

distance, and in matters of the soul, the meaning of the word is identical. It is a withdrawal from the turmoil of life for a few days in order to meditate on eternal interests. St. Ignatius, in his Spiritual Exercises, does not understand it otherwise. So, from the outset, the religious of his Order have always endeavoured to hold in readiness secluded asylums for the convenience of those who have a wish to devote a few days to the study of the great truths of religion. Retreats thus made in seclusion, or in houses expressly set apart for that purpose, are the only ones which are wholly deserving of the name; for then, indeed, we separate ourselves from family, friends and business of every kind, in order to treat with God in holy solitude on the affairs of eternity, and on the world which is to come.

It might seem, at first sight, that retreats of this nature were fitted for those souls only, who, by a special vocation, are called to live removed from the daily intercourse of their fellowmen, and from the noise and bustle of worldly affairs. But the prompt testimony of experience points to their powerful efficacy for good with all classes of Christian society, and consequently with such of the faithful, as a whole, who are engaged in worldly affairs. The great Bourdaloue remarked that these retreats were preferably for just such classes of Christians; in fact, for them "they were more necessary." \*

So much so, that when Pope Paul III published in 1548 his famous bull *Pastoralis officii*, in which he lavished so much praise on the Book of the Exercises, he did not confine himself to a bare declaration that they were "replete with piety and holiness, most helpful and most salutary for the edification of souls and their spiritual advancement; but he added an exhortation to the august testimony he then bore:

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\* Sermon on the *Character of the Christian*; XVIIIth Sunday after Pentecost.—Part I.