

expedient what only Christ can do? You cannot consecrate yourself or anything else by a form, a habit, a vow. Are you not putting an externally devised discipline, a human rule, in the place of Christ? The answer to such questions is simple and joyful. This rule, the profession of the three counsels, constitutes what is called "religion," and "religion" is "that which binds." The whole meaning of this religion of the three vows is something done to bind me more personally to Christ than I ever realized before while I kept my independence.

But there is more to say than this. This "religion," this state which I enter to-day, is not a new device for coming at last to Christ, to bind me a little closer to Christ *externally*, but it is a *grace*; it is Jesus Christ's life springing up within me, a member of His Body. Jesus Christ is the Original of all "religious" persons. He is Himself the only "Religious," the one perfectly consecrated Man. In Him human nature is dedicated and given, body and soul, to GOD. And so Jesus in Heaven is the Fountain of all consecration, of all Holy vocations. Our vocation to religion is Jesus Christ's vocation and response, going on in us, and calling us to the Father. Your sacrifice to-day is the sacrifice of the One True Religious, Jesus Christ, going on in you. These vows are His vow, as the Dedicated Man, going on. He uttered His vow as the Religious when He came into this world, "Lo, I come to do Thy will; Thy law is within My heart, I delight to do it."

There was the Rule of the true Religious; and our Lord teaches us expressly that He consecrated Himself, not that His consecration might make His own life merely a sacrifice, but that we might share it, as we might be able to understand it, and rise up to it, "For their sakes I consecrate Myself that they also may be consecrated through the truth."* The Lord Jesus Christ has all His treasures, and his Religious dedication to the Father among them, not for Himself, but for us, as far as we are able to receive them. Consider what it is to partake of the Religion of Jesus Christ in Heaven. His personal consecration to the Eternal Father. These vows then bind you, not to do more work for Christ—perhaps your life was already well filled with honest and charitable work—but they bind you never to do anything apart from Christ, never to do anything like a machine, of weary necessity, hopelessly, or with pride and self-confidence. Jesus Christ's "Religion," the life of His consecration, that is of His love to the Father, is to come into all the drudgery of your charitable service, the marking of registers, the perpetual repetition, and drill of classes.

*St. John xvii, 19.