

Madame Alacoque, her mother, had for some time been in ill-health. She felt herself quite unable to fulfil her duties as head of the house. She therefore took into her family various relatives of her husband and her own, and two or three old married servants. Into the hands of these new comers she gave not only her authority, but her house and money, all that she possessed, so that she and her daughter were dependent on them for the mere necessities of life. And the new-comers, far from bestowing any care on Margaret and her mother in return, soon claimed absolute authority, and behaved with the greatest cruelty towards both. Margaret was so fully under the control of these people that she could not leave the house without their permission, which was often refused. She had no clothes to wear, and she found herself oftentimes obliged to borrow some covering to go to Mass in. To keep herself from starving she had often to beg a morsel of bread. If, when refused permission to visit the Blessed Sacrament, she showed her sorrow, she was taunted and accused in the most ignoble manner of having made other appointments. If she hid herself for a short time in the garden or stable to weep and pray undisturbed, she was greeted on her return with a torrent of abuse for having neglected the care of the children, or other manual work, which had been set for her to do. She passed her days among the servants, and her nights in weeping. All this suffering, with far more, which her humility has only hinted at, was sent her to wean her from the love of the world and to draw her more closely to God. It seemed a heavy punishment for what we should term her slight infidelities to grace.

How many lessons after all does it teach us of the jealous love of God and the purity He requires in His saints. When we find such a history as these two years of anguish. whether we regard it as a punishment for neglect of grace. or as a trial to prepare a soul for future favors, we begin to see dimly the uphill road to sanctity.