

to decide for you in whatever manner he shall consider in the sight of God, and not in the way that would be most agreeable to you, according to nature and the world. When you act with this uprightness and good faith, you have every reason to hope, that God will preside at the judgment of his minister, and that the spirit of truth will inspire him with a just decision in your regard, and one that you may safely follow. But in the second place, you ought to reckon amongst the ministers of God, both your parents from whom you have received life. Fathers and mothers are, after God, and according to the order of God, the first superiors of their children, and instead of gospel liberty, it would be a culpable independence, to withdraw ourselves absolutely from the paternal authority in the choice of a state of life. It is true, that we are not always bound to conform to the desires of a father and mother, who are too full of the spirit of the world, and that there are occasions when we may answer them in the words of the Apostles: *Is it just that we should obey you in preference to God?* Acts iv. But we should, at least, listen to them, examine their reasons, and yield to them if we have no stronger to advance; in a word, whether we agree to their desire, or act differently for the sake of our salvation, we should always give them proofs of our filial submission and respect.

IX. It remains, that you consult, or in St. Paul's language, that you *prove*

yourself. For God has given us discernment and reason, that we may use them in all our affairs, but particularly those which are of so much consequence to us as the choice of a state of life. Examine then, without deceiving yourself, what state of life that is, in which above all others you can give most glory to God, in which it will be most easy to work out your salvation, and for which you are most suited, by the qualities of your mind and heart.—For it may be, that with the natural dispositions which God has given you, you might be lost in a state in which another would be saved, or the contrary. At all events, you should remember, that every deliberation of yours should be referred to your salvation, as to your only end; that you should not form an opinion of a state of life, nor value one state more than another, only, inasmuch as it will more surely conduce to your salvation; that all you have to consider in yourself should be reduced to that single question, which the young man in the gospel addressed to Jesus Christ: *What must I do to obtain eternal life?* Luke x. For, the grand principle which you should lay down, and from which you should draw all its consequences is, *I desire to work out my salvation; and I desire to secure it at any price.* On this point, I require no deliberation; my mind is already determined. But there are many ways of securing my salvation, and one of the most effectual is a state of life.—Now, of all the states of life which pre-