazareth—that of submission to His mother and to His foster father? If the good son makes a good husband, it is equally and, as a general rule, the good son who makes the good priest or religious—he who has learned at home not the *duty* of obedience only, but the *virtue* of obedience as well; has learned that the relation of son to father is nothing short of divine, of God's ordering—"of whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named." And, since it is even more true that a girl is what her mother makes her, so it is the good daughter who, again, as a general rule, makes the good religious, even as in the world she makes the best wife. Not that God's arm is shortened or His grace limited, seeing that Mary Magdalen and Augustine are models for religious in all ages, and for poor sinners in the world as well. But it is the home training more than all else that counts, as the lives of the saints plainly show; and if there be, indeed, a lack of vocations to the priesthood and to the religious life, it must be that our home training is lacking or at fault.

If so, wherein lies the remedy but in a clearer and truer conception of the sacredness of the common life, of the Christ-life "in the world"; of the sacredness of all its duties, the smallest and most trivial, as well as the greatest and most necessary? Such a conception does not and can not detract from the immeasurably greater sacredness of the religious life, from the infinitely higher and more Christlike dignity of the priesthood. It means, rather, a fuller recognition of the fact that the Christian life is, and must be, the Christ-life; that its essence is self-abnegation; that its perfection is in our likeness to Him. It means further the realization of the only means whereby this life of Christ in us can be nourished, maintained and brought to perfection—the means He Himself provides in the Sacrament of His Love. Surely, in these days of a renewal of frequent and daily Communion among those "in the world," this conception of the sacredness of the common life will become clearer and more fully understood.

But if the Christ-life, so nourished and maintained, is indeed the common life of all His followers, it must for all of us, whether He call us to the "much serving" of life in the world, or to the "better part" of life in the cloister, begin, ordinarily speaking, in the home if it is to be continued and made perfect "in the secret of His tabernacle." While, therefore, I admit that it is "almost impossible" to love God in the world as well as in the cloister, since the more perfect love is the reward of the more perfect self-abnegation, or to attain to the same measure of grace, which also is the special lot and inheritance of His chosen ones, still I would venture to insist that it is not, and need not be, wholly impossible, since "it is God Who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure," Who "is able to make all grace abound in us. That on which, however, I wish chiefly to lay stress is the oneness of the Christ-life—since it is His life—whether in the world or in the cloister; on the sacredness of the common life and its duties; on the necessity, as a general rule, of beginning the religious and, still more, the priestly life in the Christian home. It is a necessity, I am bold to say, no less urgent, no less inevitable, than that of beginning our heavenly life in this earthly home in which God has placed us.

It is right and fit, it is only our duty, to insist at all times, and in these days most of all, on the high dignity and privilege of the religious life, of the need of the Church—to say nothing of the world—has of many vocations to this "better part." All that I aim at here is to base the dignity and privilege of that higher state, and of the highest of all—the priesthood—on the sanctity of the common life, and on the oneness of the life of Christ, Our Lord, in all who are His. It is in this that the sanctification of the priest and of the religious must begin. The more perfect we can make it therefore, the more we insist on its sacredness, on its high dignity—a dignity no less than that of God's children, fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God;" on its high privilege that of serving and glorifying God in all things,—the more shall we see its fruits in multiplied, heart-whole vocations; its perfection in the sanctuary and in the cloister.

For is not the essence of the Christ-life, in the world, at the altar, or in the religious house, this and this only, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me?" Is not its end, its consummation, for each one of us, this, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is?" If so, then the Christ-life is the true common life, and is nothing less than divine, since it is His life, Who is ours; common alike to priest, to religious, and to those in the world; its perfection in each state, its Christ likeness—its likeness to Him Who came that we might have life more abundantly, that we might abide in Him, and He in us.

And the reward? "None other than Thyself," as St. Thomas of Aquin prayed. What matter if the degree and measure of it seem less or more to our human vision—if Mary seem nearer to Him than Martha? It is Himself that He gives; here in the world—for it was Martha who received Him into her house; in the cloister most of all; and most perfectly to His "other selves," His priests; best of all and most fully in His Father's house, where, as He tells us, we "shall see His face, and His servants shall serve Him." Surely we may say with David: "When I awake up after Thy likeness, I shall be satisfied with it." And, since it is by way of the common life—of life in the world, life "hidden with Christ in God,"—that most of us must hope to attain, if at all, to this reward, I have tried here to make its sacredness plain: thereby not lessening, but exalting, as I honestly believe and intend, the greater sacredness of the life rightly called religious.—Francis W. Grey in the Ave Maria.

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In striving to gain the mastery over his passions and crush out his own selfishness, a man is laying the ax to the very root of all his troubles.—Ignatius of Loyola.

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