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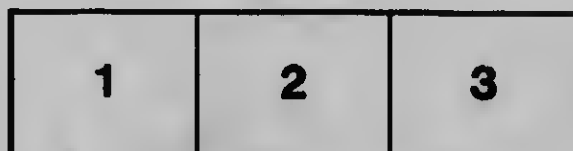
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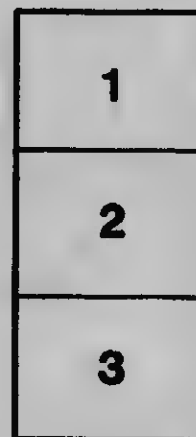
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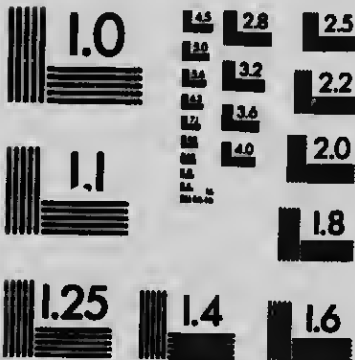
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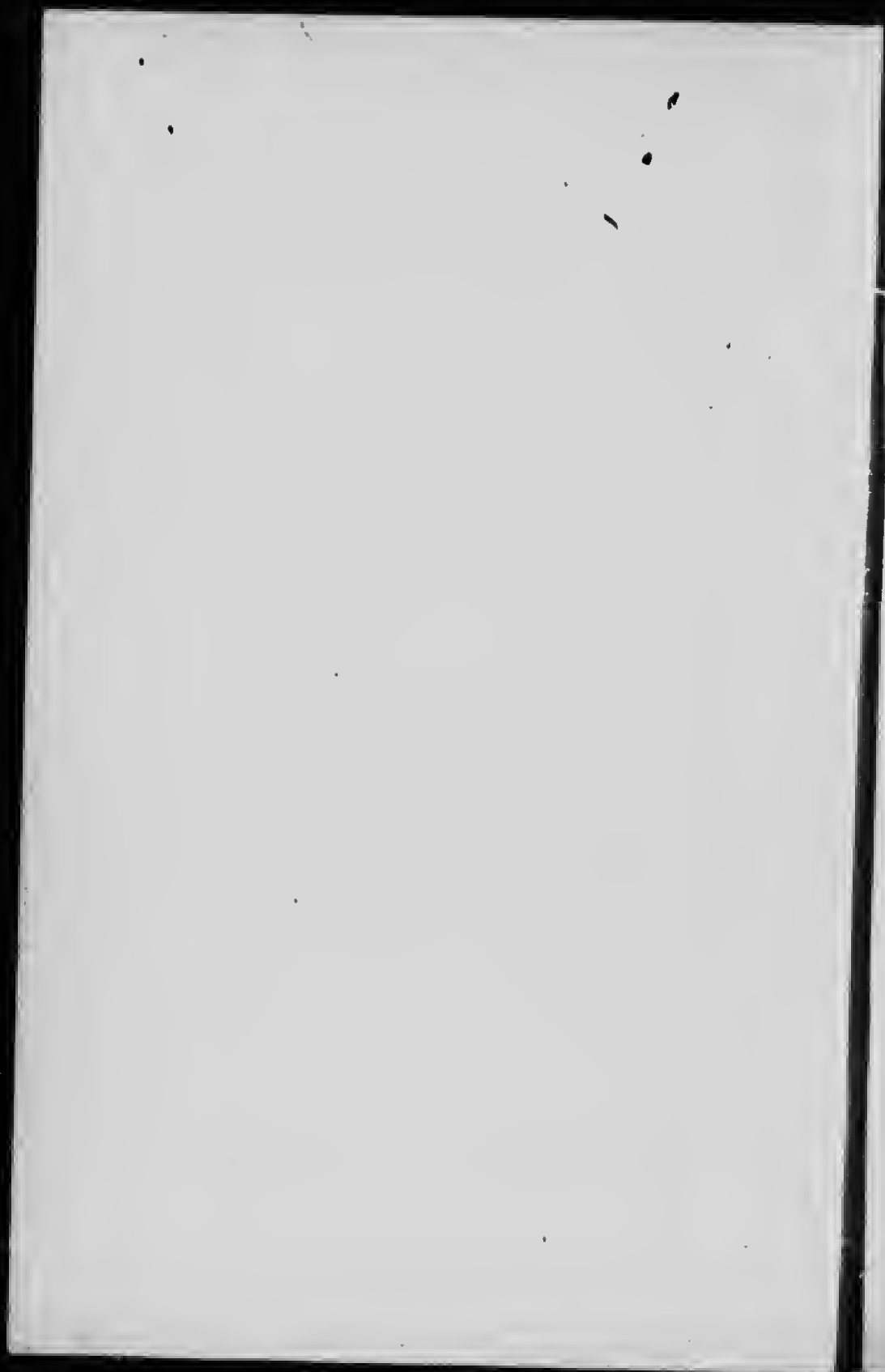
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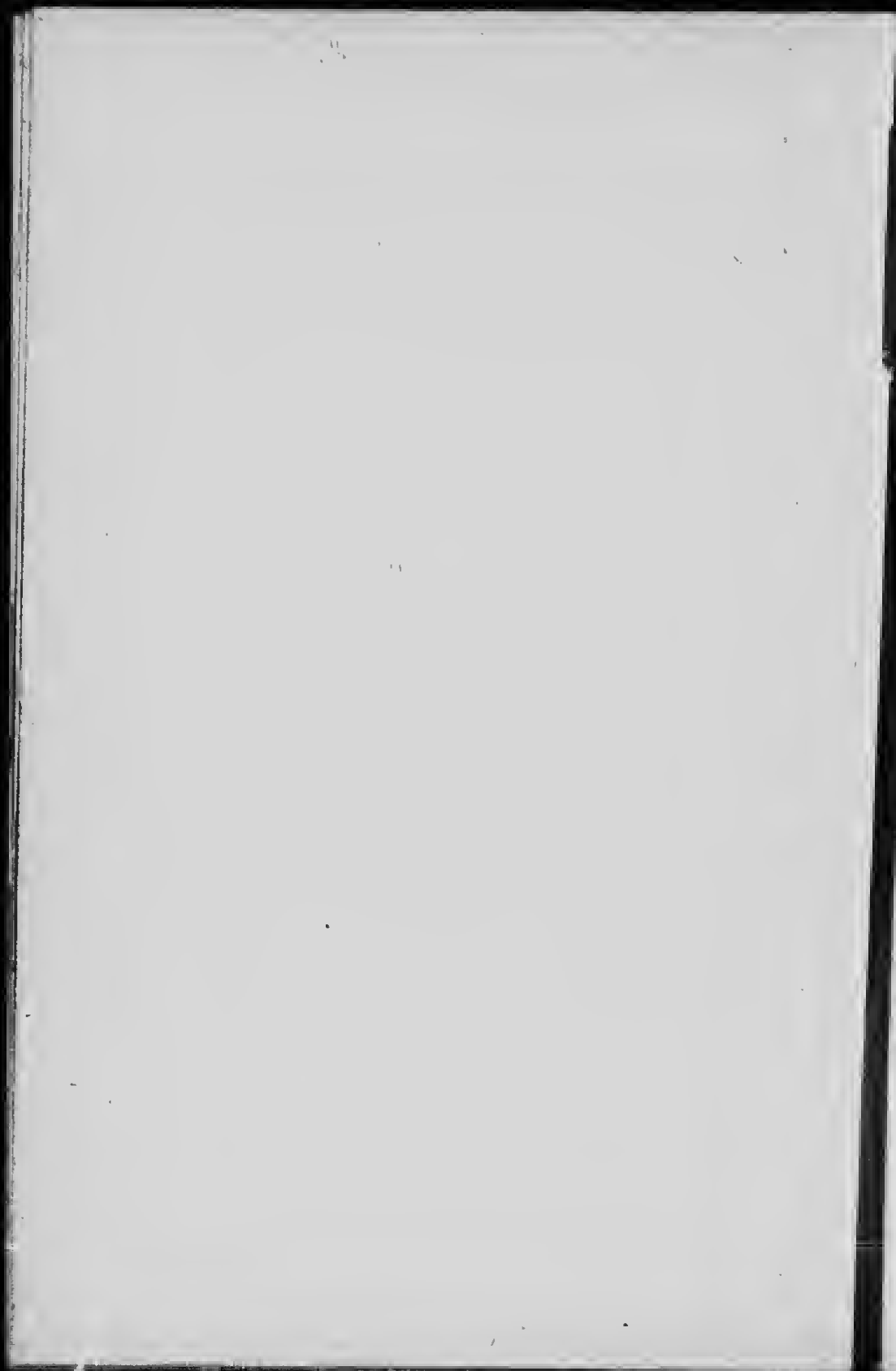
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TO
THE DIRECTORS
PROMOTERS AND ASSOCIATES
OF
THE LEAGUE OF THE SACRED HEART IN CANADA
AND NEWFOUNDLAND
WITH WHOM
THE AUTHOR HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED
FOR MANY YEARS IN THE WORK OF SPREADING
THEIR FAVORITE DEVOTION
THIS VOLUME
IS
AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED



AUTHOR'S NOTE

THE essays in the present volume have appeared in print from time to time during the past few years. They have been gathered together, rewritten most of them, and are now offered to the public in permanent form. A glance at the Table of Contents will show that they outline, more or less definitely of course, a few of the social and spiritual questions that should engage the minds of Catholics in this strenuous age. It may be well to add, however, in order to head off unnecessary criticism, that we are not publishing these essays for the benefit of speculative dreamers or the higher critics; and those people should not be disappointed if they find our prose too commonplace for their peculiar needs. The readers we have in view are people of simpler tastes, that is to say, plain Catholics, who are likely to be satisfied with the

old truths of their catechism served up under new forms. From these we hope that the brief and practical treatment of the topics herewith presented will have at least a passing welcome.

Our aim in bringing out these Fireside Messages is, first of all, to provide mental food for Catholics who do not reflect enough, perhaps, on matters which have a bearing on eternity; and, secondly, to encourage the custom of spiritual reading around Catholic firesides, a custom almost forgotten in an age given over to novels and newspapers. How many hours are lost in useless reading; and yet how little time we pilgrims here on earth can afford to lose! A short quarter of an hour spent daily in reading aloud out of this volume, or out of volumes of a similar character, would help greatly to keep up a sound Catholic spirit in our homes.

E. J. D.

CONTENTS

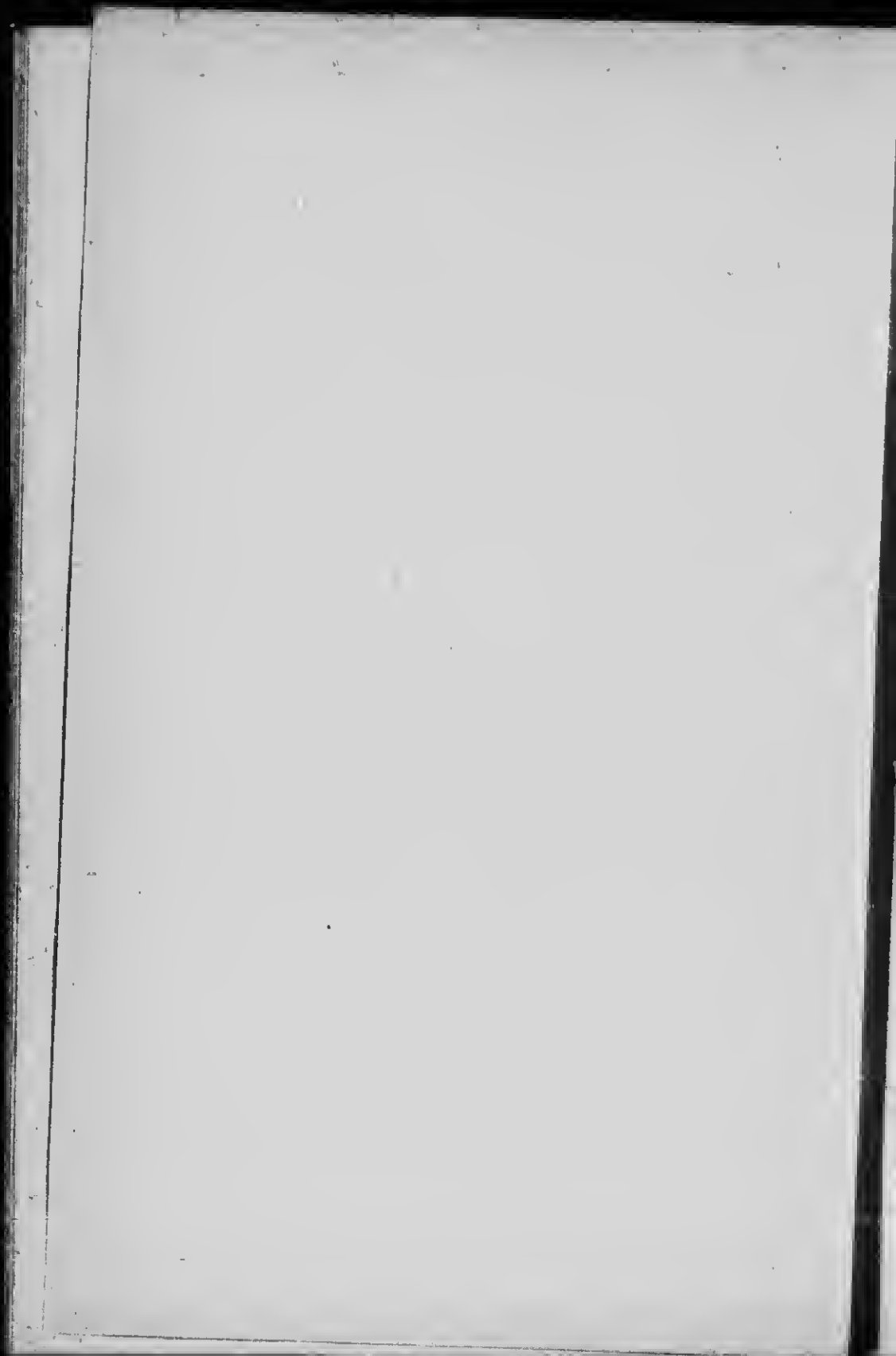
I. <i>Ideal Catholic Homes</i>	1
II. <i>Catholic Motherhood</i>	14
III. <i>Training the Little Ones</i>	25
IV. <i>Christian Education</i>	35
V. <i>Religion in Schools</i>	45
VI. <i>After Schooldays</i>	57
VII. <i>Religion at Home</i>	66
VIII. <i>Our Young Men</i>	75
IX. <i>Our Life's Calling</i>	88
X. <i>Responsibilities of Marriage</i>	98
XI. <i>Towards the Altar</i>	107
XII. <i>Our Parish Clergy</i>	117
XIII. <i>Religious Communities</i>	128
XIV. <i>The Lord's Own Day</i>	141
XV. <i>Sunday Rest</i>	154
XVI. <i>Spiritual Directors</i>	165
XVII. <i>Reviving our Fervor</i>	174
XVIII. <i>Shrines and Pilgrimages</i>	183
XIX. <i>Integrity of the Faith</i>	194

XX.	<i>Helping the Holy Father.....</i>	202
XXI.	<i>The Field Afar.....</i>	211
XXII.	<i>Spread of the Faith.....</i>	222
XXIII.	<i>One Fold, One Shepherd....</i>	232
XXIV.	<i>Catholic Social Works.....</i>	241
XXV.	<i>Secret Societies.....</i>	253
XXVI.	<i>The Church and Progress....</i>	265
XXVII.	<i>Peace through the Church....</i>	272
XXVIII.	<i>The Generosity of God.....</i>	283
XXIX.	<i>Recognizing God's Gifts.....</i>	292
XXX.	<i>Devotion to the Sacred Heart..</i>	300
XXXI.	<i>Reign of the Sacred Heart... </i>	311
XXXII.	<i>The Bane of Egotism.....</i>	323
XXXIII.	<i>The Study of Self.....</i>	333
XXXIV.	<i>Disinterestedness.....</i>	342
XXXV.	<i>The Ten Commandments....</i>	350
XXXVI.	<i>Souls in Mortal Sin.....</i>	359
XXXVII.	<i>Lukewarmness.....</i>	367
XXXVIII.	<i>Atonement for Sin.....</i>	377
XXXIX.	<i>Our Heavenly Queen.....</i>	388
XL.	<i>Books and Reading.....</i>	402
XLI.	<i>Zeal for Souls.....</i>	413
XLII.	<i>Work among the Poor.....</i>	424
XLIII.	<i>The Meek of Heart.....</i>	434
XLIV.	<i>The Value of Suffering.....</i>	443
XLV.	<i>The Will of God.....</i>	451

CONTENTS

xi

<i>XLVI. The Rights of God.....</i>	<i>460</i>
<i>XLVII. The Heavenly Banquet.....</i>	<i>471</i>
<i>XLVIII. Dispositions for Communion.</i>	<i>483</i>
<i>XLIX. Messengers of God.....</i>	<i>498</i>
<i>L. Friends at Court.....</i>	<i>506</i>
<i>LI. The Passing Years.....</i>	<i>515</i>
<i>LII. The Final Summons.....</i>	<i>526</i>



FIRESIDE MESSAGES

I

IDEAL CATHOLIC HOMES

He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the winds: and the fool shall serve the wise.—
PROV. II, 29.

*Be not as a lion in thy house, terrifying them of thy household, and oppressing them that are under thee.—*ECCLUS. IV, 35.

THE mere title of this message, suggestive as it is of the introduction or the renewal of a Catholic spirit in our homes, should furnish food for much serious thought. A poet tells us that

Home is the resort
Of love, of joy, of peace, and plenty; where,
Supporting and supported, polished friends
And dear relations mingle into bliss.

In the ideal home religion should temper the merely natural virtues. Husband and wife and children, welded together by the

bonds of a love that has God for its author, form the ideal Catholic home; here may we look for peace and happiness.

Married life among Catholics is not a mere contract or partnership to which certain serious obligations are attached; nor is it merely a union of two persons who agree to live in harmony and to exercise authority over children; it is this and something more. With us marriage is undoubtedly a contract entailing positive obligations, but, unlike other contracts, it is given a sacramental dignity; it is a mutual and permanent agreement entered into in the presence of an approving God, who endows it with special graces, so that the end in view may be the more easily attained.

The Catholic Church holds that the union of two persons in marriage is a sacred thing; moreover, that the family of which it is the source is specially designed by God and may claim His immediate protection. Hence we may not eliminate God from our homes; His spirit should constantly reign therein, animating, encouraging, consoling its members, who in their turn should bless and glorify

His name, whether their lo' be cast in joy or in sorrow.

There are Catholics who do not always look at the family tie in this supernatural light. Their desire for harmony and peace in the married life is undoubtedly sincere; the love of husband and wife, of parents and children, being the result of natural affection, is looked upon as a matter of course; but it is not an unfair question to ask parents whether they fully realize the sacramental character of their union, or whether they admit that the Church has a right to dictate to them regarding their responsibilities.

A few considerations may make things clearer. The Church considers the home as the nursery of civil and religious society. Civil society must go to the family for its kings and subjects, its leaders and statesmen, its administrators of justice; for all who work for its preservation and betterment; in a word, while the grades of civil society are many and complex, the home is, in final analysis, the source from which they all come. If the home is not constantly animated with the spirit of God, if

justice and charity, mutual forbearance, and the other Christian virtues, are not cultivated therein, what kind of members will the home give to civil society? If God is practically banished from the life of the home, if He has no share in the molding of its members, what influence can He have later on in the careers of men and women who have never learned to know Him?

Similarly, it is to the Catholic home that the Church must go for the rank and file of her clergy, her pontiffs, her defenders. If a Catholic spirit does not quicken souls, if the Sacraments and other means of grace are ignored, if, finally, worldliness has usurped the place of the Spirit of God in the home, what kind of Catholics will emerge therefrom, and what kind of recruits may the Church hope to secure for her service? A miracle of grace is needed to transform a worldly Catholic home into a centre of piety, and yet God is not bound to perform miracles. This may possibly account not merely for the present day dearth of vocations to the priesthood, but for much that distresses us in Catholic circles. We Cath-

olice should try to take a lofty view of all that is embodied in the word "home." The welfare of society, both civil and religious, calls for a true conception of the character of the family, and a thorough appreciation of the sacrifices and mutual devotedness that family life entails.

One characteristic that we should look for is *unity*. The words that fell from the lips of God Himself in the early days of the race, "They shall be two in one flesh,"¹ are still as full of meaning as they were on the day they were uttered, not merely because they have a definite cogency of their own, but also because they symbolise the unity of thought and sentiment which an ancient philosopher, unconsciously echoing a still more ancient tradition, described as "one soul in two bodies."

Another characteristic is *indissolubility*, and is a consequence of the first. "What God hath joined together let no man put asunder,"² is the last word regarding the perpetual union of husband and wife. This is perfectly understood by the Church, and

¹ Genesis ii, 24.

² Mark x, 9

the world gives her credit for it. She insists not merely on the union of bodies by the marriage contract, but also on the union of hearts by love, teaching meanwhile that one is supplementary of the other. No one knows better than the true Catholic that a union of hearts is necessary in the home, in order to fulfil properly the functions of a family. Where there is no love there is no harmony; where there is no harmony there is no happiness.

There are reasons, in the present age, why this indissolubility should be insisted on with greater stress than formerly. Not since the establishment of Christianity itself has the home, that common basis of civil and religious society, been so strongly shaken as in our days. The abominable excrescence called Divorce, introduced by the enemies of God and of His Church, and tolerated by so many Governments, has wrought havoc with the sacred ties of family in millions of homes. Happily, the sacramental character of the marriage bond keeps the question of divorce outside of the practical sphere as far as Catholics are concerned; there is no danger that the Church

will ever belie herself or her Divine Legislator by trying to minimise the obligations of the marriage contract or by tampering with its perpetuity. But it may happen, even among Catholics, that while the external and visible union is intact, the bond that the world cannot see is rent asunder. It may happen that though the Catholic home is not broken up, love has taken its flight therefrom; and then the lives of two become very often a burden too heavy to carry.

The estrangement of hearts and the forgetfulness of marriage vows which unhappily are often witnessed nowadays, have been discussed until the subject is threadbare, and various reasons are suggested to explain why this anomaly is found in many Catholic homes. May not the true reason be sought in modern education and in the strenuousness of modern methods? The results of environment are necessarily felt in Catholic as well as in other families, and have given the word "home" a meaning differing greatly from what it had a score of years ago. The multiplication of clubs

and theatres and other sources of amusement, the ease of travel, long absences from the hearth, neglect of the Sacraments, disputes over money and legacies—to which must be added immature alliances and mixed marriages—quickly snap asunder the bonds of love. In too many Catholic homes there is no longer that unity of thought, of tastes, of affection, of hopes, of interests, there once was, and yet these are the elements of the little meed of happiness we enjoy here below. It is sad to contemplate the members of a Catholic family trending each in his or her way, without a thought for feelings once held so sacred. A time was when there was no rivalry, no opposing convictions, no division of interests, no thwarting of each other. Now this is changed; and sad to say, under the withering influence of family quarrels and divisions, the noblest instincts born of love are stifled, straightforward characters are given a false direction, and lofty natures are reduced to inactivity, not to speak of the scandal given to neighbors and offence to God. Disunion of hearts is not divorce

in the odious legal acceptance of the term, but it is a divorce for all that, and should consequently find no place in the Catholic home.

And yet this is the dark side of the picture. There are, indeed, numerous ideal Catholic homes in our land, centers of noble love and devotedness, where the father is the head, the mother the heart, and the members the children of the unit which the Almighty destined to be the foundation of human society. The consoling spectacle of families united in heart, and at peace with God and man, may still be seen, and for this we cannot be too grateful.

For those who do not possess this pearl of happiness in their homes we should pray earnestly. A renewal of the true family spirit to replace the spirit of bickering and strife, is desired by the Church not merely among Catholics but among all, even among those without the fold, who feel the need of renewal. While here in Canada the hideous privilege of granting divorce is rarely exercised by our legislators, there is nevertheless a current of opinion not unfavor-

able to it, and the wish is expressed now and then for a more popular use of the divorce court. If this tendency, as yet only timidly showing itself, is not crushed in the bud, it may some day develop into a demand for formal legislation. Now there is a public moral tone to be kept up in society, and we have a duty to perform not merely as Catholics but as citizens. Even though civil legislation in this matter cannot affect us or the unchanging character of our marriage laws, we know that our outside brethren are less scrupulous than we are; there is always danger that laws may be enacted which will render divorce easier in this country. Sound public sentiment is urgently needed to prevent legislation against marriage, and Catholics can do a great deal to influence anything legislators may propose.

While we need not fear that divorce will ever get a foothold in our own homes, there are other dangers that are not so well provided against. We should never forget that the family spirit, that half-natural, half-supernatural instinct, that urges

truly Catholic families to submit personal interests to the general well-being, is a hundred times more precious in the sight of God than the egotism that seeks to destroy it. Weighing our joys and our sorrows, in the seclusion and intimacy of the home, is a far nobler and more Catholic way of doing things than giving them full vent in the glare of publicity, as is too often the custom nowadays. The true Catholic spirit teaches us to shrink from the gaze of the multitude. Our home is a sanctuary, where it is our own privilege to enter; here the Catholic atmosphere draws hearts together, and the trials of life become lighter. In the intimacy of the truly Catholic home noble characters are formed, lofty sentiments are fostered, virtues are cultivated, religion exercises its sway; in a word, in a truly Catholic home God is glorified, and, as far as we can assure ourselves, our passport to our eternal home is assured.

To whom shall we turn for help in this work of renewing the spirit in Catholic homes? To none other surely than to the Sacred Heart. Jesus, our Saviour and King,

is the great model after whom we must form our hearts. The Catholic spirit means personal devotedness and a willingness to sacrifice self for others; it means reciprocal union of husband and wife, of parents and children; it means submission to authority; devotedness which never wearies, strong enough to overcome the friction which every day brings with it, generous enough to banish suggestions of selfishness. All these qualities are to be found in the inexhaustible Heart of our Divine Saviour.

We should, then, fathers, mother:, children, servants, all go to this source and beg earnestly for the virtues that make life worth living here on earth. Jesus is the type of self-sacrificing love and filial submission, of loving forbearance, and enduring charity. Let His admirable Heart inspire members of our Catholic families and urge them to a greater union and love for one another.

This Catholic spirit once acquired—or, if it be lost, regained—will strengthen us to work and pray together, it will encourage us to inhale the air of heaven together,

it will console us here below in the common hope of eternity. When the end does come, and we must lay down the burdens of life, our faith, hope and charity shall have grown in intensity; so true is it that the close union of families, even though it is temporary, is merely the prelude of the union which shall have no ending.

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II

CATHOLIC MOTHERHOOD

And the parents taking their daughter, kissed her, and let her go: Admonishing her.... to love her husband, to take care of her family, to govern the house, and to behave herself without blame.
—TOBIAS X, 12, 13.

I will therefore that the younger should marry, bear children, be mistresses of families, give no occasion to the adversary to speak evil.—I TIMOTHY V, 14.

THE fourth commandment, given to us by God Himself, is a formal order to honor our father and our mother. To these two creatures, as the authors of our physical being and the representatives near us of Divine authority, is prescribed a homage second only to that which owe to the Creator Himself. The reason for this homage is because parenthood is a holy thing. In all ages, even during the early ages of paganism, a halo of love and respect was thrown around the names and persons of parents; and the ancients have left us some splendid examples of the sacrifices they could make to show their love for the author of

their days. But pagan love, no matter how intense, was a sentiment rarely hallowed by supernatural motives. The advent of our Blessed Redeemer and the influence of His doctrines, which permitted us to add to the name of father and mother the epithet of Christian and Catholic, and to practise all that these words stood for, modified the relations of parent and child, and raised what is a purely natural affection to a higher plane.

If children must needs love and honor their parents, as they all are taught to do, parents on their side have corresponding obligations towards their children. It seems therefore, the proper thing here to remind Catholic mothers of a few of their responsibilities. The age in which we live, or rather its social strenuousness, has blunted in many a mother's mind the perception of the dignity of her motherhood and the seriousness of the obligations attached to it.

The vocation to motherhood the vocation of the greater number. It is in the eyes of the Church a sublime calling, a holy state, one that supposes the exercise of noble and lofty virtues, one that carries with it serious

responsibilities. If all Catholic mothers recognized the apostolic nature of their vocation, we should soon see a transformation of the family spirit throughout the Catholic world. Worldliness and its maxims would be banished from our Catholic homes; God and His amiable laws would rule therein, and coming generations would feel their strengthening effects. What are the teachings of nature and of the Gospel on the mission of motherhood? And what are the means placed in the hands of Catholic mothers to carry out their mission?

A recent writer tells us that if the heart of man is a masterpiece of the power and goodness of God, the heart of woman has perfections higher still. If we except the heart of a virgin martyr, a mother's heart holds the highest place among the hearts of women, because the love of which it is the organ and the symbol is, after the love it has for God, the purest, most elevating and most powerful of human loves. The Creator has poured into the hearts of mothers inexhaustible treasures of tenderness, of patience and goodness, of sweetness and strength, of devotedness and

heroism. Nothing can stay the flow of the love which is the source of all these virtues; nothing can diminish its intensity. A true mother lives on this love; her every breath is a sigh of love; like Antigone of old she was born to love.

When God wished to give us an idea of His love for us, that is, when He wished to make the sinner understand what an ocean of tenderness and mercy was in His love for man, He could do nothing better than compare Himself to a mother. "As one whom a mother caresseth so will I comfort you."¹ "He will have mercy on thee more than a mother.", "Can a woman forget her infant?.... and if she should forget, yet will I not forget you."²

Love then in some way comparable to the love of God for man is the kind of love that fills a mother's heart; it is an influence that moves the very fibers of her being. To prove this we have only to take the spectacle of a Catholic mother at the bedside of a dying child, where every movement is interpreted, when every sign of a coming dissolution, no matter how slowly, is watched amid her tears.

¹ Is. lxvi, 13.

² Eccl. iv, 11.

³ Is. xlix, 15.

Her look is one of intense earnestness, because she is peering for a ray of hope; her face is drawn and ghastly, because her heart is breaking; her lips are meanwhile uttering prayers to God to spare her child. And yet it may be that God does not heed her—for God knows best. It is then a truly Catholic mother knows how to say bravely "Thy will be done!" And yet with all her resignation there is for her on earth no further consolation. If the mourning mother overcomes her sorrow, or hides it for the moment, the effort is almost superhuman, she does not wish to pain those who are sharing in her agony. If a smile rests on her lips, or a passing ray of sunshine lights up her brow, it is only an effect of her tenderness to those who are left to her. But the remembrance of the one who is gone remains vivid and undisturbed; the wound is still open and will remain open for many a day. A true mother, even while bending her head to the decree of God and willingly accepting the sacrifice, dies in the hope of seeing in heaven a child that has been snatched from her.

And yet this intense love is merely the

voice of nature; there are other and loftier points of view that a true Catholic mother keeps in sight in the dignity of her motherhood. She is not satisfied with being lavish of her love through merely natural motives; her religious training and convictions elevate her affection to a higher plane. The knowledge that her child has an immortal soul created in the likeness of God, redeemed by His blood and destined to eternal happiness with Him, gives a different aspect to her vocation. The examples which the Divine Master gave while on earth, appeal to her heart and console her; for while they eloquently tell her that her motherhood is a holy thing, they also tell her that the objects of her love are the objects of His love as well. Jewish mothers brought their little children to our Lord while he walked through Palestine, "that He might touch them." And when the disciples rebuked those mothers for troubling Jesus, the Master was much displeased and said to them, "Suffer little children to come unto me, for of such is the kingdom of God," and embracing and laying hands on them He blessed them. Here we have what

must have been, nearly two thousand years ago, the climax of the happiness of those Jewish mothers, the spectacle of the amiable Saviour blessing their children. There was a double reason for this happiness, first, the blessing itself which was a great grace for the little ones; then, the implicit approval the Master gave to the intensity of the love which brought mothers to His feet.

Our Lord is no longer with us in person, but His spirit still remains. His desire is to bless little children, and His Church, ever faithful to the traditions He left her, makes every effort to draw them to her. In this anxious effort she asks the cooperation of Catholic mothers. This is their real mission—to continue the work begun by Christ, to cooperate with the Church in the training of their children, to take human souls in their weakness and ignorance and form them in the way of truth and virtue, and thereby dispose them for all that is good and beautiful and eternal.

What are the means that Catholic mothers have at their disposal to help them carry out their mission? There is, first of all their

power of loving and the influence of their love.

Say to mothers what a holy charge
Is theirs — with what a kindly power their love
Might rule the fountain of the new-born mind.

Nothing can resist a mother's love. It may be that we can close our eyes to the light of faith, refuse to accept truth, and turn our back on virtue; but there is one thing we cannot do—brave a mother's tenderness and tears. Men who have been dead to all sense of honor, pitiless in their impiety, intense in the fury of their hatred of everything noble and good, have been known to become little children again under the eloquence of a mother's tears.

The second means that mothers may use is prayer. Prayer is help in their misery, hope in their sorrow, strength in their weakness, but a Catholic mother's prayers have an efficacy that those of another have not. Is it because her tears so often accompany her prayers? Or is it not rather because her prayers spring from a Catholic heart, and because she feels so deeply what she asks? And yet, praying to God for purely temporal favors in behalf of those on whom love is spent, while good in itself, is not the highest

mission of Catholic motherhood. Other and nobler interests may be at stake and may call for the intercessory power of her prayer. Human souls, souls of those near and dear, may need the help of a mother's prayers, the soul of a wayward son, for instance, who is lost to all sentiments of virtue and steeped in vice and sin, who has for many years, like Augustine perhaps, brought sorrow to a desolate home. It is then that a mother's mission should be active; but it is then, too, and we cannot too strongly insist upon it, that God will listen to her prayers as He listened to those of St. Monica. "If I prefer Truth above all," wrote the great Augustine, "if I love only it, if I am ready to die for it, I owe it to my mother. God could not resist her prayers.... If Thou hadst not forsaken me it is because my mother wept night and day and would have shed her heart's blood for me. What! repel a mother in the most sacred emotions of her heart! This could never be, O God! Thou didst heed the prayers of my mother and didst vouchsafe to listen to her according to the decree of Thy immutable love."

The third means—a powerful one in the hands of a Christian mother—is the beauty of her home life and the fragrance of her personal virtues. The goodness and the patience which should never falter, the motherly tenderness and the self-sacrifice which may find so many forms of expression in the family circle, are capable of moving the heart of those whom a Catholic mother is called upon to rule. And what are those personal virtues that she should practice? Her love of home and retirement, not seeking elsewhere for either joy or consolation; her love of labor and order and economy, so that the temporal well-being of those depending on her may not be endangered; her love of the simple life, so that all that refers to the government of her home may reflect that simplicity which is the virtue akin to greatness. In a mother's hands those personal virtues are a powerful form of apostleship. Queen in her own right, a mother's kingdom is her home, where she has full scope to exercise her authority and where she may rule with regal sway.

Love, therefore, prayer, and example, are the means which God has placed at the dis-

posal of Catholic mothers, and which, if rightly applied, are potent enough to transform the world. Let us implore the Sacred Heart of Him who loved little children; let us appeal to her who was the model mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, to give to all who are honored with the dignity of motherhood an increase of the virtues so needful for them to carry on their sublime mission among men.

III

TRAINING THE LITTLE ONES

Rejoice not in ungodly children, if they be multiplied: neither be delighted in them, "the fear of God be not with them..." for better is that feareth God than a thousand ungodly children. And it is better to die without children than to leave ungodly children.—ECCLUS. XVI, 1, 3, 4.

[N the happiness that may be enjoyed in this fragile life," said an old writer, "there is little more enjoyable than that of having, by assiduous study, secured the possession of the pearl Science. It is science that paves the way to a wise and happy life." Undoubtedly; but how often have we occasion to note that it is not science, or the enjoyment of it, that is man's ultimate object in life. Science for its own sake is a possession of doubtful utility; science without religion to guide and restrain it, is a dangerous possession; and the Christian parent is neither wise nor prudent who will permit his child to acquire science without this necessary leavening.

Our Lord showed for all time the little value He placed on mere human learning in the choice He made of His Apostles to be teachers of men. He who knew the human heart so well and its relation to our immortal destinies, did not insist on purely intellectual culture as essential to our well-being here or hereafter; otherwise would he have chosen illiterate fishermen to teach His Gospel instead of learned doctors from Rome or Athens?

No one questions the value of knowledge; it is always useful; it is useful in the age in which we live, and even necessary for those who court worldly success. It is a precious thing when used as a stepping-stone to Heaven; it may be dangerous if used otherwise; and on account of this indefinite character we are in duty bound at least to examine closely the channels through which it flows into the unformed minds of youth.

Two claimants, the State and the parent, struggle for the possession of the school. The State claims the right to form its citizens, and goes to extremes sometimes to uphold

this right. The Church, on the contrary, tells us that the parent is the natural teacher of the child. Nature and the history of the world take sides with her; they are unanimous in proclaiming absolute and inalienable the right of the parent to superintend the moral and intellectual training of his children. Reason asserts that he who has the responsibility of fatherhood on his shoulders should, as well as he is able and preferably to all others, provide his child with what is needed for its natural and social life.

It would be unnecessary to dwell on such self-evident truths as these were they not impugned so frequently and in so many unexpected quarters. This opposition is, most of the time, not made openly; but opposition to the doctrine of the Church on such an important matter as education is not less effective because it is tacit. A few thoughts concerning the source and nature of parental rights and duties may not be out of place; they may help us to form a true judgment on a matter so hotly discussed in the present age.

It was on Horeb that Johovah first made

known in a special manner His will to Moses: "Call together the people unto Me, that they may hear My words, and may learn to fear Me all the time that they live on earth, and may teach their children."¹ And the great Law-giver, faithful to his trust, laid the Divine commands before the chosen people, with this solemn injunction: "Forget not the words that thy eyes have seen, and let them not go out of thy heart all the days of thy life. Thou shalt teach them to thy sons and thy grandsons."²

What Moses impressed upon God's people as a rigorous duty, St. Paul corroborated as a Divine command to Christ's followers in the new dispensation: "And you, fathers, provoke not your sons to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord."³ "But if any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."⁴

What Christ is with regard to His Church, what bishops and priests are to their people, what the shepherds are to their flocks, such

¹ Deut. iv. 10.

² Ib. iv. 9.

³ Ephes. vi. 4.

⁴ I Tim. v. 8.

are parents to their children. It is for them to see that the wolf break not into the fold, that the sheep and lambs be led to rich and wholesome pastures, that noxious food be carefully kept out of their reach; otherwise the souls of their children will cry to heaven against them, as did the blood of Abel against his unnatural murderer.

Until children are able to take care of themselves, the responsibility of the moral welfare of their children weighs on the shoulders of fathers and mothers; and it is only when, through poverty, or incapacity, or sickness, or the multiplicity of other duties, they are unable to impart religious instruction in all its fulness to their little ones, they may shift this responsibility on to the shoulders of others. Parents are not at liberty to rid themselves of this personal obligation, or to surrender their rights. So true is this that, when circumstances oblige them to give over to others the training of their children, this temporary transfer may be made only when those others who assume the burden are competent and trustworthy and when there is a certainty that children's hearts will receive no taint.

Seeing that the Church has condemned the divorce of the teaching of religious truths from that of secular science Catholic parents must choose a system of teaching that is in harmony with tenets of their Church. Now how can any such choice become possible if liberty of teaching is not fully recognized; that is to say, if Catholics are not free to control institutions of their own? Whenever a system obtains that throws on Catholics the burden of supporting schools, to which they may not conscientiously send their children, a grave injustice is done them. If non-Catholics claim the right, and obtain it, of bringing up their children after the manner of their choice, why not Catholics also who pay their taxes and otherwise fulfill their duties of good citizenship?

The right of the Catholic citizen to liberty of teaching is grounded on his parental obligations in the natural order, on his duties as a parent, and on his constitutional privileges which put him on an equal footing with his fellow-citizens.

When we assert that parents have in the natural order a right to liberty in the question

at issue, we mean simply that God has imposed on parents, preferably to all others, the obligation of bringing up their children; no one has a right to put obstacles in the way, or to hamper them in their exercise of this right. But this right supposes other rights in the matter and mode of education. The selection of teachers for a child, the nature of the teaching, the choice of the methods of imparting it, are privileges that the parents may lay claim to, that they are not free to dispense with. Whoever has a right to the substance of a thing has a right to use and dispose of it in his own way.

The Catholic parent has another motive for seeing that his children's intellectual training be not divorced from religion. Religion should not be given a secondary role in schools, for it crowns all science; its place is at the top. The Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX, wrote in 1864: "Religious doctrine should hold the first place in teaching and education; it should hold sway to such an extent that all other branches of knowledge should appear, so to speak, as accessories." What constitutes a religious school is not that the greater

part, or even a great part, of the time be given over to the teaching of religion; it is the ordering of the exercises which take place in the school; the prayers and hymns at stated times; the attention given to the ecclesiastical year; the Catholic interpretation of history; the recurrence of feasts and the meaning that the Church puts on them; the community of ideas and consequent sympathy that exists between teacher and pupil as the outcome of religious instruction; the Catholic tone that pervades everything—all these things create the Catholic atmosphere in a school and cannot fail to make a deep impression on the little ones who live and move under its influence several hours every day. Who will deny the right of a parent to provide such a school as this if he sees fit?

The constitutional privileges of a Catholic should secure him from interference in such an essentially domestic function as the training of his children. Is it not evident that the intermingling of another authority would inevitably embarrass the liberty of the parent and destroy the unity of education, if it did not annihilate education itself? No authority

has a right to impose wearying "programmes" on a parent, or embarrassing restrictions, and above all, it has no right to jeopardize his liberty of conscience. Furthermore, man has a natural right to communicate the truth. We have an inborn inclination to give to others the notions we have acquired by personal endeavor, so that the act of teaching is, after all, the natural use of a faculty which no one has a right to prevent us from exercising. Surely a parent has a right to teach the truth to his children or to see that others teach it to them.

How slow men are to perceive that the welfare of a nation is involved in the training of its children, and religious training at that. A sound education, impregnated by the truths of religion and by the sanctions of a higher Power is the best earnest of the prosperity of a nation. This truism supposes two others, that education must be based on religion; that religious education can be imparted only by teachers of deep religious convictions.

While sympathising with those parents who are unjustly deprived of their rights to

educate their children as they wish, and deploring the fact that in some Provinces of this fair Dominion our fellow-Catholics have not the full privileges they are entitled to in their threefold capacity of parent, Christian and citizen, we should pray and beseech the Divine Heart of Jesus to enlighten the minds of legislators and move their hearts, so that justice and charity may guide them in their deliberations, may urge them to abolish unjust educational laws and prevent them from promulgating others that would jeopardize the souls of youth.

IV

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Bow down thy ear, and hear the words of the wise: and apply thy heart to My doctrine.. that thy trust may be in the Lord, wherefore I have also shown it to thee this day... that I might show thee the certainty, and the words of truth, to answer out of these to them that sent thee.—PROV. XXII, 17, 19, 21.

THE instinct of hatred which guides men in their attacks on the Catholic Church is rarely deceived. The arch-enemy of souls helps them in their perverse work, and points out to them the relative weakness or strength of the positions against which they should direct their violent attacks. And a recent writer, commenting on their cunning tactics, tells us that the importance given to these onslaughts by the enemies of the Church may help us Catholics to gauge unerringly the seriousness of the interests we have to defend.

If we use this principle to guide us we shall find that it is the education of children

that gives Satan and his agents the greatest concern. From the days of the Apostate Julian down to the present, the enemies of God's Church have tried to get hold of the minds and hearts of the little ones. They know well that if they wish to succeed in drawing souls away from Jesus Christ they must begin with childhood, for it is in early years that the human soul receives impressions which future influences, no matter of what character, rarely succeed in effacing altogether.

Corrupt nature is always ready to trend downwards, unless watched carefully and kept in a healthy environment. But we know by experience that even the most closely-hedged souls, do not resist the insinuating calls of the enemy and his satellites. Only too often do our Catholic sons and daughters, yielding to the influences that surround them, follow the example of the Prodigal in the Gospel and wander off into the regions of wickedness and incredulity. In our day, bad books, evil companionship, secret societies, the yellow press, undoubtedly rob the Church of many who have grown to

manhood and womanhood, and who have been nourished of her substance and warmed in her bosom. We have only too many examples of youth, trained in Catholic schools and given a start in the upward path, who forget their early teachings and wallow half a lifetime in the mire. It happens that in after-years the remembrance of the training they received in childhood brings many of the prodigals back to the fold; we may say at least that their early Catholic teaching, aided as it always will be by God's grace, is looked upon as the occasion of their return. But these conversions are victories gained over the agents of Satan. They fill them with rage and desire for revenge, and urge them to recur to more diabolical methods to reach their end. They aim at so complete a perversion of human souls that if they are given a free hand, poor prodigals shall have no souvenirs of Christian teaching to fall back upon that would suggest a return to grace. The agents of Satan in this world would pervert the intelligence and corrupt the heart from the dawn of reason, and would do this so completely as to hopelessly and

forever destroy in young souls the love of truth and the instinct of piety. What are their tactics? They abolish God from schools, they poison the well-springs of the moral life, they teach downright atheism, or, if they do not go that far, they teach a nebulous theism which designedly eliminates all dogma and morality. The catechism, according to them, is the greatest obstacle to the development of a child's faculties, for the human mind, when unfettered by the trammels of dogmatic teaching, becomes more apt for a career of worldliness and sin. There is method in their hatred; they find in Godless schools the surest way of blotting out forever any early impressions that may have been received in the Christian home. Alas, how shrewd is the arch-enemy of souls and how docile are his agents!

A line or two will help to throw further light on this subject. Moral responsibility supposes a knowledge of good and evil. This knowledge, of which all men are possessed in a certain degree, is developed and extended by the study of religion, and because of its importance it should be the first and principal

work of education. Undoubtedly, it is well and useful to teach facts and to form and develop the mind in profane matters, but uninformed children have a right to be thoroughly taught first and foremost how to discern the true from the false, the good from the bad. God and His action in this world can not be ignored. His Fatherhood, His Providence, His laws as revealed to us, His sanctions both in this life and the next, our free will and personal responsibility, must form the most important element in the education of children. Without this spiritual element added to profane instruction, education is not merely incomplete but even dangerous; and this is the real reason the Church will have nothing to do with education that ignores it. It is unjust to a child to teach it to admire the Universe and the laws that govern it, if no word is permitted to be spoken about the Law-maker. And still this system of atheistic education is considered by many as the ideal one in the age in which we live. One might as well admire and study the mechanism of a watch without giving a thought to the watchmaker.

Not merely does the Church insist on her children having a knowledge of God and of their duties to Him; but she tries also to inspire them with a desire to fulfil those duties. Knowledge may influence the will, but it cannot force it to act. So weakened is our poor human nature, as the result of original sin, that it is more inclined to follow its own appetites than the dictates of reason. An essential duty of an educator is to train the will; much depends on the proper use of this faculty. It is supremely important that from the dawn of reason the work of education should begin by planting the germs of good habits in the soul and encouraging them to develop. Children must be warned not merely of their own weakness but also of the dangers of external temptations; they must be taught when and where and how to fight against their own passions; they must be taught, even at the cost of tears, to resist their own inclinations and caprices. It is for not having drawn tears from a child that parents themselves have often to weep when the same child has grown to manhood.

A time comes in the life of most of us

when the work of our education is handed over to others. It may be that parents have not the time nor the ability to continue a child's training after a certain age. In such cases children are placed with teachers, who to all intents and purposes act the part of parents to those under their care. But this is the moment when a solemn choice must be made. Parents who have any regard for the spiritual welfare of their little ones will not allow them to breath the atmosphere of Godless schools or to listen to the voice of teachers who never speak of God. Catholics who would put their children in Godless schools and rely on mercenary teachers for the formation of their little ones' minds and hearts, assume a grave responsibility, and a just God will some day call them to account for the souls of their children.

The Catholic Church insists on education based on sound Catholic principles. Catholic teachers, Catholic atmosphere, Catholic schools, Catholic control, are what Catholics require, and what they should insist upon getting. All this was summed up by Pope Leo XIII, who tells us that the family

may be regarded as the cradle of civil society. Those who strive to divorce religious teaching from education are working to corrupt family life and to destroy it utterly. It is then incumbent on parents to strain every nerve to ward off such an outrage and to strive manfully to have and to hold exclusive authority and to direct the education of their offspring in a Christian manner; and first and foremost, to keep them away from schools where there is danger of their drifting into the poison of impiety. Where the right education of youth is concerned no amount of trouble or labor can be undertaken so great soever that even greater may not still be called for.

It seems almost incredible that there are men so perverse that rather than see a child imbibing doctrines which would make it pious, moral, lovable, expansive, all elements of future sound citizenship, they would prefer to teach it selfishness and sensuality, pride and insubordination. And yet it is true that there are men who live in hatred of God and of His Church, who spend their lives in trying to change light into darkness, truth

into error, and whose most ardent wish is to hide from the coming generations those great Christian laws and principles which furnish the solution of the tremendous problems of life. They are the men who are doing the devil's work in this world, and who would, if they could, silence the testimony of the Lord, which, according to the Psalmist, gives intelligence to those whose youth and inexperience have been deprived of it.

We cannot be surprised, then, to see the Church of God counteracting at every step the tactics of her enemies by insisting on the Christian education of her children; nor can we be surprised at the sacrifices she makes of time, energy and money, to build up those splendid schools and colleges and convents that dot our land. The little ones of Christ who bear the Divine Image impressed on their souls, and who are heirs to the kingdom of heaven, have a right to be strengthened against the corruptions of life and against whatever would jeopardize the title to their eternal legacy. The Church and her ministers, mindful of their obligations and feeling that they are responsible to God for those placed

under their care, are always on the watch, so that the enemy of souls and all those malign influences of which he has the monopoly, may not gain a foothold. No Catholic worthy of the name should be inactive when the interests of immortal souls are at stake.

V

RELIGION IN SCHOOLS

They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity.—
DANIEL XII, 3.

IN this age of feverish activity, knowledge is the key to success and the surest pledge of promotion in every sphere of endeavor. Without knowledge men are handicapped in the race through life; they must be satisfied with creeping painfully along while others who have knowledge forge ahead unhindered. So very obvious is this truth, proven as it is by daily experience, that Governments have in recent times made it one of their primary duties to facilitate the spread of knowledge. Cities and hamlets, hillsides and valleys, throughout the civilized world, have their humble schools and their centers of higher education, whither the youth of both sexes are invited to go and share in what should be

the birthright of rich and poor alike. In providing in this way for the diffusion of knowledge, Governments are influenced as much by motives of self-preservation as by the private interests of individuals; for it is a fact that the enlightenment of the citizens of a nation is one of the strongest guarantees of a nation's progress.

The work of training the minds of men and fitting them for the struggles for existence, both as individuals and as members of society, is a noble calling, and one can find only accents of praise for those parents and teachers whose life-work is that of imparting the blessings of true knowledge to God's little ones; just as accents of praise should be found for those Governments—few unhappily—who loyally aid parents and teachers to fulfil the duty which nature or vocation asks from them. A moment's reflection on the scope of knowledge will help us to appreciate still more fully the lofty duties imposed on those who are responsible for the education of children.

All that relates to life and the uplifting of our race, the physical, intellectual and

moral well-being of man, comes under the title of education. Education means the bringing out and development of those faculties which distinguish man from the rest of creation. Nothing but advantages are to be derived from the cultivation of the natural gifts which God has given to us; nothing but benefits to be reaped from the reducing of them to His service. What is more beneficial or more pleasurable than the acquisition of knowledge in its various branches—science, history, literature, the world of facts, and above all, that great, consoling fact, that there is a God above us who is the source of all knowledge, and that His kind Providence is watching over nations and individuals. Any educational system which ignores the fundamental truth that God exists or that He keeps an eye on us; which casts God aside as something superfluous or as unworthy of official recognition; which banishes religious instruction from its programme; which, in a word, discards as worthless that which should be the very groundwork of all true education, is a system that works havoc in human

souls and will sooner or later undermine the foundations of human society.

The State that imposes, or that fosters, Godless systems of education is a State that is working for its own downfall, nay more, it exceeds its powers. While a strong and useful ally in all things useful, the State is not an educational institution. Education by right of nature belongs to the parent, for the simple reason that the parent with all his inalienable rights to train his children existed before the State did. The State should help the parent in providing for the education of his children, but it should not attempt to supplant him in this office, nor deprive him of what is his by natural right. This, however, is what many States are doing nowadays; outraging the rights of parents by forcing upon them systems of State schools, and imposing on their children programmes of studies wherein knowledge of the Supreme Being is too often systematically ignored. With the State, physical well-being, position in life, money getting, the fleeting things of this world, are the main objects.

kept in view, and the training which it procures to the young is calculated to fit them to attain these objects and these only. Much useful knowledge is doubtlessly imparted, but it is of a purely material order; it is not education in its deeper and truer meaning. In these educational programmes, the higher realm of the spiritual world is left untouched, the great truths of the Christian Faith are ignored, a system of ethics based on merely natural motives is inculcated; while the will is left undisciplined, the conscience untrained, the sanctions of a future life entirely neglected. Thus children grow up to manhood and womanhood insufficiently grounded in the only things that are really worth knowing; and those who, a few years hence, will be the leaders of thought and action among their fellow-men, are sent out into the world only half equipped for the great task that lies before them.

If the absence of religious training is lamentable in the case of other Christian bodies, for us Catholics it is little sort of disastrous. Belonging as we do to a

highly organized religion, which possesses a large compact body of definite dogmatic teaching; brought into prominence by reason of practices and devotions which seem strange to the majority of those among whom we live, we Catholics are liable at any moment to be asked for explanations of doctrine or practice, or to be summoned to give reasons for the faith that is in us. If our religious training has been neglected, we are in danger, on such occasions, of being impaled on one or other horn of a very disagreeable dilemma: Either we distort the beautiful and sublime doctrines of the Church and misrepresent her practices, or we are forced to confess our ignorance of them, to our own utter shame and confusion. In either case our position would be regrettable, from the fact that a knowledge of religion has so many occasions of showing itself. Religious problems of various kinds are continually agitating men's minds. Matters of controversy which would demand time and knowledge for their adequate treatment are taken up by the ignorant and

the wise alike, all equally anxious to know what truth is, and where it is to be found. This unrest is at least an encouraging sign, for it is a proof that the intellectual world is conscious of its own deficiencies and is eager for enlightenment. To feel the need of knowledge is already a great step forward; for it is generally because the ignorant think they know, that so many lamentable errors are made in this world, and particularly in matters bearing on faith and morals. But if Catholics who have the truth are not able to impart it, to whom shall enquirers go? Catholics should lay up a store of sound dogmatic instruction, so that they may be able, when the occasions present themselves, to help their less fortunate neighbors to find a solution of their doubts, and thus lead them to the true source of all light and knowledge. It is well to know the truth; it is still better to be able to prove it to the satisfaction of others.

This dogmatic instruction, strange as it may sound to some ears, is given in the

little catechism. Here may be found concentrated, and yet in acceptable form, the doctrines that underlie right living. While seeing to it that men and women of the next generation receive solid training in secular branches to enable them to serve their interests in the race for life, Catholic parents, or in their stead, Catholic teachers, should instil into the minds of the young the elementary notions of Christian doctrine; they should recall to them the thought of God and their responsibility to Him; they should accustom them to habits of prayer and serious reflection and to the frequentation of the sacraments; but above all, in an age of doubt and enquiry like ours, they should give them sound catechetical instruction and furnish them with ammunition for controversial argument, so that Catholics may not be taken unprovided in the religious disputes of every day. Instruction of this character cannot be imparted in neutral schools which, being exempt by law from the obligation of religious teaching, allow nothing to be taught which at least favors

the Catholic religion. Neither can this instruction be given in schools hostile to religion, wherein Catholic children are seriously in danger of losing whatever religious truth they may have acquired at home. The grave obligation consequently rests on parents not to allow their children to frequent those schools, no matter what loss their action may entail or what penalties they may have to suffer. The danger of perversion is always imminent in the uninformed and plastic minds of children, and it is nothing less than criminal to expose them to the blighting influences of Godless or anti-Catholic schools. We might go further and say that even if complete perversion were not feared from those sources, the indifferentism engendered by association with non-Catholic teachers and pupils is a sufficient motive to keep Catholic children out of non-sectarian schools.

On this whole question of education, as in everything else, the Catholic Church speaks with authority and lays down the law to parents. She tells them that the use of those sources of knowledge wherein

literature and art are made to minister to sensuality, and wherein philosophy is made to wage war against truth, can have but one result—the eternal loss of souls created for God. Moreover, experience and common sense add this testimony, that a scholar without a conscience is a menace to society. The strongest efforts of every enemy of social order and religious truth, from the Apostate Julian to the most refined Materialist or Rationalist of our age, have been directed against the religious training of children. "Take the parent, let us have the children," said a modern infidel; and there was method in his frenzy. Give the infidel the work of developing young intellects and the future is his.

To sum up. It is because of the lack of religious instruction that indifference and apathy overwhelm human souls; that the least temporal advantage is preferred to eternal interests; that the directing principles of life are absent and all manner of moral compromises are readily accepted. As soon as individual interests become the law of life, all that serves their purpose

must be accepted, all that runs counter to them must be set aside. The appetites get the upper hand, and the clear notion of duty is replaced by caprice and passion. It is in vain that we strive to build up a moral edifice on any other foundation than that of Christian truth; those who try to do so waste their time.

Let those who are responsible for the training of youth understand then, once for all, that of man's many obligations, the most important are his duties to God and to his soul, and that of all the various branches of knowledge, the most essential is religious instruction, which fixes in the minds of young and old alike the nature and extent of those duties. Not one of them has a loftier object, not one of them receives applications more frequent or more fruitful. We may do without many things, but not without this; nothing can take the place of religious instruction. Even the most gifted minds will remain sterile or accomplish but little, if a knowledge of God and of His teachings does not form part of their equipment.

Let us therefore beg of the All-Wise, Supreme Source of all knowledge, to be mindful of the needs of parents and of those who are in authority; to inspire them with a deep sense of their obligations to those who have been entrusted to their care, so that they shall strive by every means in their power to procure for them that instruction which may enable them to glorify God, do honor to His Church, and save their souls.

VI

AFTER SCHOOLDAYS

Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayst be wise in thy latter end... Cease not, O my son, to hear instruction, and be not ignorant of the words of knowledge.—PROV. XIX, 20, 27.

My son, from thy youth up receive instruction, and even to thy grey hairs thou shalt find wisdom.—ECCLES. VI, 18.

THE real object of education is to give children resources that will endure as long as life endures; habits that time will improve on, not destroy; occupation that will render sickness tolerable, solitude pleasant, age venerable, life more dignified and useful, and death less terrible." The writer who penned these words—Sydney Smith—knew well that the effects of sound education should persevere long after a child has closed its career at school.

No sane educator will say that the real object of education is attained, if habits of virtue, barely formed during those impressionable school-years, are going to disappear

under the first adverse pressure of after-life. A plant has not reached maturity when it is transferred from the hot-house to the open garden; time and labor must still be spent before the owner gets the results he is looking for. No matter how well the school-years have been spent, or how high the hopes for a child's future, it is still a child when it throws aside its books, and consequently it must receive the treatment of a child. A sad error it is to think the contrary, and many a parent has been guilty of grave injustice who turned his child out on the cold world immediately after its school-days, to struggle unprepared with the enemies of its soul. A human body must wait for years before it attains to manly vigor; so it is with the human soul. The seeds of virtue are undoubtedly sown in the Catholic school; but those tiny germs, already sprouting in favorable soil, need careful and constant tending if the roots are to sink and spread. The child still needs to be guided, encouraged, strengthened. Religious instruction, good example, pious practices are to be continued in the years that follow

school-days; for these are precisely the years when life presents itself to a young man in new phases; when he begins to reflect more deeply; when the essential differences between right and wrong, between virtue and vice, between what is lawful and what is not, are forming new and vivid concepts in his mind. A child's mind, while seizing impressions, is not yet able through lack of experience to reason out conclusions, and even if it could, the untrained will, drawn into so many alluring paths, is neither free to lead nor prone to follow whither it should go. It is an uncommonly hard task to put an old head on young shoulders; hence the absolute need of sound direction for the young after schooldays. When a farmer plants a sapling by the roadside he puts a strong guard-rail around it, to prevent injury from outside sources. After a few seasons the sapling grown in strength may brave the winds and storms; the guard-rail may be removed, and the tree may begin its career alone.

Similar methods should be followed by

parents and others having the responsibilities of little children. The age fraught with danger to young souls is hardly the school age, especially in centers where Catholic teachers supplement the watchfulness of parents. The dangers lie hidden in the years immediately following the abandonment of the school. These are the years—say from fourteen to twenty—when youth is left to its own devices, when unexplored sources of knowledge, sources not always healthy, are appealing to it, when the tendencies of character and temperament are strongly asserting themselves. Too much care cannot be taken to cultivate the virtues and to stifle the vices that are still only in germ.

If fostering care on the part of parents and guardians is needed over those who have had the all advantages of Catholic teaching and religious training, how much more is it needed for children who have passed their tender years under the blighting influences of non-sectarian and public schools? Institutions from which religion and religious instruction are excluded, are

destructive of the basis of morality. Even though positive doctrinal errors are not taught, the very absence of religious influences suffices to do the baneful work. The human frame may be destroyed by the absence of nourishment as well as by the administration of poisonous food. Human souls may in like manner perish through lack of religion, as well as by the poison of heresy. Non-sectarian institutions may boast of their comprehensiveness, but if they starve the souls of children who naturally crave for spiritual food, what difference is there between them and the most bigoted schools? The baneful results on tender souls are the same, and how deeply to be pitied are the children who are brought up under such hurtful influences! What a meagre spiritual outfit they possess to face the world with! What sympathy and care should be shown them by those on whom the responsibility rests!

Now what are the peculiar dangers against which young people should be put on their guard after they have survived their school-days? This is an easy question

to answer. In our large towns and cities the dangers are, *i*) the daily newspaper, with its shocking record of crimes; *ii*) the theatre, with its demoralizing tendencies; *iii*) the poolroom, with its fatal fascinations; *iv*) bad companions, with their obscene language and their vile blasphemies. These are the influences that our boys and young men must be warned against. Young minds are debased by them; and untrained wills, unaccustomed to the struggle against these new forms of sin and wickedness, are quite sure to succumb when all within them is clamoring for freedom. We have only to pause and recall the human wrecks we have met in our journey through life. One of them comes to our mind as we write—a school-mate, with all the innocence of early boyhood attached to him. Peering into the impenetrable future one would have carved out for him years of useful life, dedicated to all that was good and beautiful and holy, to be followed by an honorable old age. Alas, that hopes should be so easily shattered! Instead of a career of use-

fulness, the friend of our youth, the companion of many a joyous romp, turned out to be a blasphemer of all things holy, a reviler of God's sacred Name, a sodden drunkard. The victim of a weak, vacillating will and of evil companions, he now lies in an unknown and unhonored grave. He was one who tried alone to fight the battles of life after school-days.

Parents, guardians, pastors, teachers, friends, you who value young souls purchased with the Precious Blood of our Redeemer, put forth your best efforts. Little children have need of your help after they have left school. Before they can safely face the world, with its thousand dangers, they must still be guided both by word and example. Teach them the value of reflection. Accustom them early to realise that there is something nobler and more excellent than the enjoyment of the insipid pleasures of life, that this world is a place of labor and trial, that all their aspirations should be directed to the attainment of higher things. To these serious and salutary thoughts which should be uttered

in words simple and forceful, add the duties of submission to law and legitimate authority, the sacredness of conscience, the sanctions of religion. Solemn truths like these cannot fail to leave their mark on minds hungering for impressions.

The Church is fully conscious of the dangers to which Catholic youth is exposed after school-days and she encourages every effort at "child-saving." She fosters sodalities of young people, clubs, guilds, etc. She urges pastors to preach frequent and daily Communion, to promote temperance societies, etc. She throws the mantle of her protection around her little ones, for they all need her staying arm. She knows very well that if the years following their school-years are spent well, she will not have to regret a leakage among her members after they have reached the age of manhood.

There is no more consoling work in the Church or in the home than that of tending the lambs of the flock of Christ. The words of the Heavenly Shepherd, "Suffer little children to come unto Me,"

with all their tenderness of sentiment and their depth of love, have inspired many a shepherd of souls in ages past and shall inspire many a one in the ages to come. Let those upon whom the responsibility rests put all their energies into the work of saving youth. They may confidently rely on help and abundant grace from the Heart of Him who was the friend of little children.

VII

RELIGION AT HOME

*Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father,
and attend, that you may know prudence...
Take hold on instruction, leave it not: keep it,
because it is thy life.—PROV. IV, 1, 13.*

*It is good for a man when he hath borne the
yoke from his youth.—LAMENT. III, 27.*

THE complaint is abroad nowadays that religion is losing ground, that a great many Catholic men and women have no longer the strong, active faith in things supernatural that they once had. To this is added the other complaint that, while faith is diminishing, the tide of corruption is constantly rising, that the thirst for ease and pleasure is growing more and more acute, that insubordination to all legitimate authority is, in many quarters, the rule now and no longer the exception. Contemporary history proves that there is some ground for these complaints, and the question that naturally presents itself is, Who is responsible?

The practical Catholic who reflects even a little, knows that the religious education of early youth is an important element in the life of a man. He knows—alas! too well—that the careless home-training many Catholics received a generation ago, is in great measure responsible for the religious indifference and the leakages we hear so much about among Catholics of to-day. He knows, too, that unless the solid religious training of Catholic youth is insisted on, the men and women of the next generation will not be any better than their forebears. This is a matter that parents must take time to ponder over, for religious training should play an important part in Catholic home life. A child cannot be taught too soon that it comes from God, that it belongs to God, that it is destined for God, that it is bound to serve God with all the powers of its body and soul. To bring up a child after this Catholic ideal is to thoroughly impregnate its thoughts, words, actions and aspirations, with religious motives and sanctions, and if this work is carried on sys-

tematically—as it should be—during the impressionable years of youth the child's will will be strengthened in faith and morality, and will not easily lend itself to evil later on in life.

After all, the end of all education is to help us to reach heaven. We were created and put into this world to work out our salvation, and our whole life, helped by God's grace, should be given up to this work. In final analysis all else is vanity; if we lose our souls all is lost. Religious training, and religious surroundings from the dawn of reason up to maturity, are the best possible preparation to meet the trials of life and will keep us in the right path. Children should consequently be brought up in this atmosphere, and under these influences; the very air they breathe should savor of religion. This may seem a difficult programme to carry out; but the obligation exists, and Catholics who have assumed the responsibilities of parenthood, must make the best of it.

During the first years of a child's life parents are practically its only teachers,

During that formative period good example and good advice must needs be given a child, in order to make salutary impressions on its tender mind. If this good advice is supplemented by the fascinating stories of the lives of the saints and of holy men and women, if the child is shown the result of following the good advice, the impressions received will remain even after it has grown to maturity.

A time may come when circumstances will oblige parents to hand over their child to others to continue its mental and moral formation. Does the responsibility of parents cease then? No; they simply share their responsibility with others who happen to be qualified to do what they cannot do themselves. They should delegate their work to other teachers only after they have satisfied themselves that those others will do the work well. What folly it is for parents to thrust innocent and confiding children into schools—secular schools, for instance—where religion is ignored, where examples are not wholesome, where the work so well begun at

home is soon undone! The worldly advantages that may be gained in secular schools will never make up for the loss of those early religious impressions that mean so much for a child.

We might go a step further, and assert that it is imprudent for parents to leave too much to the option and initiative of even Catholic teachers in schools not professedly Catholic, or to be satisfied with a meagre pittance of religious instruction doled out in half-hour catechism classes. It is true these Catholic teachers have duties to perform—duties of justice, if you will—both to parents and child, but no matter how competent they may be, they cannot adequately supply for the absence of home-training. Some parents do not fully realise this. In order to save themselves trouble they exaggerate the importance of a teacher's role and throw the responsibility of the religious training of their children on his shoulders, a mistake that they will repent of sooner or later.

Undoubtedly, Catholic teachers are doing

their share of hard work in many public schools. Their influence for good is being felt throughout the length and breadth of our country, and the Church is grateful to them for it; but when all is said and done, there are nevertheless vital principles in the education of a child that no teacher can give; there are impressions that only mothers can impart, that are all the more lasting because they are supplemented by a mother's love. The mind and heart of a child must be well fashioned in the home virtues to prepare it for the ordeal of after-life, and a teacher of rare merit, indeed, is the one who can replace a mother in this work.

In an age when every effort is being made by Satan and his emissaries to draw education away from religious influences, the importance of home-training cannot be too strongly insisted upon. Without even a murmur, parents will sacrifice time and money for the secular training that fits their children for worldly pursuits, and they can hardly be reproached for this. Secular training is useful, even necessary

in our age, and parents should see to it that their children are equipped intellectually to earn an honest livelihood. But this is not enough for souls destined for immortality. "Knowledge is not to be blamed," says the *Following of Christ*, "nor simple acquaintance with things good in themselves and ordained by God; but a good conscience and a virtuous life are always to be preferred." But it is not enough to know God and the wonders of his working here on earth; the heart must also be trained; a child must be taught to love God and to practise virtue. Home-training must crush out the egotism, the pride, and the other minor vices that begin to show themselves with the dawn of self-consciousness. In a word, religion and religious instruction are indispensable in view of the eternal interests that are at stake.

The Church warns parents who are indifferent about the souls of their children, and insists on religious training at home. In a letter issued some years ago, the bishops of the Province of Quebec gave a prac-

tical instruction to parents: "From children's tenderest years," they wrote, "insist on their daily prayers; when in church explain for them the ceremonies they are witnessing; when the proper time comes, take them to confession, and to Holy Communion, and let them hear practical instructions. Catholic homes should be sanctuaries where the good odor of faith, piety, love of God and of His Church are ever present." This is the right kind of home-training, and this is the training that Blanche of Castile provided for her son St. Louis, whom she would rather see dead than stained with sin.

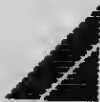
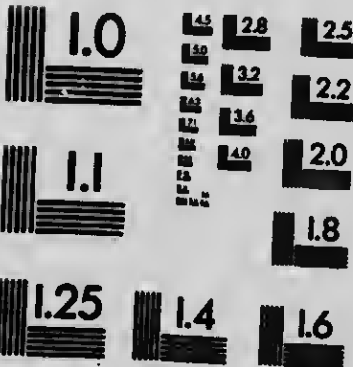
May we not look to parents to exert themselves in such a grave matter? If they were strongly imbued with the spirit of Christ they would not leave exclusively to others the training of their children. The souls of their little ones are too precious to be exposed to the withering influences of Godless schools and irresponsible masters. If parents themselves are not in a position to impart the intellectual

¹ Collective Pastoral, 1894.



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training desired, let them provide for others to do it in their places. If it is an absence of virtue that prevents parents from doing their duty, let them begin by acquiring and practising virtue themselves. Virtuous parents will be able to teach not merely by word, which is already much, but also by example which is far more eloquent. In a word, let Christian parents take seriously to heart the work God gave them to do when He bestowed on them the honor of parenthood; let them bring up their children in His fear and love, and thus make them heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven.

VIII

OUR YOUNG MEN

The joy of young men is their strength; and the dignity of old men, their grey hairs.—PROVERBS XX, 29.

I write unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.—I JOHN II, 14.

THE Church has always taken a very deep interest in the spiritual welfare of her children, especially of the young. Recognizing, as she does, that the child of yesterday is the youth of today and the adult of tomorrow, she follows with anxious eyes the religious training of her sons and daughters during the period of their adolescence and formation; and she continually impresses on the minds of parents and others in authority the necessity there is of carefully watching over those whom God has entrusted to their care. The interests of their immortal souls are at stake, not less than the interests of the Church herself and society at large.

One of the sad facts our age is witnessing is the imperfect religious training that, owing to circumstances apparently uncontrollable, many of our own Catholic young men and women are receiving. Frequently, their only source of purely religious instruction, and the extent of it, is the Penny Catechism. When this little work has been learned by heart, without note or commentary, nay more, learned by bits and scraps during uncongenial moments, too often the end of the religious education of youth is reached. Rarely does a Class of Perseverance come to complete these imperfect preliminaries, and our young Catholics step out to take their places in life, with no knowledge of the history of the Church, her struggles or her victories, with no controversial lore, no ready answers to time-worn objections against the Faith. The result is that when in a mixed society like ours they come into contact with all kinds of men, vile, ignorant scoffers oftener than saints, they are handicapped. They cannot give reasons for the faith that is in them, or

for the various practices of their belief; they are, in a word, placed at such a disadvantage that sooner or later the effects of their incomplete mental equipment will tell on themselves. Constant dropping wears away the hardest stone; so will the constant sneer of the bigot or the atheist wear away the childlike faith of a young man or a young woman, if they have not a positive training in Catholic doctrines to fall back upon.

The present anxious, restless state of the intellectual world shows us how needful is the knowledge of dogma; everywhere religious truth is agitating the minds of men. Mysteries of our holy Faith, pregnant with consequences for time and eternity, are topics of conversations in coffee-houses, on railway trains, in drawing rooms, on the street corners, everywhere, in fact, where people gather together. Controversial subjects that need time and leisure to be treated adequately, are brought down by both the learned and the ignorant, by the workman as well as the professor, all anxious to know, as

Pilate was, what Truth is. In moments like these, even in passing conversations, Catholic young men have excellent opportunities to shed a ray of light on some point of faith or history. Their very status as laymen often gives them excellent occasions of meeting persons whom the Catholic clergy are hardly able to reach. And how creditable it is to them when they are able to drive away the doubts of an anxious mind or to send home some wholesome truths. On the other hand, what a sorry figure they cut if they have to be silent, when questions are put to them concerning things of religion which, after all, every Catholic ought to know. The Church is not asking too much when she expects from her young men a workable knowledge, at least, of the doctrines they are required to believe and practise.

Cardinal Newman is quite reasonable in the demands he makes for the religious equipment of young men. "I should desire," said he, "to encourage in our students an intelligent apprehension of the relations, as I may call them, between

the Church and society at large; of the difference between the Church and a religious sect; the respective prerogatives of the Church and the civil power; what the Church claims of necessity; what it cannot dispense with, what it can; what it can grant, what it cannot. A Catholic hears the celibacy of the clergy discussed in general society; is that usage a matter of faith or is it not of faith? What is he to answer?..... He fills a station of importance and he is addressed by some friend who has political reasons for wishing to know the difference between canon and civil law; whether a priest cannot, in certain cases, absolve prospectively; whether and in what sense we consider Protestants to be heretics; whether they can be saved with sacramental confession; whether we deny the reality of natural virtue, or what worth we assign to it?" It is a sad commentary on our modern educational methods, when Catholic young men, of otherwise excellent intellectual training, can not answer such simple questions as these, and correct errors that are current in the every-day table-talk of men.

But this is only one view of an important question; the life of the children of the Church should develop on other lines as well. Let us suppose that a young man is fully grounded in dogmatic truth and historical controversy; even then something more is required. Speculative religion is of little avail without its practical application to one's own daily life. There have been men, many of them, who have distinguished themselves in the defence of the Church, but whose lives gave the lie to their principles. Knowledge without practice profiteth little for eternity.

"What availeth," says à Kempis, "a great dispute about abstruse and obscure matters, for the not knowing of which we shall not be questioned at the day of judgment?" It is a great folly for us to neglect things profitable and necessary, and to be willing to busy ourselves about those which are curious and hurtful... When the day of reckoning comes, we shall not be examined on what we have read, but on what we have done; nor how learnedly we have

spoken, but how religiously we have lived." Let a man gauge the measure of his merit before God, not by his knowledge of dogma or his skill in controversy, but rather by the practical application of his knowledge to his own conduct. What will it profit a man to be well-read if he neglect the care of his soul?

No one will deny that there has been in these latter years a falling off in piety and religious practices among Catholic young men of education. Consult the pastors and spiritual guides of many a college graduate in after-life, and they will tell you that, instead of giving examples of upright living to less favored sons of fortune, they are stumbling-blocks in their way. The love of the good things of life, worldliness, the blighting contact of non-Catholic society, ambition in its various forms, human respect, etc., have quite modified the relations of those young men to the Church. Who is to blame for this? It is hard to lay the finger on the spot; but it is certain that modern methods of home life, with their

facilities for pleasure, coupled with a spirit of emancipation, are responsible for much lukewarmness amongst Catholics. There is many a parent in the land who may lay his hand on his breast and accuse himself of neglecting his son's welfare, of being the occasion of his spiritual downfall.

Take an instance. We hear a great deal about the safeguards home should throw around young men. But if the home is not made attractive, how can parents expect a youth to acquire an attachment for it, when so much he craves for may be reached outside? Should not a young man find the members of his own family companionable and worthy of his confidence? What is the unwritten law that forces him to go forth from his father's house to enjoy, for instance, the amenities of social life? Is not the experience of years an argument cogent enough to convince parents that young people should be encouraged to enjoy companionship around their own firesides, instead of letting them seek it without, where vigilance cannot be so easily exercised?

False theories of parental care are responsible for many a checkered career. The old adage, "Tell me whom you haunt, and I'll tell you what you are!" may well find its application in the subject before us. Give a Catholic young man genial surroundings; let a Catholic tone pervade his home; make its halls pleasant for him; show him by word and deed that his presence there is a ray of sunshine, and it is quite certain you will hear fewer tales of loss of faith and of moral disaster.

One of the greatest enemies—to mention only one—young people have to contend with is human respect. This moral cowardice in the presence of others has a blighting effect on their conduct, and few can conceive how frequently it claims its victims. The fear of being thought devout prevents many a youth from approaching the life-giving sources of God's grace, Penance and the Eucharist. When these channels are closed, the love of prayer and other religious exercises diminish gradually. Without them a young

man is without supernatural aid; he is left to battle alone with his passions which wax strong in proportion as religious influences decrease. Can we wonder, then, when we see so many spiritual and physical wrecks lying along the highways of life?

And yet if our young men were well grounded in religious instruction, human respect would be less apt to influence them. When the objective truth of our Catholic dogmas is brought home to them in all its fullness, their love of truth will force them to defend it just as staunchly as they would a proposition of Euclid. Truth makes the mind submit whether it will or no.

There is a phase of this topic that does not meet the consideration it deserves: we refer to the responsibilities of our educated young men regarding calls to the sacred ministry. God has decreed that men shall work to save souls; and yet no one in the present sinful state of society will dare say that the supply of those soul-saving agents ever exceeds the

demand. In fact, statistics point just the other way. Are there not in every part of the world, thousands of souls clamoring for priests to give them the words of life and to absolve them from their sins? The natural defenders of Church and Society are the ministers of God, and why is it that the Church is continually deploring a dearth of vocations? Is it the Holy Ghost who is at fault? Is it not rather because we Catholics do not pray enough for our young men? Or are they alone responsible for neglecting to respond to the Silent Voice? This is a question that should make us all reflect. The privilege of saving souls is great; so are the responsibilities it brings with it. God created men's souls without assistance, but He wills to save them by human agents. If those agents are not faithful to the call which is extended to them to work for the eternal welfare of others, God will surely require from them a rigid account of their unaccepted trust.

Many young men who feel the promptings of grace shirk the responsibilities of

the priesthood, and various are the reasons they give for their conduct. If those reasons are carefully analysed we shall find that it is hardly ever mental capacity that is lacking but rather moral courage. Catholic young men allow the allurements of the world to stife the spark of vocation in their souls, giving no thought to the souls which may be lost through their ungenerous neglect. However, a day of reckoning will come, and with piercing accents lost souls will cry out against those who should have been the instruments of their salvation. If the Apostle of the Indies, while still a young man, had turned a deaf ear to the pleadings of Ignatius—and he was free to do so—what glory would have been lost to God, and what legions of souls would have never entered heaven!

These few thoughts may help parents, guardians, teachers, and others, to measure their duties in the important work of instructing in religious doctrine and practice those who are under them. They may also make Catholic young men

stand and ponder over responsibilities that do not sufficiently claim their attention, and that, perhaps, are theirs by Divine command.

IX

OUR LIFE'S CALLING

All the foolish of heart were troubled. They have slept their sleep; and all the men of riches have found nothing in their hands.—PSALM LXXV, 6.

And their days were consumed in vanity, and their years in haste.—PSALM LXXVII, 33.

Even tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down and shall be cast into the fire.—MATT. VIII. 19.

NOWADAYS, when our young men and young women have reached the age when they should choose a state of life, the question that almost always presents itself to them is: What career promises the larger fortune, the higher honors, the greater amount of pleasure? So much stress is laid upon those matters of purely worldly welfare that not merely young men and women, but even their parents and counsellors display an unseemly anxiety regarding it, even to the exclusion of other questions of far greater importance.

It may be asked, indeed, is the pursuit of worldly welfare alone the end of man? Is there nothing higher attainable? Is this visible world, with its undoubted advantages, the only object worthy of our quest? If so, then we should congratulate the youth of the present age on the ease with which they adapt themselves to their destiny. If, on the contrary, this life is only an evanescent panorama, a phase of our existence that shall pass quickly away, surely other considerations than wealth, honors, pleasures, must necessarily impress themselves on the mind of those who are starting to live through it.

So much depends on a wise choice of a state of life, owing to its relations with time and eternity, that it would be idle to underrate the responsibility of those who have the choosing to do. The years between the cradle and the grave are so precious, they are so few, they succeed each other so rapidly, that we cannot give too much thought to the way in which we spend them. If we had two lives we might risk one of them in

the experiment of living, and thus learn by our own experience what would be the better course. But one life only is given to us; we must learn by the experience of others how to live; the testimony and the authority of others who have lived before us must be our guide. The Divine Master teaches us that it will profit us nothing if we gain the whole world and in the end suffer the loss of our souls. Ascetical writers, in their turn, tell us that the object of our being here on earth is to love, honor and serve God, and by this means to reach heaven. To serve God, owing to the weakness of our fallen nature, is a hard task. And yet there is no choice; we must serve God if we are to save our souls. It can then be only a question of finding the easiest means to attain that end.

Two paths running parallel are offered to our choice. There is the ordinary *secular* path—followed by the greater number—wherein are observed the obligations of the Natural Law and the Commandments, imposed on all those who

have the image of God impressed on their souls. There is the other, the *religious* path—or the way of the evangelical counsels—wherein the traveller towards eternity, with a view of making his journey easier and his service more efficacious, paradoxical as it may seem, voluntarily assumes heavier burdens. The exclusive service of the Master becomes the one object of his life. It is consequently a more intense service, for it means a greater effort in the struggle with the enemies of the soul. Since Heaven is carried by violence, it necessarily follows that those who choose to travel along the second path travel towards the goal more rapidly than those who take the secular path. What lofty wisdom, then, do they display who, in the early stage of their journey towards eternity, choose the path of greater safety!

A wise traveller takes all kinds of precautions. If he is a landsman, about to go through an unknown country, he carefully inspects his equipment and notes where the stopping places are. If

he is a sailor over the trackless ocean, he sees to it that his ship is stout and his compass in perfect order. Surely, we who have infinitely greater interests at stake than this traveller, and who are already on a road over which we cannot retrace our steps—for the journey is made but once—surely, we should see to it that there has been from the outset no mistake in our direction. In other words, our chances of reaching Heaven depend a great deal on the state of life we have chosen.

In the secular state, permanent though it be, those who choose it are satisfied with the due observance of the Ten Commandments. But in this state the way is long and the pitfalls many. The world has its snares that easily capture inexperienced youth, and enticements that lure them on to destruction. The struggle to lead a life of virtue is hard and tiring, and how few there are who succeed! On the contrary, those who embrace the religious life throw off the worldly yoke, and without losing one jot or tittle of

the true liberty of the children of God, are free to travel, untrammelled by the seductions or the exigencies of the world. They live constantly in the more vivid knowledge of their responsibilities to God and of the sanctions of the world to come. They bind themselves to do the will of God more perfectly, and consequently show greater generosity in His service. With them the service of God has a higher meaning than the worldling gives to it. To serve God in their vocabulary is not merely to observe the Commandments; it is rather to work with Him as a co-laborer in the noble apostleship of souls, choosing meanwhile the methods that help the more easily to attain their end. These may be prayer, fasting, apostolic travel in the ranks of the priesthood, or action or contemplation in the ranks of the Religious Orders as auxiliaries of the clergy in their works of zeal and mercy.

But there are degrees of fervor even in the religious state. Those who wish to distinguish themselves in God's service,

push their generosity to the extent of imitating the Great Exemplar himself in the various phases of His earthly career, by not merely abandoning the wealth and the pleasures of the world, but by putting themselves by three religious vows in the impossibility of returning to them. Not merely do they give God the fruit of the soil but they yield to him the possession of the soil as well; so that all may belong to Him.

These various degrees of generous activity are at the option of all who are called to choose a state of life. They are free to accept or reject the religious life, just as the young man in the Gospel was free to follow or not to follow in the wake of the Saviour. "If thou wilt be perfect go sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow Me." In these words Christ clearly intimated to the young man that the burden of choosing the more perfect life, preferably to the worldly one, lay with himself. We know what was the outcome

of the invitation. The young man had not the moral courage to take the step; the attractions of wealth and pleasure still shone before his eyes, even while the Saviour was speaking to him; he yielded to their deceptive brilliancy; and he turned away sorrowfully.

The same invitation is made to many a youth nowadays, and unhappily with similar results. There are hundreds of young men and young women, in this age of ease and liberty, who stand between the two paths, the secular and the religious. They hear the eloquent voice of the Saviour telling them that "there is no man who hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or children, or lands, for His sake and for the Gospel, who shall not receive a hundred times as much now in this time and in the world to come life everlasting." They see the Saviour beckoning to them to cast aside the trappings of wealth and follow Him in poverty, to turn from pleasure, to live near Him in mortification, to despise honors for the ignominy of the

cross. The invitation appeals both to their hearts and minds, but apparently it is not cogent enough to draw them to Him. Or it may be that, while they feel strongly drawn to the priesthood or to the religious life, they are waiting patiently for the Lord to send an angel down from heaven to urge them to take the final step. They would wish God to compel them as He compelled St. Paul on the road to Damascus. And because He does not condescend to perform miracles in order to make known His will clearly, they persuade themselves fully that they are not called to follow Him more closely than the millions who walk along the secular path. Add to this persuasion the traditions of race and family, personal bias, soul-stifling occupations, worldly attachments, prayerlessness, and we can easily understand the reasons why the ranks of the priesthood and the religious orders are thinning out. And sadder still, it is the conviction of spiritual men that many souls have been lost because they did not heed the interior voice calling them to a

higher life. When the call is heard, let it suffice for them to know that it is God's voice, even though it be only a whisper that they hear.

Naturally, in these momentous matters a youth should not overlook the advice of wise parents and disinterested counsellors; but no matter what may be the rights of parents and others over him, they are always inferior to the rights of God. When there is rivalry of interests, it is God who should have the preference. Let those who read these pages ask the light of the Holy Spirit when they have to decide for themselves or to counsel others in a choice of a state of life. Let them, in a word, give to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar, but let them not forget that the service of God is more important than the service of Cæsar, and that the salvation of their soul is an object infinitely more precious than worldly advantage or preferment.

X

RESPONSIBILITIES OF MARRIAGE

Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of thy unsteady life, which are given to thee under the sun, all the time of thy vanity: for this is thy portion in life, and in thy labor wherewith thou laborest under the sun.—ECCLES. IX, 9.

A virtuous woman rejoiceth her husband, and shall fulfil the years of his life in peace. A good wife is a good portion, she shall be given in the portion of them that fear God, to a man for his good deeds.—ECCLES. XXVI, 2, 3.

ST. Paul gives us an lofty idea of the nature and dignity of marriage when he tells us that it is a "great sacrament." Our Lord instituted it to confer grace on husband and wife, whereby they might live happily together and bring up their children in His fear and love. The marriage state is a real calling, recognized as such by the Church, and those who enter it with a right intention, and who persevere in this intention, may rely on God to help them carry out its serious obligations.

Unhappily, a tendency to shirk, or at least to minimize, the stern obligations of the married life has been showing itself in many countries in recent years. Unless we wish to shut our eyes to evidence, we must admit that the terms "home" and "family life" have assumed meanings very different from what they once had. To live in peace one with the other, and to raise up children who would work out their salvation on earth and people heaven later, was the end God had in view for husband and wife in marriage, and this is still the end held in view by married people whose faith is strong.

And yet there are too many, even among Catholics, who have lost this strong faith and who are failing in the duties of their state. The noble end of marriage is ignored by them, the obligations of the bond are systematically set aside, and empty or nearly empty homes are no longer the exception but the rule. The yearly lessening in population in various nations is causing anxiety not merely to the Church but to many Civil

Governments as well. Both Churchmen and statesmen have become alarmed at the sight of decaying nations, and they have raised their voices against the phase of paganism which is shirking the responsibilities of the marriage tie. While the State contents itself with deploring results because it cannot suggest a remedy, the Church goes to the root of the evil and tells parents very plainly that this sad state of affairs is the outcome of the diminishing of faith and consequently of the fear of God. Men and women who have lost all religious convictions and who have ceased to fear the sanctions of a Higher Power, fail to grasp the supernatural idea of a Christian life. They see in the marriage bond an alliance of merely temporal interests, or the occasion of satisfying pride and selfishness. To such persons marriage is a yoke that is easily put on, but just as easily put off when its weight becomes too heavy. They know no better, and their conduct corresponds with their want of knowledge, even though their logic is hurrying on the ruin of human society.

But that Catholics who are obliged to respect the order of Providence, who have been taught that the marriage contract is a sacrament, and that this sacrament has for its primary object to augment the number of the elect in the Eternal City of God — that Catholics should brush aside the responsibilities of married life, after the manner of pagans, is something that is not easily understood.

And yet Catholic parents cannot lay claim to ignorance. Their catechism has plainly taught them their duties; their pastors have impressed upon their minds, time and again, how sacred these duties are. How then account for the conduct of so many of them? The only answer is that they sinfully ignore what they know, and with a serene conscience willfully violate the laws of God. How can they hope to be able to reconcile this violation with the practices of a Christian life?

Let married people know, once for all, that they must take things as God ordained them, and that of these things none is more sacred than the trans-

mission of life to future generations. It is His will that men and women by their supernaturalized union should become His cooperators in the formation of His elect. The essential end of marriage is the increase of the number of those who will one day people heaven. Everything opposed to this end is a criminal disorder which the Most High detests and which He will punish sooner or later, no matter what pretexts we shall bring forward to justify our conduct or to calm our conscience. If husbands and wives have in their hearts any fear of God they will allow no advantage, however great, to balance with the weight of the Divine anger. Not the cringing fear of poverty, or suffering, or care, should ever tempt them to go against the clearly manifested designs of the Creator.

There is a further consideration. The supernatural sanctions that God has authorized in various striking passages of the Scriptures should be sufficient to prevent abuses of the sanctity of the marriage tie; but even from the natural and worldly

standpoint, the evil we are condemning has not the beneficial results in the home that is criminally sought for. Does experience show that the fewer the members of a family the better their training, and the greater their energy to meet the battles of life? Experience does not show this; on the contrary, the smaller the family and the easier its struggle for existence, the less its members feel the need of energizing personal effort. The care lavished on the few is only too often a superfluity. The more the few are helped and indulged, the less confidence they have in themselves. What is the inevitable result? The absence of stimulating effort in youth is sure to be felt in later years. The seeds of degeneracy have been sown; and children of limited families will transmit to other generations, their effeminacy, their selfishness, and their want of initiative, which are the enemies of prosperity even in the temporal sense. Can men and women be surprised or disappointed if the empire of the world passes to those who have

been faithful to the law of God? So that, even economically, the evil we deplore is more serious than it seems. If it relieves a family of definite cares it also deprives it of the strength and the help of many hands, by which it could have taken a new hold of life and used it for its own welfare. The homes that are prolific are the harbingers of the nations that will possess the land, and these are the ones that God has promised to bless.

From what precedes a few considerations must be deduced. While from a moral point of view the voluntarily empty home is a crime against God and society, it is also a crime against the Christian home itself. What home can be built on the craving for wealth, or on the fear of poverty and suffering? What traditions of devotedness can parents leave to children whose first lesson is that of selfishness? It is a matter of experience that the upkeep of a worldly home whose members are limited, costs more than the rearing of a large family; and, saddest of all, the parents of such a home

have not the consolation of being repaid by love. Besides, when the cares of a large family do not take up the energies of parents, parents have more time to devote to pleasure. If they are free to enjoy themselves in legitimate ways, they are also free to commit sin. The devil is never idle and sooner or later he makes them grow weary of each other's company. How could it be otherwise? It is surely not their reciprocal respect, nor the souvenir of their mutual devotedness, nor their disinterested attachment, that can unite their hearts and keep them bound together. The soundness of the tree is known by its fruit; the absence of fruit is a sign of decay.

This teaching should not be ignored by Catholic parents. Instead of shirking the duties that married life imposes, they should know, once for all, that they are citizens of an imperishable commonwealth, and that they are responsible for those who must succeed them. Let them understand that, in the designs of God, life in this world is not a round of pleasure,

nor is shirking suffering or poverty the only true wisdom. Let them form for themselves a higher and nobler ideal for their homes, wherein God should reign supreme, and wherein He is willing to share His protection with them over the children whom He confides to them for the time being.

Catholic parents should look beyond the horizon that shuts out death. In fulfilling the duties of their married life they are suffering and toiling not for passing honors, or wealth, or pleasures, but for eternal rewards. If death ends their toil, it also crowns it; for it brings together the scattered members of a family to a home in heaven where there shall be no separation. And the glory of a father and a mother, who have recognised through life the sanctity of their marriage tie, shall be to have given birth to a long line of saints who will continue to honor and love them throughout eternity.

XI

TOWARDS THE ALTAR

Is it a small thing unto you that the God of Israel hath separated you from all the people, and joined you to himself, that you should serve Him in the service of the tabernacle, and should stand before the congregation of the people, and should minister to Him?—NUMBERS XVI, 9.

Blessed is he whom Thou hast chosen and taken to Thee: he shall dwell in Thy courts. We shall be filled with the good things of Thy house; holy is Thy temple.—PSALM LXIV, 5.

ONE of the works that craves the sympathetic cooperation of all Catholics, especially our Catholic parents, is the recruiting of young men for the service of the altar. The very existence of religion and its advancement in the world depend upon the constant supply of those ambassadors to whom God has delegated His mission and His power. The priest is the propagator of Christ's doctrines, the dispenser of His graces, the lieutenant of the Holy Ghost in the work of man's sanctification. The Holy Ghost is continually operating in individual souls, striv-

ing to keep them in a state of grace, or striving to restore it to them when it is lost, but in this sublime effort His instrument is the priest. The Holy Ghost floods the intellect with the light of faith, but it is the words of the priest that set the rays in vibration. The charity of the Holy Ghost warms men's cold hearts and moves their wills, but this is done through the Sacraments conferred by the hands of the priest. It is God's desire to remain with us, to be the nourishment of our souls, but He depends on His priests to utter the words that keep Him in our tabernacles. "Where there is no priest there is no sacrifice," says the Blessed Curé d'Ars; "where there is no sacrifice there is no religion; where there is no religion there are no reasonable men, only brutes destroying each other."

True, the Christian faith might subsist for a time, even though Christ's ambassadors had disappeared, but once the souls of men were deprived of the benefits of absolution and of that heavenly manna

which is Christ's own Body and Blood, they would soon pine away and die a spiritual death. Without the priesthood the light of faith would soon dwindle and disappear altogether. This has been the result in every land where persecution has succeeded in banishing the clergy. We have only to mention the instance of England under the Tudors, or of Japan under Tiacosama. A vital affair, then, in the life of the Church, is the filling up of the priestly ranks to continue the work of those whom death claims, or whom age and fatigue oblige to lay down the burdens of the ministry.

Before the Council of Trent, the old monastic and cathedral schools educated youth in preparation for the service of the altar. The universities crowned these preliminary studies with courses of philosophy and theology, and the young Levites then started out to labor for souls. But the upheaval of the sixteenth century caused such disruption in this order of things, the leaven of heresy tainted the wells of knowledge to such an extent,

that the Fathers of the Council of Trent had to initiate other methods and provide other means for the rearing of the future servants of the sanctuary. It was then that they resolved that every country, every diocese even, should provide its own pastors and carefully train them to meet the spiritual needs of the faithful. They decreed that institutions should be established where young men showing signs of a vocation to the priesthood should be trained in science and virtue. These institutions they called seminaries. The name was well chosen. In its etymological sense, "seminary" means a nursery where saplings are planted and carefully tended until they are strong enough to resist the action of the elements, when they may be transferred to other soil. In the minds of the Fathers of Trent, the saplings were to be the young men destined for the priesthood, who, after they had been strengthened morally and intellectually, should go out into the world to spread the Faith by their teaching and uphold it by their example.

This wise legislation of the Council of Trent has been the salvation of the Catholic religion ever since the sixteenth century. For the past four hundred years, our seminaries have supplied the Church with her ministers, and the prospects are that for centuries to come the Church must look to the same sources for them. Such being the case, the question of the recruiting of the priesthood should concern every Catholic, layman and cleric; it should, in fact, appeal to all who have the interests of our holy religion at heart; for we are all responsible to God in some way or other for the soul of our neighbor. In recent years the number of young men who enter our diocesan seminaries has diminished in a marked degree, and yet the needs of the Church have grown with the spread of the Faith, not merely at home but in foreign lands. Our bishops everywhere are deploring the scarcity of priests to cater to the religious wants of Catholics; the foreign missions are clamoring for workmen; everywhere, at home and abroad, the harvest is ripe, and there are not reapers enough to gather it in.

The glamor of the world naturally attracts inexperienced young men, and it is sad to think that Catholic parents will not turn a hand to influence their decisions. There was a time when the prospect of seeing a son at the altar was a father's or mother's highest ambition on earth, but that time has evidently gone. Wealth and honors and the pleasures of life have too strong an attraction; abnegation and poverty and suffering in the footsteps of the Crucified seem too great a sacrifice to ask from the sons of worldly minded Catholic parents.

And yet the claims of religion are just as cogent as they ever were. The need of holy and learned priests is greater than ever before; for in these strenuous times, souls not merely must be fed with the Bread of Life, but they must also be fortified against the pernicious doctrines and influences that are rife on every side.

A heavy responsibility shall rest on the shoulders of some one, and if it is parents who discourage their sons from entering the ranks of the priesthood, they

should be warned while there is yet time. God's designs are never thwarted with impunity. To parents, preferably to all others, He has confided the eternal interests of young souls. Their duty is to try to discern early His providential designs and to second their execution. Parents should be the first to foster in a child the germ of vocation to the priesthood, when it begins to show itself; above all, they should be watchful, lest the frail germ be stifled amid worldliness and the temptations of life. When the moment comes for its final blossoming in the seminary or in the novitiate, they should not hesitate to give their son willingly to God, in order that in the course of time he may not only honor them in the dignity of his priesthood, but also—and this should be of much greater moment for them—that they may have their indirect share in their son's labors in the Master's vineyard and their own reward for eternity.

So much for the candidate to the priesthood; a word now about his training

in the novitiate or the seminary. How may lay-Catholics help in this work? By contributing to the support of those institutions wherein priests are educated. The precept obliging us to support our pastors has a wider range that is generally supposed, nor is it restricted to the needs of the moment. The young seminarian of today will be the pastor of tomorrow, the novice of today will be the missionary of tomorrow; and if we understand our obligations aright, the future as well as the present has its claim upon the generosity of all who are able to help.

From those who are favored by fortune more generous sacrifices may be asked. The Spirit of God breathes where It willeth. We know too well that the whispering Voice calling a child to the sanctuary is often heard in homes where worldly wealth is a stranger, and it often happens that no matter how pressing his desires, how lofty his hopes, how urgent his call, the young man sees the priestly career closed against him unless some generous benefactor steps in and

provides the wherewithal to enable him to carry out his wishes. One of the most Godlike of charities, when a family is in a position to do so, is to provide for the education of a young priest either in a diocesan seminary or in a religious community. God promises His blessing to the generous giver, even when an alms is doled out for the mere welfare of the body; how much more readily will He bless those who give of their substance to save immortal souls! Wealthy Catholics should seize this opportunity of showing their generosity. They may not be called by God directly to save souls, but it is their privilege, if they will only use it, to help those who are called by God directly to save souls.

To sum up. There is a great scarcity of priests to carry out the work of the Church. Let young men who feel the call to the priesthood not hesitate to follow it. Let Catholic parents be generous in giving their sons to God when His holy will is made known to them. Let the Catholic laity, the well-to-do especially,

be generous in helping on the work of training in our seminaries. All may not be able to give of their worldly substance, but all may help by their prayers. Let us ask God to supply His Church with holy and learned men who will carry on the work which He Himself began during His earthly career.

XII

OUR PARISH CLERGY

You are My witnesses, saith the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen: that you may know and believe Me, and understand that I Myself am.—ISAIAH XLIII, 10.

The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with Me in peace and in equity, and turned many away from iniquity.—MALACH. II, 6.

WHEN the faithful throughout the world gather round their altars to hear the Gospel preached to them, or to partake of the Bread of Life, those words of the Saviour come home to them, "Where there are two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them."¹—words which assure them that His sacred Presence is with them and will continue with them until the end of time. The kind and loving Lord is with us not merely in the words that teach us how to live but rather in the spiritual Food that makes us live.

¹ Matt. xviii, 20

It is at the Eucharistic Banquet especially, during which we incessantly nourish our souls and gather in spiritual strength, that He truly lives with us. And yet His adorable Presence is not visible to us, but hidden under an impenetrable sacramental veil. This alone is a marvellous condescension on the part of our loving Master. The fact that He is living with us, that He is watching over us, that He is perpetually interceding for us, that His Holy Spirit is influencing our thoughts, words and actions—all this is more than poor sinful men could hope for.

But the kind Master was not satisfied with this. He knew that if we had to look ever and only with the eyes of faith, a feeling of longing and incompleteness would soon take possession of our souls, just as the Jews after a time began to loathe the heavenly manna and longed for other food, and He has given us further evidence of His presence and protection. For this purpose He has made us members of a visible society, His Church here on earth, and appoints visible

representatives to take His place and look after our interests. These representatives are His pontiffs, His bishops and His priests, with whom He shares His power, and through whose visible agency He continues the ministry of souls, a work which He Himself discontinued as a visible task when He ascended into Heaven. It was preferably to these representatives that His first Pontiff, St. Peter, addressed the words: "Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God and Jesus Christ."¹

In the design of our Great Shepherd, who likened His Church to a sheepfold, and for its more effective government, this visible Church is divided into minor folds, called dioceses. These again are divided into many subordinate ones, called parishes, every one having at its head its own visible shepherd, the parish priest.

It is easy to gauge the dignity of the

¹ I St. Peter ii, 5.

man who is placed over one of these subordinate folds, not simply because he works directly for souls, nor because his hands are consecrated to the service of the altar—thousands of others share these privileges with him—but because he is officially delegated to watch over a certain portion of the great flock, and shares his pastorship with him who was named by Christ Himself to feed the lambs and the sheep. His right to govern is ratified by the Church; she reserves to the parish priest certain jurisdiction over souls which she does not permit others to exercise unbidden; that is to say, even though others have the spiritual power to help souls by conferring the Sacraments, they have not the authority to use it.

Seeing that the Church singles out and confers special privileges on these delegated shepherds, it follows that she desires the faithful to respect not merely the privileges themselves but also the persons who possess them. Our Church teaches us that our parish priest is an ambassador of God, that he is among us

as His visible representative. And since we respect God we should respect His ambassador; since we love God with a grateful and tender love, we should show a similar love for the ambassador who represents Him. We listen to God and obey Him when He manifests His will; should we not also submit our judgment and will to him who shares God's authority and who commands in His name? Three duties, therefore, are imperative on us all in our relations with our parish priest, namely, respect, love, obedience.

It is necessary in the present age to insist on the first of these duties, because sectarian hatred of the priestly character tends to show itself, preferably against those who are pastors of souls. If it can succeed in casting contumely on the shepherds, the faith of the flocks is soon weakened, for even Catholics are influenced by evil reports. And this is precisely the end the enemy aims at. Happily in our days—the priestly dignity is worthily borne by those who are invested with it; our pastors and leaders of par-

ishes are men who are admirable in their zeal and abnegation. We see among them young men with a long life of service still before them, who fully realize their position and the obligations attached to it, and who are consequently working with a will for God and souls. We see among them other men whose years of strenuous watchfulness have stretched into decades, venerable priests with hair whitened with age, who stand with their hands raised like those of Moses, mediating with God for the flocks entrusted to their care. This is no fanciful picture; every diocese in our country possesses such men; and to show them respect is paying a tribute to their personal virtue as well as to their sublime office. It is not merely their priestly character, which entitles them to our veneration, but their upright lives; and their many acts nobly done call for the respect of all noble minds.

Respect alone, while praiseworthy, is not all that is due to those who, in the mind of the Church, are the fathers of our

souls. It is to the parish priest as to a spiritual father that our love should go out. A dutiful child loves him to whom he owes the preservation of his physical being, and he is looked on as an ingrate among men who would withhold his love from the one who provides him with the temporal necessities of life. The parish priest fills a similar role in the spiritual world, and he should have a share in our love. The word "gratitude" is expressive of the just appreciation of a gift. And yet do we always appreciate at their just value the spiritual gifts that come to us through the shepherds of our souls? Baptism, whereby we are made true children of God; absolution, whereby our sins are wiped out; direction, whereby our foot-steps in the rough road of the spiritual life are smoothed down; Holy Communion, whereby our souls are fed and strengthened—are all gifts that come to us through the ministrations of our spiritual guide; they surely entitle him to our gratitude and love. We can never hope to give adequate return for favors such as these—the things of

heaven are not purchasable with gold or silver—but we should try to repay, in our own human way, by a grateful thoughtfulness, that is, by the tribute of our prayers and by a genuine affection, the long hours of fatigue in the sick room and in the tribunal of penance, and the other works of the sacred ministry. In return for his labors in our behalf, gratitude for our parish priest should urge us to contribute joyfully to his support, and to soften the roughness of his life by adding to his frugal comforts. The true shepherd of souls looks for very little in this world; one of his chief rewards here below is the affection of his people.

Obedience is the natural outcome of respect and love. We are ready to obey him whom we respect and love, and this is the best way of showing our third and last duty. Our parish priest has been lawfully named a shepherd over a portion of the flock of Christ. He commands with an authority which comes down to him in an unbroken line, through pontiffs and bishops, from the Saviour Himself,

who said, "Go teach all nations... He who hears you hears Me." When our parish priest, therefore, counsels, urges, commands, he does so with the sanction of the Universal Church and of its Founder whose ambassador he is.

Nor should we be chary in rendering homage to his authority or obedience to his wishes. The privileges of the pastor of souls is to teach by word and example. When he teaches he presupposes a spirit of submission to his voice not only in things that are obligatory, or otherwise commanded, but even very often in things that may be left to our own initiative. Naturally, the advice of one who is teacher and father at the same time, and whose vast experience gives his words a special cogency, should be listened to with becoming respect and submission. This is the dictate of sound common sense. It does not take a philosopher long to decide whether it is more reasonable that the head should obey the other members of the body or that the body should follow the direction of the head. In all or-

ganized communities there must be a chief who rules and directs. When subordination to leadership is lacking the logical result is anarchy of thought and action. Insubordination and opposition, even in minor matters, are always the sources of great evils; in a parish they only too often lead souls to disaster.

It is also our duty as Catholics and as members of Christ's flock, to cooperate with those who are placed in spiritual authority over us. The interests of the Church necessarily demand a certain amount of lay action from her members; to labor for the salvation of souls should surely not be the exclusive privilege of the clergy. Happily, there are many who fully appreciate this truth; there are, in every parish, laymen who are willing to work with their pastor in things affecting the glory of God, and who thereby give both God and His ambassador ineffable consolations. Those laymen have not the sacerdotal halo on their brow, nor have they ever tasted the austere joys of the sacred ministry; but they are the un-

selfish helpers of God's priests, all the same, and they may look for their share in the reward reserved for those who have been formally chosen for the work of the sanctuary.

If it should happen, that the obligations of family, or state, or age, or health, prevent our lay-folk from co-operating actively in parish work, their zeal should not for that reason be rendered inactive. In prayer they have a powerful lever which they may use whenever they wish. Let parishioners, therefore, pray for their shepherds, that God may preserve them in health and actuate the zeal which their ministry calls for. Let parishioners pray for the works of their pastors, that these works may be meritorious in the sight of the Most High. Sad, indeed, should be the plight of a shepherd of souls who on the Day of Judgment would be forced to say: "Unhappy man that I am! I too have worked among the flocks; yet I am a castaway." If we respect, love and obey our pastors, we shall have done at least our share to prevent such a catastrophe.

XIII

RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

To thee is the poor man left: thou wilt be a helper to the orphan. . . The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor: thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart, to judge for the fatherless and for the humble, that man may no more presume to magnify himself upon earth.—PSALM IX, 14, 17, 18.

Leave thy fatherless children: I will make them live: and thy widows shall hope in Me.—JEREMIAS XLIX, 11.

[T is the duty of all sincere followers of our Divine Saviour to respect, love and pray for those who represent Him on earth. His pontiffs, bishops and priests are His special representatives on earth; they are His ambassadors to men; they are the channels through which the Divine life in our souls is watered and helped on to its season of ripening; for this reason they have a right to our esteem and love. Besides, the true and faithful exercise of their solemn functions presupposes confidence in them on the part of those whom they serve; for confidence is the

offspring of respect and love. Without it their ministry would not be fruitful, nor would it be sought after.

But there are others who have roles reserved to them in the great mystical body of Christ; others who work in the same vineyard, and whose cooperation is needed for the accomplishment of the designs of God among men. Besides the hierarchy of pontiffs and pastors, there is another hierarchy—that of the Religious Orders—whose branches are distinguished from each other not by the differences of power and jurisdiction, but rather by their rule of life freely adopted and persevered in—who, by their prayers and penances and personal sacrifices, try to appease the anger of God against a sinful world, and who thus work, at least indirectly, for the souls of their fellow-men and fellow-women.

Relatively few of the vast number who make up the Religious Orders are called to exercise priestly powers, but all of them receive the call to sanctity, to follow the Saviour closely and imitate

Him joyfully. The great mission of the Church is to make saints, that is, to imitate and, if possible, reproduce in her children the various phases of the life of Christ, the model and consummation of all sanctity. But it is easily seen that each member cannot perform adequately so great a work. For this reason the Church confides the task collectively to great bodies of her children. In the Church there are vast armies gathered together, under separate and distinct governments, to carry out these designs of imitation and reproduction. All must imitate the Divine Model in some way or other. The Holy Spirit urges some to reproduce the seclusion of His infancy; others, the obedience of His youth; others, the poverty of Bethlehem and Nazareth; others, the ministry of His public life; others, teaching little children, preaching the Word and comforting suffering souls; others, His life in the desert, where in solitude they pray and intercede for mankind; others, His way to Calvary to taste the bitterness of His sorrowful passion.

It is the coalescing of all these partial imitations that goes to make up the noble portrait of the Divine Lord and Master, which the Catholic Church, His Spouse, unceasingly presents to the world.

These various armies of workers are called Orders, Congregations, etc., and from the dim past down to the present, they have grown and flourished under the fostering influence of the Church. In the ages of Faith, kings and princes vied with each other in extending them a warm welcome to their realms and in protecting them; for these gentle servants of Christ who had given up all for His sake were the harbingers of peace and progress. Whithersoever they went religion took peaceful possession of the minds and hearts of men; the sweet odor of holiness went abroad into the land, and human society felt the effects. But it has been reserved for our days, when the world has grown cold, when faith and fervor have waned notably, to see the indelicate sneer of the scoffer, to witness the opposition and even persecution against those who try to

reproduce in themselves the life of Christ, and who consecrate their services to the advancement of His kingdom on earth.

If the question were bluntly put, What claim have Religious Orders to our respect and love? the best answer would be to present the questioner with a history of the Christian world. There he would find records of deeds and sacrifices unparalleled in secular annals, deeds done for God and His kingdom, sacrifices borne for His love. The question is, indeed, frequently put by people who should know better. We hear even Catholics asking, Of what use are Orders—the Contemplative Orders, for instance—whose members spend their lives shut up in monasteries and convents? Of what use to the world are those voluntary exiles from the haunts of men; living in the world but not of it; taking apparently no interest in the world's affairs; spending their days and even their nights in devotions and acts of piety; what titles have they to our love and respect?

If we reflect we shall find that they

have many titles. When the question is put seriously and with the desire for the truth, we may answer that were it not for the prayers and supplications that are unceasingly going up to heaven from these innumerable centres of intercession, human society would soon become smothered by the material preoccupations that absorb all its thoughts and energies. When men cease to pray, or when others cease to pray for them, their souls get out of focus; their reason becomes darkened; their hearts are closed against the influence of grace; their whole ambition turns downward; they cease to take an interest in the things of eternity. It is precisely because we are living in a century of extraordinary material and mental activity, and because there is a danger of spiritual asphyxiation, that Contemplative Orders are necessary. We need some prayerful mediatorship to give the world a right direction again. Look at our large cities, with their tens of thousands of white slaves, faint, exhausted, and chafing under the pressure of what is next to tyranny; see our newspaper

presses, fearful sources of moral pestilence, daily belching forth tons of printed paper, rank with all manner of filth and error, to defile the minds of men and sow corruption in their hearts.

In presence of these enormities, is there no need of some good influence to soothe the anger of God and to counteract the baneful sources of contagion? Is there no need of people to pray for those multitudes who do not pray for themselves, and whose only care is for the world and the things of the world? Is there no need of a reminder to them that others are thinking of them and their souls when they are not? Yea, even for those who realize the value and need of prayer, and who have not the leisure to give themselves over to heavenly communings, the convent bell, heard above the hissing of steam and the din of factories, calling its cloistered inmates to prayer, should be for them a welcome sound. It should be a consolation for them to know that others are praying for them and performing in their stead this sublimest task on

earth. So that even in this mercenary age, nations which have their interests at heart should not merely respect and love Contemplative Orders, whose cloisters are peopled with lovers of prayer and sacrifice, but they should willingly come to their aid, so that, being exempt from anxiety in worldly matters, the supplications of these intercessors for the public weal may constantly rise like incense to the throne of God and stay perchance the arm of some avenging angel. So much for the utility of prayer.

But Christ worked as well as prayed. If the Church's armies wish to imitate Christ, they must needs hold communion with their fellow-men as well as with God. The Bread of Life must be broken for our neighbor; the words of truth must be sown in his soul; the oil of charity must be poured into his gaping wounds; the kind word must be spoken to raise his drooping spirits. To work, to teach, to exhort, to govern others less fortunate, are incomparable functions that deserve the respect and love of all fair-minded men.

Will not this explain why we have our teaching and charity orders, one instructing youth and forming souls to virtue, the other looking after the sick, the poor and the abandoned?

Besides, were it not for the great Religious Orders in the Church, how little would history have to impart of the glorious conquests of nations to Christianity? If Catholicity is flourishing throughout the world, may we not thank those Orders whose members are found in the vanguard of all civilizing influences in every country and in every age? Even to-day the Orders are the defenders of the Kingdom of Christ. By pen, and word, and example, they struggle to uphold the rights and prerogatives of both the Church of God and His representatives on earth; their enemies are well able to tell us with what success. One of the glories of the Religious Orders is that they have always been the powerful auxiliaries and the firm support of the vicars of Christ and his bishops. This made Montalembert say "that the greatness, the liberty, the prosperity of the

Church have always been proportioned to the power, regularity and holiness of the Religious Orders."

The Orders are the children of the Church who bear the brunt of persecution when her enemies are bent on injustice and spoliation. They are the victims who do not hesitate to seal with their life-blood the truth of her doctrines. "Whenever it is resolved," says Montalembert, elsewhere, "to strike at the heart of religion, it is always the Religious Orders that receive the first blows." How can Catholics refuse the tribute of their love and respect to those bodies of men and women, active and contemplative, who have done and suffered, and are still doing and suffering so much for God's Church?

We grow enthusiastic over the disinterestedness and bravery of the volunteer who goes to fight for his sovereign in a foreign land. Our good wishes follow him beyond the ocean; every item of news of his doings on the field of battle is read with palpitating interest; every deed of

valor is heralded with frantic cheers; a vast empire is proud of him; if in the end, he falls, a monument is raised to perpetuate his memory. No one blames this enthusiasm; it is the secret of heroic deeds and deserves our respect and admiration. But are Catholics too exacting when they ask the lesser tribute, be it never so platonic, of respect and love for the soldiers who are enrolled in the armies of the King of kings; for those men and women who leave home and kindred, not for a few months, but forever; for those who suffer hunger, thirst and fatigue, not once or twice in a passing skirmish, but for years, and whose lives are one long, rude campaign; for those who work not to gain provinces nor to capture towns, but to save souls for heaven and for eternity? When we look at the functions of the Orders in this light, are not the volunteers of Christ just as deserving of praise as the soldiers of the king?

And still while the latter are the heroes of the hour in the eyes of the

world, the former are hunted from their homes; their property seized and confiscated; they themselves reviled by hooting mobs, and left apparently without rights that anyone is bound to respect. There is hardly a country on this globe where the Religious Orders have not had to suffer at the hands of the enemies of God. Here they are starved; there they are calumniated; elsewhere their influence for good is undermined by slander. In this treatment, at least, they drink of the chalice of Christ; herein they imitate the sufferings of the Saviour, and herein they make their profit for eternity. But woe to them by whom such scandals come !

May the Heart of Jesus, source of patience, zeal and abnegation, strengthen the Religious Orders of the Church in these virtues. The world, quick as it is to discover their merits and demerits, soon sees whether these distinguished virtues of the apostleship be wanting or not. Examples of abnegation will move hearts; the eloquence of zeal is irresistible; without these no Order can claim to have the

true spirit of the Church. While we implore the Heart of Jesus to multiply the number of the soldiers of Christ, let us pray even more fervently for their sanctification.

XIV

THE LORD'S OWN DAY

Speak to the children of Israel and thou shalt say to them: See that thou keep My Sabbath: because it is a sign between Me and you in your generations: that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctify you.—EXODUS xxxi, 13.

And He (Jesus) said to them: The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Therefore the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath also.—MARK ii, 27, 28.

REMEMBER that thou keep holy the Sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labor and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God. Then shalt thou do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath and sanctified it."¹

In these impressive words of the Third

¹ Exod. xx, 8, 9, 10, 11.

Commandment, the law of rest was imposed by God on the chosen Hebrew people. This Commandment follows necessarily from the first two, which prescribe the worship of God; it is a development and a practical application of them. For seeing that we must worship God, is it not reasonable that at least a fraction of our time should be set apart for this purpose? Still there are men who argue that, as a matter of fact, all our days, our very lives, belong to God, and consequently they see no reason why one day preferably to another should be set apart for His special service. To this objection we can only answer that it was the will of the Master, plainly expressed to Moses, the Jewish legislator. God chose one day out of every seven that should be reserved for Him alone, but He chose only one. He who might have required that all days should be consecrated specially to His service, claimed as His own one day a week, and He left to the good pleasure of the Jews the disposal of the other six.

Once the day was chosen God showed

that it was His will it should be observed. "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day," were words sufficiently unequivocal, and called the attention of the Jews to the seriousness of the precept. The Almighty threatened them with dire misfortunes if they infringed on it. "If you will not hearken to me, to sanctify the Sabbath day, and not to carry burdens, and not to bring them by the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, I will kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the houses of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched." At His inspiration the penalty of death was proclaimed against those who violated this precept. And to prove that this was not an empty piece of legislation, we read in the Book of Numbers that a man had been found gathering sticks on the Sabbath day. He was brought before Moses and Aaron who cast him into prison, not knowing what to do with him. And the Lord said to Moses: "Let that man die," and all the multitude stoned him out of the camp.

¹ Jerem. xvii, 27.

² Num. xv, 35.

In the course of time the reign of charity established by our Divine Saviour succeeded the rigors of the Mosaic legislation. The Christian Church, recalling the many grave and touching events that took place on the first day of the week, changed the Lord's Day from the Sabbath to Sunday. Sunday, may well commemorate that day of creation, when light first shot forth from the bosom of darkness, for it was on a Sunday that by the Resurrection of the Saviour our souls had been drawn from the shadows of death to the light of life. It was on a Sunday that the Apostles received from Christ the power to remit sin and the mission to preach the Gospel to the nations. It was on a Sunday that the Holy Ghost came down upon the disciples and confirmed them in their faith. These reasons for the change from the Sabbath to the first day of the week are welcomed and insisted on by the Fathers of the Church in their writings. Saint Leo tells us that we should celebrate the Sacred Mysteries on the day on which were given to us all the gifts of grace.

The reasonableness of the laws made for the observance of Sunday is recognised in the Christian Church, just as those of the Sabbath were in the days of Moses; and if the sanctions and penalties for non-observance are no longer what they were under the Jewish dispensation, the motives for strictly keeping the Lord's Day holy still remain intact.

Leaving aside for a moment the duty of subordination which we as creatures owe to God, and the precept of obedience to His law which must necessarily follow, there are other motives which should appeal to us who plod wearily along in this vale of tears. Our very temporal interests should compel us to sanctify the Sunday. It is evident that even the most vigorous amongst us have need of rest, now and then; the bow that is always bent will break sooner or later. Physiologists point out the necessity of repose; the life of the body demands relaxation. It receives this during the hours of sleep; for a kind Providence has not been unmindful of us. But the time

given to sleep refreshes us only partially; these interruptions to the fatigues of the long days are absolutely insufficient. We must at least once a week unbend our energies and enjoy a longer period free from preoccupation and responsibility. Sunday's longer rest gives us the opportunity to do this.

Again, even though our physical well-being did not require this relaxation, our social life would demand it imperiously. A workman should be neither a slave nor soulless machine; and the Catholic Church recognizes his inalienable right to freedom when she insists on the sanctity of Sundays and feast-days. Without these furloughs in life, the workman who goes to his shop at dawn and returns home late at night, has no chance to enjoy the company of his spouse and children, or to receive the share of affection from his own which is one of the joys of fatherhood. If he is brutalized by hard work during seven days a week, he becomes a stranger to those finer feelings which elevate and ennoble life. He has no op-

portunity to cultivate the family spirit of faith, hope and love which makes a Christian home an easy stepping-stone to heaven.

But we must come to the more fundamental reason for keeping Sunday. While admitting the cogency of the motives drawn from the physical and social life of man, there is a still loftier motive for Sunday observance than all these. Man is a creature of God. Possessed of a soul and a body, he owes God a double homage. The absorbing duties of long days of toil leave him little leisure for prayer, much less for external worship. He has a soul to save, and he should have the time allowed him to share in the inspiring influence of religious ceremony and to receive the religious instruction which feeds the soul. It is to permit him to secure this nourishment under its double aspect, to give him a chance to live for a few hours in a Christian atmosphere, to profit by the uplifting example of thousands of others worshipping like himself, that the Church has laid down the law of abstention from servile work on Sunday.

This was evidently the intention of the Legislator. Unfortunately, the reason for His action does not appeal to most men as it should. Too easily they forget this precept so full of consideration for their souls and bodies. Even when servile labor does not monopolize their time on Sundays, other matters quite unworthy of Christians take up their attention; worldly pleasures absorb them completely, and as a result, how many Catholics there are who for the slightest pretext, spend Sunday in any work but that of serving God. They miss the life-giving Sacrifice of the Mass on Sunday; or, if they are present, their presence is merely passive, and the rest of the day is filled with occupations that have little of the Catholic ring about them. A passive assistance at a Low Mass on a Sunday morning, and nothing else during the day, may fill the letter of the law, but it does not recognize the spirit in which the law was made.

It is a deplorable spectacle—one that inflicts pain on all lovers of the Heart of our Lord—to witness the growing in-

difference of Catholics towards Sunday observance. These people do not realize that their indifference betrays a complete absence of faith, a forgetfulness of God and of religion. Sunday observance is a solemn confession we make in the face of heaven and earth of one faith in God and of our dependance on Him. It is a homage which not merely individuals, but cities and kingdoms, offer to the Great Master. Take away Sunday observance, and what mark have we to show that a nation is Christian, or that it adores God or believes in Him? A nation that does not observe the law of Sunday is practically atheistic; for its people live as if they recognize no responsibilities to God.

It would, on the contrary, be a source of blessings for a country if the Lord's Day were well kept, if all unnecessary commerce were interrupted, if industries ceased, and if no other sounds were heard than those of the church-bells, calling the faithful to the foot of the altar, there to pray and [to ask God's help for themselves, their families and their works. The souls

of men would be strengthened thereby, and they would come away from their houses of prayer and sacrifice ready and willing to undertake the painful and absorbing duties of another week.

What the Church requires as a preliminary for the sanctification of Sunday and holy days is a cessation from work. But all works are not forbidden. Theologians distinguish three kinds of works, servile, liberal, and common. Servile works are those in which the body takes a more active part than the mind, and which tend directly to the welfare of the body; for instance, to till the earth, to mow and reap, to fell trees and chop wood, and other exhausting labors. Liberal works are those which depend on the exercise of the mind more than the body, and which tend directly to the culture of the mind; such as reading, writing, studying, teaching, drawing, and so on. Common work are those in which the mind and the body equally have their share of exercise and which are done indifferently by all kinds of people, for instance, travelling, singing, playing, etc.

Servile works alone are forbidden, and the precept is binding except when there are reasons urgent enough to suspend its application. Regarding common and liberal works, we are advised strongly not to undertake tasks that will cause us to miss Mass; for instance, unnecessary travelling, and such like.

These rules and regulations are full of wisdom, and it is difficult to see how Catholics can disregard them; how for example, they can have a restful conscience who live in places where they cannot hear Mass. It is easily seen, at least, that they do not appreciate the action of the Holy Sacrifice on their souls when, for the sake of health or wealth or climate, they leave centers where God is ever present in His temples to live in places where His sacramental Presence is never seen or felt. And what we have said about the Holy Sacrifice may also be asserted, less rigorously if you will, about the other services of the Church, such as Vespers, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and other liturgical functions.

If we love our Lord, if we value all we possess in our holy religion, we should struggle strenuously against the paganizing movement which would ignore Sunday. Let us take care not to abuse the graces that God reserves for us on His own blessed day. We are pilgrims on our way down the river of life, and we must needs halt often to seek the light and food which will guide us surely through the darkness, and build up our spiritual strength. We are soldiers of short endurance and little courage; we easily tire in the struggle; we must needs often renew our souls in the spirit of sacrifice and prayer. We are tradesmen who would purchase heaven; the only coin used in this Divine commerce are God's graces. We must needs enrich ourselves with these graces; and it is on the Lord's Day that He lavishes them on us with the greatest generosity. Let us, then, look upon Sunday not as a day of purely profane enjoyment, or as a day to be devoted to pleasures wherein the body receives its satisfaction; but rather let us consider Sunday as a day set aside for the welfare of our souls, a day of peace

and joy and communion with God, a day of innocent relaxation given to us by a bountiful God, for the recuperation of our physical and spiritual strength; a day of hope at the thought of the eternal rest which has been promised us and towards which we are rapidly tending.

XV

SUNDAY REST

Thus saith the Lord: Take heed of your souls, and carry no burdens on the Sabbath day: and bring them not in by the gates of Jerusalem. And do not bring burdens out of your houses on the Sabbath day: neither do ye any work: sanctify the Sabbath, as I commanded your fathers.—
JEREMIAS XVII, 21, 22.

THE importance of the precept of rest on Sunday is so vital that we are urged to give the subject still further development. There are too many Catholics who apparently do not realize all that the precept means to them both as individuals and as citizens, nor do they seem to gauge the value of that exclusive service which God demands from His rational creatures. So very much in earnest was He in urging this precept that there are in the Old Testament over seventy passages recalling His will, formally expressed, that the Sabbath should be blessed and sanctified by His people.

Under the Christian dispensation, the Sabbath was changed to Sunday, out of

respect for a great event, the Resurrection of our Lord, which occurred on that day. In the ages of fervor, when, it would seem, people felt more vividly than they do now their nearness to God and their dependence upon Him, His laws were considered as of paramount importance, and the obligation of keeping the Sunday holy and as a day of rest was strictly observed. We have only to consult the history of the Church to see our forefathers interpreted the Third Commandment of God and how they legislated in this matter of Sunday rest and sanctification. Even in our days Catholics who feel the weight of their responsibilities towards their heavenly Father and who wish to show their strong faith, still keep the Lord's own day in its primitive fullness and with a deep earnestness. Pilgrims in this vale of tears, they seem to realize that one day out of seven is not too much to be spent in thinking of the end which is sure to come, and in communing with Him with whom they shall, after a little, commune eternally.

It should not be hard to explain the

attitude of the children of God towards this Commandment. For true Catholics Sunday is the day of the soul, the day on which acts of faith, adoration, confidence, and love, are made to Him whom they recognise as their Father. It is on this day that they learn from the lips of their pastors the nature and extent of their spiritual obligations and the means of carrying them out. And this is not incompatible with a secondary object, that of legitimate rest and recreation for the body. God knew very well that, after a six days' effort at bread-winning, the frail human body would need repose, and He ordered a cessation from servile work not merely for those who command but for those who serve as well.

Unhappily, in these days of feverish activity, this order of God is a dead letter for many. The law regarding the abstention from servile work is one in the observance of which men have grown lax. The craving for wealth and pleasure, and greater than all, probably, the economic conditions of the times in which we live, have given an aspect to Sunday that the Sovereign Law-

giver had not in view for it, one surely that it did not have in other ages. Nowadays the wheels of commerce must needs go round; thousands employed by soulless corporations must slave and grind; dividends must be secured at any sacrifice, even that of conscience. But there is another aspect: When Sunday is not a day of servile work, as it too often happens to be, it is a day of religious neglect and an occasion of boisterous activity which is far from giving relaxation to tired bodies. The law of Sunday is an external link which unites human society to its Author, a fundamental covenant of the Creator with His people; and yet people do not seem to realize that the violation of it is a permanent rebellion against God; a rupture of the relations which exist between heaven and earth, tending as it does to the destruction of social and religious order.

A nation that ignores this law of rest and sanctification is a nation that does not pray. It is hard to believe that men who will not give at least one day out of seven to God, are going to think of Him every

night and morning. When people cease to keep the Sunday, or to frequent the house of God, His priests have no longer the opportunity of putting themselves in communication with them. Where there are no churchgoers, no ears open to hear the saving truths, no minds ready to be enlightened, no hearts willing to be moved, the Sacraments are necessarily neglected; men no longer live in a supernatural atmosphere; they grow worldly; they fix their minds on the things of earth; there is no longer any moral restraint to hold them back, and corruption in its various forms gets a hold on them. The concept of a God, just and provident, grows gradually hazy through absence from religious worship, and a public spirit of atheism is the logical result. A nation that has lost its reverence for Sunday, the day which is "the core of our civilization dedicated to thought and reverence," as Emerson calls it, is a nation that is drifting into paganism.

Under these conditions, we can appreciate the anxiety with which clear-sighted statesmen regard the non-observance of the

Lord's Day and its effects upon public morality; and we now know how why they try so often to legislate in favor of its stricter observance. Their efforts are deserving of praise as long as they keep within the bounds of reason. What they do is good as far as it goes; but experience shows that grandmotherly legislation, penal laws and human sanctions have little effect for good on the human conscience. The fear of fines and prison stripes for infringement of one of the commands of God is a sorry substitute for the voice of God Himself. Once a nation falls from grace, it is a hard task to raise it up again, or to restore it to its former sentiments. Men in large numbers are not easily moved, especially when there is a question of making sacrifices. Success may be looked for only by educating the members singly in their duties.

After all, it is the individuals that form a nation. Working perseveringly on the minds and hearts of individuals, will sooner or later bear fruit on the community at large. The example that Catholics should give their fellow-citizens is obedience to God

and His Church, by abstaining from servile work on Sunday and by fulfilling their religious duties, of which the first and primary one is attendance at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The short hour given over to this solemn act of the worship of God, from whose bounty all good things come to us, is surely none too much to give. The Church judges so, seeing that she obliges us to assist at Mass under pain of mortal sin, unless circumstances make this duty impossible.

But there is something more. Listening to instructions on our duties to God, our neighbor and ourselves, or reading spiritual books, or assisting at other services of the Church, such as Vespers and Benediction, or visiting the poor and the sick, while not preceptive, are also excellent works, and help greatly to the sanctification of the Sunday. The ceremonies of our worship are eloquent in their appeals to the spiritual element in us; they raise our thoughts above earthly concerns; our hymns and our liturgy respond to the different emotions of the soul; they dilate our hearts and fill them

with love and confidence. The Church does not lay all these pious practices upon us as obligations. Still, as a Catholic writer remarks, "a man who should absent himself habitually from sermons, neglect the opportunity the day of rest affords for increased prayer, for reading good books, for instructing his family in matters of religion, will, in many cases, sin against his own soul. A man is in a bad way if he makes a practice of hearing a Low Mass and spending the remainder of the Sunday rest in mere frivolous recreation."

And yet, when one's religious duties are ended the Church invites him to complete the day in rest and relaxation. For instance, the pleasures of social life are limited for a workingman who is absent during the weekdays from his family. Sunday as a day of rest is given him to live in the intimacy of home and to cultivate the affection of his spouse and children. A similar line of reasoning will hold in our relations with our neighbor. We are social beings who should find our delight in cultivating peace and good will with our fellow-men. On the Lord's Day,

when we kneel at the same altar and listen together to the same words of instruction and hope, that fall from the lips of those who are placed over us by the Church, and who speak to us with authority, a spirit of brotherly love and fellow-citizenship is fostered in the community. These are a few of the reasons, founded on the well-being of men and nations, why we should observe the law of Sunday rest. The fact, also, that this law is a pledge of our union with God, both in time and eternity, should be a sufficient reason for all who have any generosity left in their hearts.

But there is another reason which should urge us, both individually and collectively, to keep the Lord's Day holy. Of all the precepts of the Divine law, that of Sunday sanctification and rest is the one that has attached to it the greatest number of temporal promises, just as it is the one the violation of which is threatened with the direst chastisements. Not only are individuals rewarded for their compliance, and punished for their non-compliance, but society in its collective existence will also re-

ceive its due. The Jews were reproved for neglecting to build the temple, and God said to them by the mouth of His prophet Aggeus, "You have sowed much and brought in little; you have eaten, but have not had enough; you have drunk, but you have not been filled with drink; you have clothed yourselves, but have not been warmed; he that hath earned wages put them into a bag with holes. You have looked for more and behold it became less. 'Why?' saith the Lord of Hosts. 'Because my house is desolate.' . . . Therefore, the heavens over you were stayed from giving dew, and the earth was hindered from yielding her fruits." The same fate awaits a nation that leaves the Houses of God desolate on the Lord's Day. Seeing that nations are of this earth, it is on this earth that God's justice is meted out to them. Society shall receive its due here below for its obedience or rebellion.

We Catholics should give no ground for reproaches of this character, for we owe too much to God; and we should show our gratitude to Him by obeying this salutary law. There are so many attractions nowadays to

draw our minds and hearts from Him on His own day that we should be always on our guard. If we have in the past been remiss in our duty to Him, especially in neglecting Mass and in doing servile work on Sundays, our duty is plainly to reform our lives. Let us, then, resolve to gather round the altars of God on this blessed day, to make reparation to His outraged Majesty and to ask His mercy and compassion. To whom if not to us Catholics, a chosen people, may the world look for the strict observance of the laws of God and His Church? After all the favors and indulgences that He showers down upon us, surely this is not asking too much.

XVI

SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me: for He will speak peace unto His people: and unto His saints: and unto them that are converted to the heart.—PSALM LXXXIV. 9.

The wisdom of the flesh is death: but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace... But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit. if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.
—ROMANS VIII, 6, 9.

THE kingdom of heaven, with its coming joys and its happiness, should be the object of all our efforts in this life. In the light of eternity all other objects are secondary and not worth considering. What will it profit us if we gain millions, or rise to pinnacles of human glory, if in the end we suffer the loss of our souls? It is this tremendous question that causes millions of us to pause and think; it helps us to determine the true relation of our short lives with the eternal hereafter. How quickly things human pass away and how real should

be our efforts to secure the one thing necessary, namely, the salvation of our souls!

The greatest favor that anyone can do us in this life is to help us to save our souls, and we should look upon the one who undertakes this task as a signal friend and benefactor. It matters not what character his services in our regard may assume, whether it be that of intercessory prayer, or advice, or example, or even reproach, we should be grateful to him. Indeed we cannot be grateful enough. It is only after we have captured the prize that we shall know how much we are indebted to those who helped us in this work.

Among the friends and benefactors who should hold a high place in our esteem, are our confessors and spiritual directors, inasmuch as they are for us the instruments of the Holy Ghost in the great work of our salvation. It is the will of God that we save our souls through the ministry of our fellow-men, and it is to our confessors, more than to others, that we owe our victories in the lifelong struggle upward. Using the power which they receive on the day

of their ordination, the priests of God can tell us poor sinners, "Receive again the sanctifying grace which you have lost by your sins; go, you are forgiven;" and brushing away our tears of repentance we rise new men and new women to begin our spiritual life anew.

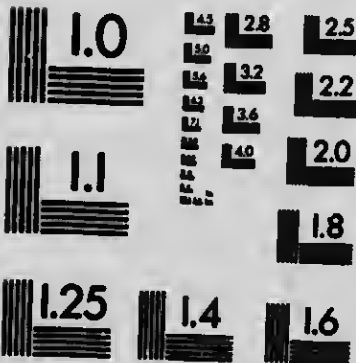
What a transformation do their words effect in the human soul! What power God has given to His ambassadors for our sake! What discernment and prudence are required in the dispensing of the great Sacrament of Penance! This God-like work of absolving us from our sins, inspiring us with a hatred of evil and directing our steps in the spiritual life, should give our confessor a special claim to our gratitude.

And yet the power of remitting sin is only one of his privileges. The spiritual world is a mysterious land for most of us. No matter how wise we may be in worldly concerns, we speak and act as children once we enter the world of the soul. Besides, there are dangers and pitfalls in this mysterious land; dark clouds often hide the sun; the nights are often long and forbidding;



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we know not how to overcome the obstacles we meet; we need a kindly hand to lead us.

Who is to be our guide on this perilous journey if not our confessor who, after his long experience in the tribunal of penance, has become an expert in the things of the soul? He is a man who possesses a deep knowledge of God's ways of acting with human souls, who is able to trace the movements of grace and its varied manifestations, who can read the character of individuals, of whom no two are alike, who discerns the idiosyncrasies of conscience, who can put a just value on the scrupulousness of some and on the laxity of others, who is at all times a wise counsellor—it is to him we may unreservedly confide all that concerns our spiritual welfare.

Only in the Catholic Church have souls the benefit of this individual direction. Her priests are not content with preaching the great truths of religion or setting forth the general principles of morality. Preaching the word of God has undoubtedly its efficacy; it tells us what our duties are to our Maker

and to those with whom we live, and suggests the methods we should use, just as lectures on hygiene explain the laws of nature and give useful hints on the way to preserve our health. But he should be a poor physician, indeed, who would remain satisfied with lecturing on the laws of health. He would do little good if he did not visit his patients individually, and not merely apply the hygienic principles enunciated in public, but also prescribe for each patient according to his special needs.

Similarly, in the Catholic Church the spiritual physician treats directly with individual souls. He analyses their illnesses, tells them how to avoid this or that danger, encourages them to practise this virtue or that. His vast experience helps him greatly in the work of enlightening their minds and moving their hearts to higher things. In this instance, at least, the human voice carries its message more efficaciously when it is spoken into the individual ear than when it is heard in the open by the multitude. The timely advice of a wise and holy confessor sinks into the receptive soul, and,

as a result, there are millions in the Church today whose lives have been influenced for the better.

If the benefits those ambassadors of Christ bestow on souls are great, great indeed are their responsibilities, and equally great must be their mental and moral equipment. The care of the human soul in its journey to perfection is one of the hardest tasks ever assumed by man; and for this reason the Church takes infinite pains to furnish her children with competent guides. Not every one is allowed to exercise this ministry among souls; many naturally shrink from it, so much depends upon its rightful exercise. Undoubtedly, God jealously watches over His august tribunal and gives special efficacy to the advice and decisions of those who take His place and act so authoritatively in His name. "I have chosen you and have appointed you that you should go and bring forth fruit." Nevertheless the chosen ones must keep themselves worthy of their sacred office. Theological science they may possess; they may have penetrated the secrets of asce-

ticism; they may, humanly speaking, be fully equipped for the duties of their exalted ministry, but if they are merely men of science, their labors will be fruitless. Without zeal and the love of God, they are but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

It is here that the flock may aid the shepherd, that the penitent may be of infinite help to the confessor whose services in his behalf have a value that he will appreciate some day. If we are profuse in our thankfulness to the physician who gives us back our health of body and adds a few years to our life, how much more grateful should we be to the spiritual physician whose fatherly warnings have helped us to avoid sin and put our souls in a way to receive eternal rewards!

How may we show our gratitude? Perhaps the generous gift of our prayers would go out all the more readily to our confessors if we fully realised what a difficult and very often thankless task is theirs. Do we ever think of the weary hours they spend in the confessional, the physical hardship thereby endured, the repugnances that nature

excites? Or the acts of patience and abnegation that they must constantly make in order to do their duty well? Or the cruel suspicions, attacks, even calumnies, with which their life-giving work in the confessional is so often visited?

If we have minds to appreciate and hearts to feel, we cannot help giving the tribute of our prayers and supplications to God for those who render us such signal services. The confessor is instrumental in saving others; he studies and works and worries in the interests of others; he slakes the souls of others in the Blood of the Crucified; surely others should try, even in this life, to repay him by respect for the dignity of his character, by obedience to his words and counsels, and, more than all, by prayer for him that God may always give him the gifts of wisdom, discernment and piety.

However, if there are hardships and dark moments in a confessor's life, there are also consolations, consolations that grow in intensity as the past lengthens out and eternity begins to dawn. One of these consolations is the conviction that he has pre-

vented the commission of many a mortal sin, that he has turned many a soul from the downward path and helped many another on its way to heaven. These consolations are great even in this life; they will be supplemented by greater ones when the faithful priest enters into eternal rest.

And we, in the evening of our lives, when our locks are whitening, will pause some day and look back through bygone years, to recall the names and faces of those who in some way were our benefactors. When we think—for think we must—of our confessor, of him for whom we reserved our entire confidence, to whom we opened up our whole hearts, whose wise counsels guided us in our spiritual life, whose timely words and holy example prevented many a downfall, we may point to a tomb in some lonely churchyard and may truthfully say: "There lies one who helped me to save my soul. After God, he was my truest friend."

XVII

REVIVING OUR FERVOR

*How great is the multitude of Thy sweetness,
O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear
Thee! which Thou hast wrought for them that hope
in Thee, in the sight of the sons of men.—PSALM
xxx, 20.*

*And now we follow Thee with all our heart, and
we fear Thee, and seek Thy face—DANIEL III, 41.*

IN the minds of many Catholics, the words "mission" and "missionary" refer to works of zeal and conversion in foreign lands. The mission-field is to them some spot in far-off heathendom; the missionary is the man who leaves home and country to labor for souls beyond the seas. There are, however, missions that are not in foreign parts and there are missionaries who stay at home and yet work for souls efficaciously. These are the apostolic men who at the invitation of our pastors go from parish to parish, at certain seasons of the year, and by their preaching and exhortations renew the religious spirit in Catholic populations.

Parish missionary work, reduced to its simplest expression, is an unusually vigorous insistence on the great truths of the Gospel and on the observance of the Ten Commandments and the reception of the Sacraments. While it is now a common practice, mission-giving is not a new departure from older methods. In all ages of the Church extraordinary fruits have been reaped in souls by the special pleading of men devoted to this kind of missionary work. But in recent centuries it has been systematized and has even become one of the special functions of the Regular clergy, who apply themselves earnestly to it with admirable results.

Certain times of the year seem to be more favorable than others for parish missionary work. The penitential seasons of Advent and Lent, which precede the great festivals of Christmas and Easter, would seem favorable times to arouse men and women to a sense of their spiritual responsibility; to make them realize more vividly that they have souls to save, and consequently to extend a welcome to the preachers

who come to point out the way. During the rest of the year the ordinary pastors instruct their flocks; their voices are heard in season and out of season calling sinners to a better life and the just to greater holiness. And yet though this would seem to be sufficient to make people think and act, there are many who fail to heed. Is it because the eternal truths by dint of repetition lose some of their inherent persuasiveness? Possibly; and for this reason a strange voice is often needed to put new life into them or to present them in a new way, and thus give them fresh vigor and cogency. Even the most zealous parish priests feel now and then the need of extraordinary help, not to urge the perfect to greater perfection but rather to rouse the indifferent, and to instil the fear of God's judgments into the hearts of the wicked. One of the common practices of those who have the care of souls, a practice becoming more common every year, is to call in strangers—clerical auxiliaries—to preach missions. Due notice is given of the event, and the pastor in order to make the members of

his flock profit by it, earnestly urges them to realize the greatness of the grace that is in store for them.

If one reflects a moment, one will easily see that a mission in a parish is a source of many blessings. It is no small matter for a lukewarm Catholic or an obdurate sinner to be given the chance, now and then, to straighten up the affairs of his soul with God. A merchant who wants to succeed in business must keep an eye on his books; the housekeeper, to be considered thrifty, must keep the dust and cobwebs away; the old clock must be wound up at stated times or it will stop. The same homely reasoning holds good in the affairs of the soul. There would seem to be a kind of gravitation active in the spiritual world as well as in the physical; we are more prone to sink than to rise. If we desire to keep our souls in order we must be continually on the alert.

Various industries are employed among pastors to keep alive the spirit of faith and piety among their people. The sodalities, leagues, guilds and parish societies, orga-

nized in these strenuous days, have this one object in view, and the greater number carry out their purpose admirably. But there are many souls whom these ordinary methods do not reach. Neglect of spiritual interests and religious duties is the common wail of pastors of today; they feel that for their straying sheep appeals must be made strong enough and loud enough to reach both mind and heart. Experience shows that there is nothing better than a frank presentation of the great truths of the Gospel to bring lukewarm Catholics back to their senses. "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world if in the end he lose his soul?" is a question just as practical today as it was when it fell from the lips of the Saviour. This tremendous question may be ignored in the stress and bustle of life; the underlying truth, which is the importance of salvation, may have lain dormant for years, but when it is presented with the accompaniments of a strange voice and an eloquent tongue, there are few, even among the most obdurate, who can resist the appeal. Truth will always win the day when it is imparted

in a convincing manner, and the lessons of early childhood come home once more to Catholics with renewed vividness. The end for which we were created, the end of things around us, the need of God's grace, the obstacles to our salvation, the rigor of Divine justice, the judgment of the good and the bad, the heinousness of sin, the necessity of conversion, the misery of impenitence, the final sanction for weal or woe, the infinite mercy of God—all these truths of faith are deeply buried in our inner being, awaiting only the living word to spring again into conscious activity.

Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers.

It needs nothing more than the soul-stirring tones of an eloquent missionary to bring back to sinners the convictions of early years, to rouse them to sentiments of fear of God, and fill them with the desire to amend their lives.

"The few days devoted to a popular mission," says a writer, "with all the truths which it proclaims, all the acts which it disposes to and realizes, form a real source

of benediction to the souls who are willing to profit by it. It is a work of teaching and conversion which undereives those who are misled, convinces those who doubt, shakes the indifferent in their false security, and stops hardened sinners in full career. It is an extraordinary weapon with which falsehood and error are attacked directly, boldly and persistently, to the destruction of erroneous systems and the triumphant erection of truth on their ruins. Deep-sea prejudices and inveterate faults, though attacked at intervals from the pulpit, always find some corner in the heart where they can hide themselves and hold their ground, but the man who attends a mission meets an assailant who deals blow after blow until the conviction of his blindness and enormity of his faults, are forced upon the hearer's conscience. Ill-gotten gains are renounced, guilty practices and criminal connections are broken off, hatreds of long-standing are appeased, separated couples reconciled, lawsuits amicably settled; the converted sinners show a change of conduct, and the face of family and parochial life

is altered through the whole district, human existence is modified for the better, sanctification spreads; and where unbelief immorality, discord, disobedience and antipathy formerly prevailed, the severity of the Christian faith is now established with union, love and peace with God."¹

In these days of impiety and indifference who will dare say that such results are not worth obtaining? And is it not true that the pastor of souls is a signal benefactor who provides graces like these for his flock? We have each of us only one life to live, only one soul to save, only one supreme chance given us; it is our duty to seize every occasion that presents itself to reap profit for the life to come.

Even if a mission does not produce all the solid fruit desired in a parish, the fact that it has brought back sanctifying grace to many a soul, that it has blotted out many a mortal sin, and prevented the committing of many another, would alone justify the anxious efforts that zealous priests make to render those occasional revivals a success.

¹ Cath. Dict., rev. edit. p. 635.

However, experience has shown that the results of missions in parishes are almost always lasting. Those who find their way back to church on Sunday and holy days, after an absence of years perhaps, do not miss Mass so easily again. Acts of injustice that have been repaired by restitution stand a good chance of not being repeated. The dissensions among families and the scandals which had been prevalent, will, very likely, not be renewed. Missionaries come and go, but their passing leaves behind them blessings that are not effaced in the coming years. Many a soul standing before the judgment seat of God will be able to look backward and say in all truth that a parish mission, once made devoutly and well, was the starting-point on its career to eternal happiness.

XVIII

SHRINES AND PILGRIMAGES

And Eliseus died, and they buried him. And the rovers from Moab came into the land the same year. And some that were burying a man, saw the rovers, and cast the body into the sepulchre of Eliseus. And when it had touched the bones of Eliseus, the man came to life, and stood upon his feet.—
IV KINGS XIII, 20, 21.

In that day shall be the root of Jesse, who standeth for an ensign of the people, Him the Gentiles shall beseech, and His sepulchre shall be glorious.
—ISAIAH XI, 10.

PILGRIMAGES to shrines and holy places have been a popular form of devotion from the earliest Christian times. Even before the advent of our Lord, the Jews set us the example by their yearly pilgrimage to the temple of Jerusalem. Their religious sacrifices were offered exclusively in the temple, and on the great feasts of the year, especially during the Paschal season, the faithful Jews made it a matter of conscience to be present in the Holy City. After the coming of the Redeemer and the establishment of His Church, the offering of

sacrifice was not restricted to one spot or to one season. The Lamb of God was immolated by the Christian priesthood in many places and at all times, so that the faithful had not to make long journeys or to seek afar for Him whom they adored in spirit and truth.

However, this real presence of Christ on our altars did not prevent Christians from making pilgrimages to the land consecrated by His physical Birth and Passion. Following the example of St. Helena, who, in 318, visited Jerusalem, multitudes of pilgrims, drawn by piety and penance, travelled in later centuries to the East to venerate the various spots rendered sacred by the presence and the sufferings of our Divine Redeemer. Although the rule of the Mussulman has, for hundreds of years, put a damper on pilgrimages to Palestine, that favored land has never ceased to attract the faithful, and few there are who feel that their earthly pilgrimage is complete who do not visit the Holy Land.

The annals of the Church tell us that the resting-places of the Saints have, in

a lesser degree, shared the privileges of Palestine. The fanes of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome, of St. James in Spain, St. Martin at Tours, St. Thomas at Canterbury, and innumerable others, appealed to the popular mind in former centuries, and their tombs became the goal of thousands who desired to venerate the relics of men who suffered and died for God. Rome being the centre of Catholic unity as well as the possessor of the tomb of St. Peter, is still the magnet that draws the faithful from all parts of the world.

Among the very popular pilgrimages in all ages were those to spots rendered sacred by some heavenly manifestation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, for instance, Our Lady of Montserrat in Spain, Guadalupe in Mexico, Loreto in Italy, Einsiedeln in Switzerland, Oostacher in Belgium, Maria Zell in Germany, each of which has its own absorbing history. The Mother of Mercy multiplied miracles at those shrines, and thereby drew to her the hearts of Christians who, while simple in their manners and habits, were energetic in the practice of their faith. A

recent writer recalls the spectacle of devout German Catholics, accompanied by their priests, singing hymns and litanies as they sailed down the Danube in open boats, and climbed with weary foot the steep ascent that led to the shrine of Our Lady of Altotting. Picturesque scenes like this were frequently witnessed before the Reformation. The Church gave her blessing to the pious pilgrim, calling down on him "the protection of Heaven in the way of peace and prosperity, and enjoining him to pray that God would be his support in his setting out, his solace on the way, his shadow in the heat, his covering in the rain and cold, the chariot of his weakness, the fortress of his adversity, his staff in the ways of slipperiness, and his harbor in shipwreck."

In a quaint account still preserved for us, the pilgrim was instructed to provide himself "with two pairs of shoes, a water bottle, a spoon, a satchel, a staff, a cloak and a broad-brimmed hat, and a cloak to be edged with leather, as a protection against wind, rain and snow." The pilgrim was solemnly warned that he might die far from

home and find a grave by the way. This warning was not given without reason, for many dangers awaited pilgrims of the Middle Ages. There was the fatigue of the road and the exposure to wind and weather to be counted with, and yet the discomforts were welcomed in a spirit of penance. Large numbers of the faithful banded together in one common act of devotion, slowly made their way to some popular shrine of Mary, and counted neither the time nor the fatigue of such a journey. The struggle for life was not so absorbing as it is now, nor did time seem so precious. Habits were simpler and companionships were more easily formed. Personal piety found a vent in hymns chanted in common, while litanies and prayers recited together helped to shorten the weary road.

But those were the habits of the olden times. Modern methods have changed much, even in the matter of pilgrimages, which perhaps accounts for the fact that these forms of devotion are not so popular as they once were and possibly not so profitable spiritually. The motives which prompted

Christians to undertake long journeys in former times have given way to others which mingle piety with more or less diversion. While it is true that in everything we do for God we should show a cheerful countenance—for if God loves a cheerful giver, he will not despise a cheerful doer—this spirit may be carried too far. It seems rather incongruous that a form of devotion, originally destined to be a work of penance, is now rather one of pleasure. How few, we may ask, visit shrines nowadays in a true pilgrim spirit?

And yet in encouraging pilgrimages to favored shrines, Holy Church responds to a legitimate element in human nature. It is a perfectly natural sentiment in man that urges him to visit spots to which personal reminiscences are attached. One always turns longingly and lovingly towards a hamlet or village which was once the scene of some consolation or pleasure. When these reminiscences have any connection with one's religious convictions, or with his happiness here or hereafter, the spot naturally becomes sacred to him.

The Church encourages this sentiment in mankind as a powerful help to religion; she promotes a pilgrim spirit in us, not merely to make us feel that we are, after all, only pilgrims wending our way through this vale of tears, but rather to keep vividly in our minds some salutary truth of our religion. It is a matter of experience with us all that when religious impressions are blunted by continual contact with outside influences, they are quickly renewed when brought in contact again with the occasion that gave rise to them. A visit to the scene of a heavenly apparition, whether it be of our Lady or of one of the Saints, the contemplation of the spot, the miraculous character of the cures effected there, our experience of consolations sought and secured there, all invariably send us away with a more vivid sense of the supernatural, a stronger faith in the wonder-working power of God, and a more intense love of the Royal Worker Himself.

We find this illustrated strongly in the last fifty years at the shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in the Pyrenees. There is nothing

like a miracle seen with our own eyes to strengthen our faith in God—it was the means used by our Lord Himself—and the thousands of undoubted miracles that have been wrought during the past half century among those who have visited Lourdes, have been one of the most powerful means of preserving the Faith in a land that needs so very badly such a preserving agency. What we assert of France may be repeated of Canada. The shrine of St. Anne at Beau-pré has done much in the past, and is still doing much, to keep the Faith alive and active in this land of ours. Miraculous shrines are continuing the work Christ did Himself to prove His doctrines. From those shrines flows an eloquence which is perpetually confirming the truths preached from the pulpits of the Catholic Church throughout the world.

Sceptics object to pilgrimages to the shrines of Saints and other holy places, because such journeys, would seem virtually to deny the immensity and omnipresence of God. "If God is independent of all conditions of space," they ask, "if He is present

everywhere, and if His power is infinite, how can we believe that He reserves manifestations of that power for one spot rather than for another?"

The only fundamental reason that can be given is that God so wills it, and this is proven by facts. "It is sometimes ignorantly supposed that practices," such as praying in consecrated buildings rather than elsewhere, encouraging pilgrimages, and other works of devotion to particular shrines, "are somewhat in conflict with the doctrine of the Divine immensity. In truth there is no conflict at all; were the practice inconsistent with any Divine attribute, it would have been so under the Old Law not less than under the New. But we learn from Holy Scripture that the practice of pilgrimage was approved by God and that prayer had peculiar efficacy if made in certain places; and although under the Christian dispensation the Sacrifice of the Mass is offered to God in every place and no longer in Jerusalem alone, yet the attributes of God remain unchanged, and if He pleases, the practice of pilgrimage may still be accept-

able to Him, the whole matter depending upon His good pleasure. Each act of this kind is laudable if done with probably good reasons, and under the guidance of the Church. The truth is, the practice of pilgrimage is admirably adapted to human nature and is in universal use; it calls out in the highest degree all the qualities that give usefulness to our devotions and efficacy to our prayers."¹

Visits to shrines whether they be dedicated to Our Lady or to the Saints, should be made in a true religious spirit. When we leave our own country or our homes for a set pious purpose, we should see to it that this purpose lasts to the end. It is in carrying out this pilgrim spirit that we do homage to the mysteries of Providence, and profit by the special blessings attached to the shrines which we visit. Pilgrimages are a public profession of our Faith. Under their unusually inspiring and impressive form they are one of the noblest manifestations of external worship. The Catholic Church has given her approval to the custom; her

¹ Hunter: Outlines Dogm. Theol, ii. p. 361

Pontiffs have enriched the shrines with indulgences and have granted jubilee privileges to pilgrims; and what is more admirable than all, God has in every age deigned to reward those pious manifestations with miracles, the strongest proof that pilgrimages are pleasing to Him.

XIX

INTEGRITY OF THE FAITH

And the apostles said to the Lord: Increase our faith.—LUKE XVII, 5.

For he that shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of them the Son of Man shall be ashamed, when He shall come in His majesty, and that of His Father, and of the holy angels.—LUKE IX, 26.

Fight the good fight of faith: lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and hast confessed a good confession before many witnesses.—I TIMOTHY VI, 12.

THE precious gift of Faith, delivered to us by Christ, has been subjected to many an onslaught in past centuries. Wicked and deluded men, moved by pride of intellect or by corruption of heart, severed their connection with the Church of God and set out to preach doctrines of their own making. Relying on their own interpretation of the Scriptures, they boldly denied the dogmas of the religion revealed by Christ, denounced the authority of His Vicar on earth, vilified the Sacraments, repelled all efforts at reconciliation, and, as history shows, only too

often succeeded in seducing souls away from the truth. These heresiarchs did not hide their intention, which was the destruction of the Catholic religion; and yet, no matter how nefarious their works or how dreadful the results, they could claim at least the merit of frankness in their methods of warfare. It has been reserved for recent years to witness an attack of a different character, one of the subtlest and most dangerous that has yet been made. And painful to relate, this attack has not come from outsiders, but from misguided men within the Catholic Church, who, while proclaiming their devotedness to her interests, they were playing the part of traitors among their brethren.

Happily, the supreme Shepherd of Souls was on the watch. True to his calling as infallible guardian of our beliefs, he raised his voice and warned his flock that there were wolves in disguise within the Fold, trying to work havoc with the time-honored Catholic faith. The errors of Modernism were revealed to an astonished world by Pius X in his admirable letter *Pascendi*

Gregis; the mask was torn from this latest of heresies, and the light let in on a series of false doctrines that few, even within the the Church, were aware of. Very few Catholics, in fact, outside of theological circles, had an inkling that such doctrines were in process of incubation, or that the taint of heresy had such a hold on the intellects of men hitherto looked up to as leaders.

Now that the blow has been given to Modernism, it is hardly necessary to enter into the details of its teaching. But this heresy has as many heads as the hydra and is liable to show itself again. It is necessary then to indicate its main features, so that we may be always on our guard in the reading of books and in using other sources of information. One of the artifices of the Modernists, in order to hide the cloven foot, was to adhere jealously to the technical expressions employed in Catholic theology; but they changed the definitions of these expressions so radically that, if accepted as proposed by them, our holy religion would soon be turned into a sort of Protestantism; all belief in the supernatural would dwindle

away, and Atheism would inevitably become rampant.

To cite a few instances. According to these innovators, Revelation is not the exterior manifestation of certain truths made by God to man, but only the consciousness we possess that we are in relation with God. It was not certain to them that God exists; at least they found it impossible to prove His existence. The more advanced among them added that our reason could never give us any absolute certainty of the existence of God. And yet they admitted that we should accept the fact of His existence as a working hypothesis; we should act as if God did really exist; for the idea of a Supreme Being over us must surely help us to guide our lives according to higher ideals and practically to better them.

In this Modernist heresy, the dogmas of the Catholic Church are not the authentic, infallible and unchangeable enunciations of what we must believe, but simply practical rules for our guidance in the moral order—rules which may be, or even should be, modified little by little.

The greater number of Modernists insinuated that the miracles of Christ are only legends; that He never rose from the dead; that He was often deceived—in a word, that He was a mere man. They denied the Divinity of Our Lord, although they took infinite pains in their publications to convey the contrary impression.

What would be the consequences of such pernicious doctrines? Simply these. If Jesus Christ be not God, then the Bible is a work without inspiration, and similar to any other book; the Sacraments instituted by Him are the work of a man; mere symbols productive of no grace; the Church is a purely human society, while her hierarchy and her pretended infallibility are institutions which may be useful in keeping an ignorant multitude in submission, but which learned men like the Modernists had no further use for. All these strange things were taught, not by men who had openly broken with the Church, but by men who clamorously proclaimed their orthodoxy, who even hypocritically administered the Sacraments, in the efficacy of which they had lost all faith.

If we try to reach the marrow of these doctrines, ordinarily vague and hard to seize, we shall find at bottom the same principle of private judgment which is the touchstone of Protestantism. Every man may believe what he wishes, and is responsible only to the dictates of his own conscience. It was this principle that brought about the loss of millions to the Church in the sixteenth and succeeding centuries.

However, the heretics of the sixteenth century did not dare draw from the principle of private judgment all the conclusions that might have been logically derived therefrom; this work was reserved for the heretics of the twentieth. The next step, according to Pius X, would have been into absolute Atheism; and it was to prevent this catastrophe and to warn us of the peril that the learned Pontiff took such pains in his letter *Pascendi Gregis* to analyse so exhaustively the Modernist errors.

The Sovereign Pontiff did not take the offensive a moment too soon. While his memorable encyclical made a stir in the hot-beds of error, it produced a feeling of

sadness among the true children of the Church. How could Catholics be otherwise than sad at the spectacle of men, once devoted to their mother, now rending her robes? once edifying her by their lives and their writings, now holding her in derision and looking for her downfall? The Pope showed conclusively that the doctrines of Modernism were opposed to Scripture and Tradition, and fraught with heresy and infidelity. He warned Catholics to be on their guard against its teachings which, owing to the intangibility of their forms and the insinuating methods used to spread them, were among the most dangerous the Church had to deal with in the course of her long existence.

There are many useful lessons that we Catholics may learn from the prompt action of the Holy Pontiff. Let us retain at least this one: There is only one way of being a Catholic, and that is to live in union with Rome, to believe what the Vicar of Christ teaches us and to obey him implicitly. Religious systems based on any other principle are false. The Church which Christ

founded cannot err; the gates of Hell shall never prevail against her; for the Holy Spirit is with her who will guide her during all days. She has her Founder's own assurance for it.

This assurance should be for us a precious guarantee and should bring peace to every disturbed conscience. When a new theory or a strange doctrine is proposed, either by word of mouth, or in books or newspapers, our first duty is to ask whether or no it has the approval of the infallible Vicar of Christ. If it has, then we may accept it without hesitation. If it has been condemned, our duty is to reject it. If Christ's Vicar has not yet spoken, our duty is to leave untried theories and doctrines in dignified isolation until some authoritative announcement concerning them has been made by competent ecclesiastical authority. If we act in this manner, we shall always remain united to the Shepherd who received from Christ Himself the charge of the sheep and the lambs, whose duty it is to confirm his brethren in the Faith, and whose infallible voice is the only real exponent of religious truth.

XX

HELPING THE HOLY FATHER

I have shewed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the word of the Lord Jesus, how He said: It is a more blessed thing to give rather than to receive.—ACTS xx, 35.

Charge the rich of this world... to do good... to be rich in good works, to give easily, to communicate to others, to lay up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on the true life.—1 TIMOTHY vi, 18, 19.

THE prestige of the Papacy, that venerable institution to whose guidance Christ left His Church, and the methods to be undertaken to provide it with the means to carry on its mission among men, are objects which should excite the active sympathy of all Catholics who have the interests of religion at heart.

The Papacy, in the person of its august head, rules Christ's spiritual kingdom on earth. Its mission is to carry on the work of the Redeemer, to spread His teachings in this world, to work in season and out

of season, reproving, entreating, encouraging in all patience and doctrine, with one end only in view, that of bringing men to the knowledge and love of God. "To renew all things in Christ," is the watchword of the present occupant of the Chair of Peter; to draw all men to the feet of Jesus, to move them to submit their minds and wills to Him, is the work of His Vicar on earth.

For this sublime mission the Papacy is thoroughly organized. The Holy Spirit has imparted to it a wisdom and a power which have given it an influence for good and an efficacy in attaining results beyond that enjoyed by any other institution in this world. The head of the Papacy is a king by right divine, whose title has been ratified by the consecration of centuries; the functions he exercises are the noblest and loftiest the world has ever witnessed. The reign of this king, whom we call our Sovereign Pontiff, has been going on since the first Pentecost; his voice is still heard at the uttermost ends of the earth; his will is law for nearly three hundred millions of the human race.

Naturally, while the acts of such an exalted personage should be kingly, his prestige too should be paramount. This is what it was in the past. In the ages of faith when the spiritual order held its rightful place in the social and political government of the world, the Sovereign Pontiff was the accepted arbiter among kings, and kings acknowledged his independence of them. In those days God was recognized as the source whence all royalty and all kingly power proceeded, and earthly princes bent the knee in submission to him who took the place of God and who was looked upon as the chief of the Christian world. The representative of God on earth held a unique place among the princes of the earth; and those who had felt the benefits of his influence, urged by motives of gratitude, or of allegiance, or filial piety, handed over to his keeping certain temporal possessions, to aid him amid the clashing of kingly interests to fill his sublime mission on earth, and to assure to him a kingly independence.

In 755, King Pepin gave Stephen II the temporal sovereignty of Ravenna and

Pentapolis; twenty years later Charlemagne added Spoleto. In 1077 the Countess Matilda donated southern Tuscany and other districts to the reigning Pontiff, retaining merely their usufruct till her death in 1115. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Duchies of Ferrara and Urbino became part of the domain of the Holy See. These temporal possessions of the Church were based on titles the legitimacy of which no one ever dared contest. The consent of neighboring nations, the prescription of centuries, the stipulation of treaties—treaties solemnly recognized even as late as 1801—all admitted the rights of sovereignty claimed by the august head of the Catholic Church.

The reasonableness of this sovereignty of the Roman Pontiff appeals to all who care to reflect on the matter. Temporal power is, if not essentially, at least morally, necessary to secure the independence of the Papacy and the prestige of the Vicar of Christ, in order that the Church of which he is the head may carry out the spiritual mission entrusted to her by her Founder. What more reasonable than that he who

claims the spiritual allegiance of the hearts and minds of men living in all parts of the world should be possessed of the kingly prerogative of independence? He whose office it is to rule as Christ's visible representative and to expound authoritatively His eternal laws to kings as well to subjects, to prince as well as to peasant, should not be hampered in the exercise of his sublime office. Rulers of nations are bound by the laws of God as are the humblest of their subjects, and he who interprets those laws or admonishes for the non-observance of them, should be independent in his action. He who is in conscience bound to feed the sheep and the lambs of the Fold of Christ should have the facilities and the means to do it with dignity and freedom. He who is bound to follow the progress of the Church in distant lands should be in a position to communicate readily with his bishops and priests the world over, without the interference of prince or potentate. The interests of ecclesiastical government require that he should not be at the mercy of other temporal rulers.

The Sovereign Pontiffs had all these advantages when they were temporal as well as spiritual rulers, and right well did they make use of them for the temporal and spiritual welfare of their world-wide flock. In the purely social order, it was the Popes who formulated the most liberal constitution of the Middle Ages; it was with the revenues derived from their temporal domain that they established schools and universities throughout Italy and beyond its borders, making science and art the handmaids of religion; it was the Popes who encouraged art in all its forms and made the Eternal City the very home of art. In the spiritual order, the income of the Patrimony of Peter enabled the Roman Pontiffs to carry on the vast government of the Church, to send missionaries to foreign lands and to build up churches for the faithful. The revenues which the Pope derived from his temporal domain promoted the interests of the Church in countless ways.

But the Spirit of Darkness could not brook without a protest the curtailment of his infernal power in the world, and he set

to work to employ human agencies to undermine the power that opposed him. In the the beginning of the nineteenth century, Napoleon, the Corsican adventurer who tried to make the world his footstool, in a frenzy of domination, seized the Papal States and cast Pius VII into prison. Again in 1848 Pius IX was driven from his throne, and a republic was proclaimed by Garibaldi and Mazzini. Louis Napoleon routed the revolutionists the following year, reinstated the Pope and garrisoned Rome. Twenty years later the withdrawal of the French forces and the defeat of the Papal army, left the Pontiff at the mercy of Victor Emmanuel and his Piedmontese hordes. Under the plea of a United Italy the patrimony of Peter was again seized, the Papal revenues confiscated, and the venerable head of the Catholic world virtually made a prisoner. The Pope is still confined within the walls of his own Vatican palace, the only spot in his once independent domain where he is permitted to exercise sovereign rights.

This has been the intolerable condition of things since 1870. Deprived of the lawful

legacy left by his predecessors, and the revenues derived therefrom, which he wholly employed for the well-being of the Church and Christian society, the Sovereign Pontiff has had ever since to depend on the generosity of his children throughout the world to supply him with the means to carry on the government of the Church at home and abroad. Naturally, his appeals for aid shall have to be made as long as the sacrilegious usurpation of the Papal States continues.

Catholics should consider it a duty to aid the Holy Father who pathetically tells us, now and then, that he needs our help to carry on his apostolic work. Peter's Pence was once a merely voluntary tax that Catholics imposed on themselves, but in view of the circumstances and the interests at stake, it should now be considered by all as an obligatory one.

is it necessary to dilate on the other motives of zeal, gratitude and love that should urge us to generosity? Zeal for the extension of Christ's kingdom on earth should be a cogent motive with us; as well as gratitude to him who distributes so gene-

rously the bread of true doctrine; gratitude to the infallible mind who guarantees the truth of the doctrines he asks us to accept; gratitude to him who is so lavish with his spiritual treasures; love for the august prisoner who in his every word and act shows himself a father, a protector and defender of the interests of our souls, the only interests worth considering in this valley of tears. If out of our own limited resources we are able to contribute to Peter's Pence only the widow's mite, let us give our small alms joyfully whenever we are called upon to do so, confident that He whose earthly representative we are helping will reward us a hundred-fold in eternity.

XXI

THE FIELD AFAR

I have set thee to be the light of the Gentiles; that thou mayst be for salvation unto the utmost part of the earth. And the Gentiles hearing it, were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord.—Acts XIII, 47, 48.

NINETEEN centuries ago, our Saviour told His Apostles to go abroad in the world and deliver the message that they had received from His Divine lips. While His words were still warm in their hearts, they started out to teach the nations, and continued to do so until they ended their lives in martyrdom. Ever since, their successors have been employed in carrying on their apostolate, crossing oceans and continents, bringing multitudes of pagans into the Fold of Christ, instructing them in His doctrines, strengthening them with His Sacraments, and preparing them for heaven.

Zeal for the spread of His Gospel and for the salvation of souls redeemed by His Blood, is one of the virtues dear to our Di-

vine Saviour. Zeal for souls is the fire that He desired to see spreading over the world. "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I but it be kindled?" and those who in past ages followed closely in His footsteps, were strengthened by its rays. Happily, the consuming flame is still burning brightly; the zeal for souls in pagan lands, and the desire to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, have always been and are still characteristic of the missionary men and women who have given themselves to the service of God. The truths of Faith as well as the prospects of eternal life, appeal to their minds and hearts, excite their zeal and make them proclaim to the world, as Chrysostom did, "Even though you had acquired the treasures of Croesus and the wealth of Solomon, and though you spent all this to help the poor, you would have done infinitely less than if you had saved one soul."

There is no greater charity than that which urges us to work for souls; no greater love could we show our neighbor than to help him on the road to life eternal; there

is no vaster achievement than to have opened the portals of heaven to one of God's creatures. To have cooperated in such a work is a greater event than to have discovered a continent or governed an empire. The reason is simple enough. Nothing is more precious in this world than a human soul. It was to save souls that the Son of God came down from Heaven; it was for this purpose that He taught and preached; His doctrines in their entirety were one unceasing exhortation to men to cooperate with Him in His plans for saving souls; His whole earthly life was lived to teach His apostles what they should say and how they should act, in order to help others to obtain that blissful end. And surely the All-knowing God knew what was essential and what was not. Yet when we compare the work of saving souls with that which ordinarily fills the lives of men, how puny and insignificant are the enterprises of us poor worldlings! And how different the intrinsic value of the two!

The missionaries of the Catholic Church have for over nineteen centuries been carry-

ing on their work among souls. By their preaching and teaching, and with the help of the grace which gives efficacy to both, they are still conquering, instructing and strengthening nations in the Faith. They labor incessantly, in season and out of season, to bring souls under the yoke of Jesus Christ. We have only to open the pages of history to read of their exploits in the midst of heathenism in the past; even at the present day, these consecrated children of the Church are found in every nation under the sun, spending themselves in the work of evangelization.

And still after nineteen hundred years, of the thousand million people who inhabit this earth, more than half never hear the Words of Life preached to them. There are still five hundred millions groping in the darkness of superstition and infidelity, five hundred millions waiting to see a ray of the true light of Christianity. A vast work still remains to be done. The enlightening of those millions of pagans is an enterprise that it is the will of God we should undertake, and one that should appeal to the

generous sentiments of all Catholics who possess the precious gift of Faith and who live securely under the ægis of the one true Church. Out of the abundance of our inheritance as Catholics we should be willing to share with others.

How may we help to spread the Faith in foreign lands, and what role should we play in this work of enlightenment? Is it by giving up our lives to it exclusively? The answer is: Yes, for all on whom God confers the grace of vocation. When He inspires us to devote ourselves entirely to the service of souls, He thereby bestows on us an inestimable grace. "They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many, as stars to all eternity."¹ With what confidence shall not a saver of souls stand before the judgment seat of God, on the last day, to render an account of his stewardship! Those who owe their salvation to his zeal and self-sacrifice shall be there also, helping the recording angels to count his prayers, his penances, his fatigues, his charity, his

¹ Dan. xii, 3.

watchings. It is at that supreme moment when the just Judge begins to sum up results, that the missionary priest or nun shall realize fully what vocation meant—and what a sublime act it was, that of giving up home and kindred, wealth and pleasures, to work exclusively for souls.

It may be, however, that God has not called us to work actively in the ministry of preaching or teaching; but because He has not given us that grace, or rather because we realize that He has not given it, do our responsibilities to souls cease? May the Catholic laity assert even then that the conversion of souls is no business of theirs? Certainly not. While works of zeal and charity engage the life of the priest on his missionary circuit, and the nun in her classroom or in her hospital ward, God expects the laity to share, at least indirectly, in their labors. For instance, missionaries must be supported; their wants, few though they be, should be supplied. In former ages, when kings and princes professed the Catholic Faith, they generously aided missionary endeavor; but since these sources of revenue have run dry,

our priests and nuns who work in foreign countries must depend on private offerings for their support. It was to meet the actual and pressing needs of missionary life that a Society, which we treat of more fully in the next chapter, was founded in France in the early part of the last century. This Society is a monument more lasting than bronze raised to the zeal of one lay woman. Its contributions, gathered in from rich and poor alike, have helped thousands of men and women in the past sixty or seventy years, and are still helping them, to spend their lives in the pagan fastnesses of the Old and the New World, enabling them to carry out literally the order of Christ to "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

When there is question of generously giving to our missionaries in foreign lands, a motive which should have its cogency is the spectacle that presents itself among the sects who swarm outside of the true Church. Their Foreign Missionary Boards, Bible Societies, and other organizations,

supply ample funds to carry out on a large scale their propaganda of Protestantism in pagan countries; and the reports of our missionaries are continually deploring the ravages which heresy is making among aboriginal tribes in various lands.

And yet there is no lack of effort on the part of the Church; devotedness and zeal are still strong among Catholic missionaries. There is no dearth of Religious Orders to carry the Gospel to foreign parts. There are among us numberless generous men and women who are ready to give up everything for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Why are they not at work? Simply because there is a lack of generosity on the part of wealthy lay Catholics in whom worldiness and luxury have deadened religious influences, and consequently stifled any zeal they might have had for the extension of God's kingdom on earth.

It may happen that our poverty, or the responsibilities of our state of life, will not permit us to give of our substance to aid missionary efforts and the spread of

the true Faith; but are we for this reason exempted from contributing our mite? If we cannot give alms, we can at least pray for the success of the efforts that are being made by others to propagate the Faith. Prayer is a powerful lever in the hands of our Catholic missionaries; for God is moved by our prayers to give efficacy to their words. Prayer is a kindly dew that can soften the hardest pagan heart, and it is to prayer more than to our gold that our missionaries attribute their success in the work of conversion. How consoling it is to realize that, through a fervent prayer of ours, some poor soul, hidden away in Asia or Africa, has been moved to listen to the preaching of a missionary, and has been prevailed upon to embrace the Faith!

It may be that we are not called upon to work actively in the ministry of souls; it may be that it is not in our power to help this noble work by generous almsgiving; but we may never say that we cannot help it by prayer. The channel of communication between God and us is always open. At every instant of the day or night our

ejaculations may rise to the throne of Him in whose august presence we ever live. Can we, then, to whom God has been so good and generous, refuse this tribute of intercessory prayer, when we are conscious that there are other millions whose souls have never felt the salutary influence of the Redemption? nay more, who have never heard the name of the true God mentioned? God has been good to us; he has given to us the privileges of being born of Catholic parents, of being educated in the Catholic Faith, of being sharers in the graces imparted by the Catholic Sacraments; on our way upward, over the narrow road that leads to heaven, we at least have not to grope in darkness. Why not try to show our gratitude for all these favors? Our sense of charity—if not of justice—should strongly move us to help millions of poor pagans who have not been as favored as we have been.

Our motto should be "Thy Kingdom Come!" This is the motto of all missionary endeavor, and it shows clearly that our interests should be mutual. Let us,

therefore, try to help the spreading of the Faith, if not by personal effort, at least by our offerings and by our prayers; if not by our offerings, at least by our prayers. The Heart of Jesus, always burning with zeal and charity, will amply repay us for whatever sacrifices we make for the welfare of souls.

XXII

THE SPREAD OF THE FAITH

Going, therefore, teach ye all nations. . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.—MATT. XXVIII, 19, 20.

And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Christ.—EPHES. IV, 11, 12

THAT the Catholic Church received from the Holy Spirit an inherent strength, by virtue of which her influence spreads day by day, is manifest in the growth of Catholicity during the centuries. "Our Gospel hath not been unto you in word only," writes St. Paul, "but in power also, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much fullness, as you know what manner of men we have been among you for your sakes."¹ While the Spirit of God does His share in spreading the influence of the Church throughout the world, much may also be done, and is done, by members of the Church for the same

¹ I Thes. i, 5.

end; for God makes use of men and their efforts to carry out His own designs. In the first rank of those whom He uses to extend the influence of the Church are the preachers of the Gospel to whom Christ gave the positive command, "Go ye into the world and preach the Gospel to every creature."¹ St. Paul realized the importance of the preacher's role when he asked, "How then, shall we call on Him in whom we have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without the preacher? Faith, then, cometh by hearing the Word of Christ."²

This function of preaching the Gospel belongs to those who have received the mission from God. It is the most sublime of all functions, and calls for qualities of mind and heart that few may hope to claim for themselves without the special assistance of the Holy Ghost. Reminding men of their destiny in the long hereafter, urging them to practise virtue, encouraging them in moments of weakness, helping them to

¹ St Mark xvi, 15.

² Rom x, 14, 17.

rise after their falls—what nobler mission was ever conferred on the sons of men! And yet this is the mission of the preacher of the Word of God. Relatively few are called to do this sublime work; other interests must take up the energies of the majority of men; but if all have not the privilege of expounding the Word of God to their fellow-men, all may share indirectly in this mission by helping by their prayers and their alms. Priests and others who labor in the apostolic ministry are powerfully aided by the succor they receive from others in things material and by the prayers which draw down heavenly graces on them and their work. St. Paul attests that those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel. The Gospel praised the holy women who ministered unto Christ of their substance while He was preaching and otherwise engaged in His sacred ministry.

The duties of almsgiving and prayer as a means of outstretching the limits of the kingdom of God, may easily be fulfilled by persons of every class. Who is the man

with fortune so meagre that cannot, at least once in a while, give a small alms to God's messengers? Who is the one whose occupations are so enslaving that he cannot sometimes offer a prayer for them? The Roman Pontiffs, who are the heads of God's spiritual kingdom, and who have the task of spreading the Faith throughout the world, are ever asking for the spiritual and temporal aid of the faithful to help missionaries in foreign countries, and they are lavish in the indulgences and other privileges which they grant to those who show their generosity. Many societies have been formed among Catholics to relieve missionary poverty. In securing prayers the Apostleship of Prayer in union with the Heart of Jesus, more familiarly known as the League of the Sacred Heart, is perhaps the most widely extended organization in the world. Between twenty-five and thirty millions of members are daily consecrating their thoughts, words and actions in prayer for the extension of God's kingdom on earth and for the success of those who are engaged in this noble work.

The methods employed for gathering in alms naturally vary according to time and place. The best known Association for this purpose—the Work of the Propagation of the Faith—was founded at Saint Vallier, in France, by Pauline Jericot about the year 1819. This zealous lady organized bands of ten associates, from whom she asked one cent a week for missionary needs. Her efforts were so successful from the very beginning that in a few months she had given nearly eight thousand francs to the Catholic missions in America.

On May 3rd, 1822, a Council the Propagation of the Faith was organized at Lyons, and the humble foundress handed over to it the direction of her work. Bishops and priests began to honor the Association with their encouragement and praise. The Roman Pontiffs, Pius VII, Leo XII, Pius VIII, Gregory XVI, and Pius IX, each in turn, recommended it strongly and enriched it with many indulgences. In 1840, Gregory XVI, in an encyclical letter, spoke of it in these terms: "We regard this great and holy work as worthy of the admira-

tion and love of all good people. The little offerings and daily prayers addressed to God by each associate help and strengthen apostolic men. The Association exercises a great Christian charity towards neophytes, and delivers the faithful from the fury of persecution. We exhort all bishops to advance its interests in their dioceses." Pius IX recommended it as warmly as his predecessors had done. He seized every occasion to come to its aid, and to advance its prosperity. He granted very ample privileges to the associates, and showed himself a sincere friend and well-wisher to the work in many other ys.

All these testimonies of sympathy and good will have made the work of the Propagation of the Faith venerable in the eyes of the Christian world; and it is not surprising the those two Associations, the Apostleship of Prayer and the Propagation of the Faith, should have always worked hand in hand and taken a deep interest in each other's welfare. Many a time during the past fifty years, the *Messengers of the Sacred Heart*, and other organs of the Apostleship

of Prayer, have recommended the great Lyons Association to the good will of their readers throughout the world. It was only reasonable that those two world-wide organizations should stand together; for while the means they employ may differ, one being spiritual and the other temporal, still the ultimate objects of the two societies are the same, the extension of God's kingdom on earth. The Apostleship completes, as it were, the work of the Propagation of the Faith, and is its most powerful helper. To the Propagation of the Faith is entrusted the task of looking after the temporal wants of the missionaries; but what is it that gives the missionaries the supernatural power to move the souls of poor infidels? This grace is given in answer to the prayers which are addressed to God by those millions who are working in union with the Heart of Jesus and who, by the daily offering of the thoughts, words and actions, are engaged in an apostolate peculiarly their own, in carrying out the wish of Christ that we should always pray. It is evident, therefore, that the Apostleship is a power-

ful help to the Propagation of the Faith, as well as to all Associations engaged in missionary work. While these are preparing the instruments and the means by which grace is spread, the Apostleship, by its prayers, obtains the grace itself, without which even apostolic men would be but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

All members of the Apostleship of Prayer should take a deep interest in the work of the Propagation of the Faith. They should help by their alms, be these never so small, to swell the funds of an Association which is contributing so lavishly and so perseveringly to the support of our Catholic missionaries in various parts of the world. But they should also keep up by their prayers the stream of intercession that is rising daily to the throne of God for the extension of His kingdom among populations who have as yet not heard His adorable name mentioned.

It is not given to every one to go abroad to foreign countries to preach the Gospel to pagans and infidels; only the few have received this vocation. But while these few

are at work toiling for Jesus Christ, it remains for those who stay at home to aid them by their prayers and alms. The way to fulfil this duty easily and painlessly is open to us all. A few dollars, or even a few cents, thrown into the coffers of the Propagation of the Faith gives us the privilege of working with those apostles; and thus without incurring the dangers or making the sacrifices incident on the active apostleship, we may share in the glory and the merits of those who do.

It is incredible the amount of good that could be done in the desolate missions of the Church if we chose to sacrifice a few of our superfluous luxuries. Over a million dollars are collected and spent every year by the Propagation of the Faith in strengthening the Church in the abandoned corners of the world, in building schools, succoring poverty, feeding the famine-stricken, and baptizing pagans and neophytes. But what a paltry sum is a million of dollars when compared with the millions of Catholics who are in a position to give generously! And what are those millions of Catholics

doing to help missionaries to bring teeming millions of pagans into the Fold of Christ? Nothing further need be said to excite zeal in favor of a work so deserving of sympathetic cooperation. Let Catholics bear in mind that every alms, every prayer, that they contribute to the work, is so much done towards the fulfilments of the dearest wish of the Heart of Jesus, the extension of the kingdom of God on earth.

XXIII

ONE FOLD, ONE SHEPHERD

Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners: but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and, the domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being himself the corner-stone.—EPHESIANS II, 19.

IT will suffice to cast a glance over the world today to appreciate the need of reunion of the Christian Churches. Millions of souls lie in absolute ignorance of the Gospel of salvation, either because it was never preached to them, or because they lost it through neglect or through the vicissitudes of time. But there are other millions of souls, divided into numberless sects, who claim to be Christians, but who dissent from belief in the dogmas of the one true Church. There was a time when those millions were bound to us by the ties of a common faith and discipline, that is, when the Christian world was united under one visible head, the Vicar of Christ on earth. But

heresiarchs appeared and sowed cockle among the wheat. The bad grain grew, in the sixteenth century especially, and stifled the truth in the souls of countless multitudes. Great and flourishing nations separated themselves from the centre of unity, and they are still living far from it.

The Protestant sects make many efforts to justify their separation from us. They assert that the Church founded by Christ erred. But the vital question will always suggest itself: How could the Church of Christ err, since Christ promised that He would abide with her forever? Either the Founder failed to keep His word or the sects are misguided. In this dilemma it is not difficult to make a choice. Christ Our Lord, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, must not be made to assume the paterinity of contradictory doctrines. Truth is one; unity of doctrine is a cardinal mark of religious truth. It was proclaimed by the Master Himself, who prayed that all might be one, as He and the Father were one.

The unity required by the Church of Christ is not a mere agreement of belief in

"fundamentals" and in the intercourse of brotherly love, as is professed by the Protestant sects of the present day, but rather the triple unity of faith, of government and of discipline. One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, can only mean that all the members of Christ's Church must be united by other than sentimental bonds, and must together tend towards the same end and in the same way. This unity does not exist outside of the Catholic Church; the sects are independent one of the other; nor does one pretend to have any authority over another.

It would be a vain task, indeed, to try to find unity in Protestant doctrines. The Bible interpreted privately, and its teachings accepted only in so far as they agree with the opinions of the individual, cannot produce this great distinguishing mark of the one true Church. To set up a claim to unity on the strength of a certain mutual acceptance of "fundamentals," while at the same time rejecting the teachings of a Church which can prove her apostolic origin, and which has within her fold more than two-

thirds of the Christian world, is vain and unreal, to say the least. The rejection of Papal authority, the suppression of most of the Sacraments, those instruments of grace that vivify human souls, the negation of the value of good works, the principle of justification by faith alone, all show us that there is still a wide abyss between Protestantism and the Catholic Church, and that much remains to be done before the rent made in Christian unity is mended.

What is asserted here of the offspring of the sixteenth century Reformation, may also be asserted of the schisms in the Oriental Churches. These do not possess the mark of unity either in their chiefs or in their members, for their patriarchs are equal in authority and independent one of the other. When they broke away from the Roman Church and denied the jurisdiction of its Pontiffs, they forfeited their claim to the mark of unity.

This is the state of the Christian world today outside of the true Church; disunion in matters of faith, government and discipline, is everywhere prevalent, and presents

a sad and striking contrast with the Catholic Church which, ever since the days of the Apostles, professes one unchangeable set of dogmas, and recognizes only one supreme authority on earth. Catholics are united to their priests, the priests to their bishops, and these in turn to the Pope whose See is the centre of doctrine, as it is the arbiter of authority and practice. The Sovereign Pontiff is the visible head of this complete hierarchy composed of bishops, priests and people; and thus it happens that throughout the world all true Catholics profess the same faith, observe the same precepts, accept the same beliefs, condemn the same errors, assist at the same Sacrifice, say the same prayers, submit to the same God-given authority.

Can we be surprised, then, that the Vicar of Christ should long for the return to the true Church of the many souls who claim Christ for their Redeemer? The watchful father of the flock knows that the sects which reject the teaching of the Catholic Church have, at best, only half-truths to offer to the intellect, and little or nothing to move the heart. He knows full well that

the human mind will, sooner or later, recoil from error and refuse to be satisfied with mere half-truths; and it is only natural that he should be seized with a zeal for the full enlightenment and spiritual welfare of those millions who, through no fault of their own, dwell outside of the Fold, and who are drifting rapidly into Rationalism and Agnosticism.

The reunion of Christendom, therefore, is one of the great intellectual and religious necessities of the present age. Were it consummated, one of the supreme wishes of the Heart of Jesus would be realized; and a united Christian Church would speedily find an easy solution for many human problems that now seem insurmountable. Irreligion and impiety would see turned against them the combined spiritual strength of all believers in Christ. The efficacy of missionary work among infidels, now diminished and weakened through subdivisions, would be increased a hundred-fold; and the spectacle of unity of faith and practice throughout the world, after two thousand years, would furnish unanswerable evidence of the

truth and the vitality of the Church of the living God, just as it would provide the safest methods for the attainment of the end for which the true religion was revealed, namely, the salvation of the souls of men.

How this vast project of unifying the Christian Churches may be brought about, is a question that is open for consideration. The Catholic Church will not put obstacles in the way. Possessing the truth in its entirety, her most ardent desire is to share it with others. The difficulties lie rather with those outside, who either are hedged in by prejudice or are satisfied with a general and passive belief in the existence of God, and of man's duty to worship him according to the broad dictates of conscience. Moreover, Rationalism and Agnosticism are working havoc among the various sects, while the Gospel of Deism, Ethical Culture, etc., are replacing many of the positive creeds of other forms of Protestantism.

Our missionaries and our teachers are modifying their methods to meet new conditions, and are succeeding admirably in the work of conversion. But their numbers are

limited; and they need the aid of the bulk of their coreligionists. The simplest way whereby our millions of Catholics may work for the return of the outside world to the Fold is, first, to pray unceasingly for this object, and then to prove by the goodness of their lives the truth and purity of the doctrines and the discipline of the Catholic Church. Men are influenced by the example of a good life perhaps more readily than by the strongest arguments brought forward in a controversy.

Many consoling signs of a return to Catholic unity have been given to us in recent times. In Russia, England, Germany, Scandinavia, and the United States, the multiplication of individual conversions offers us at least reasonable grounds for hoping that a movement of vaster proportions will be inaugurated in the near future. Undoubtedly, an event of this importance is bound to meet with many obstacles both from men and from the arch-enemy of mankind. Race hatred, national pride, and the misunderstandings and prejudices of centuries have still to be overcome. But with God

all things are easy; His powerful arm can straighten the ways and soften the asperities. Our daily devotion should include a prayer to God to hasten the reunion of all believers in His Gospel, so that the world of the faithful may be one in mind and heart, as they were in the days when the Catholic Church was the spiritual mother of the world, and recognized by all as the source of Christian truth.

XXIV

CATHOLIC SOCIAL WORKS

Learn to do well: seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow. And then come and accuse Me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool.—ISAIAH I, 18.

To no man rendering evil for evil: providing good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men.—ROMANS XII, 17.

EXPERIENCE has shown, wrote His Holiness Leo XIII, some years ago, "how efficacious are Catholic institutions, workmen's unions, mutual help associations, and other similar bodies, in softening the lot of the poor and educating the people. Assuredly, those who give the weight of their authority and advice, who consecrate their wealth and their labors to such works, wherein a great number find salvation, even for eternity, merit well both of Church and State." These weighty words naturally come to mind every time there is question of promoting social works among Catholics. The moral,

physical and intellectual welfare of all classes, by cooperative effort, is the question of the hour. Not that social work or what it represents is a new development; it is only another name for a virtue which is as old as the Church herself, namely, the virtue of charity. "By this sign shall men know you if you have love one for the other."

Social work is not a new thing in the Catholic world, but the application of it to human needs seems to have changed in a marvellous way. The old precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," applies to any one to whom our personal service may do good; but owing to human limitations the application of this precept must necessarily be limited. In these days of easy intercourse and cooperation its scope has become enlarged beyond anything known in past ages. Social work is a new name applied to the activities displayed in cooperative charity which endeavors to do the greatest good to the greatest number. This is the topic uppermost in the minds of thinking men at the present time. It is penetrating the halls of universities and parlia-

ments; it is engaging the attention of theologians and legislators, and forcing them to declarations, both practical and speculative, regarding its value and application; it is reaching down to the working-classes and empassioning them not merely because it is so actual and so opportune, but because they see that it affects the interests they have nearest to heart. So real, in fact, has the subject of Socialism and social works become that it forms the topic of conversation among men of all conditions. Every State has its social question nowadays; and every group of citizens that we meet has suggestions to offer for its solution.

The Church is fully alive to the importance of this question of Catholic social work and its influence for good or evil. Her Pontiffs are keeping a watchful eye on its various phases; and when the need is felt they do not fail to give out their messages of direction to their children scattered throughout the world. None of them spoke so eloquently as Leo XIII. If the grave teachings of this illustrious Pontiff were listened to and reduced to practice, a social

reform for the betterment of all classes would be effected in a short time.

There is a practical side to this question that calls for a little discussion. Usually when we speak of social work among the laity, it is the vision of individual work, with its element of personal endeavor and responsibility, that looms up before us. But the subject has a wider scope than this; combined lay action is also an element that must be introduced if we wish to treat it adequately. Lay Catholics are accused of unchanging apathy in the work of the social betterment of their fellowmen, while the example of what is done among outside denominations is held up to them unceasingly as an incentive to greater activity. They are accused of being niggardly in personal sacrifice, and of leaving not merely the initiative of social work, but also the accomplishment of it, to the clergy and the religious organizations of their parishes.

We fear there is some truth in this charge. Vicarious charity, whether it be much or little, coming from the laity, is undoubtedly meritorious in its way, and is

the means of effecting great social good, but it in nowise dispenses the laity from personal service. And yet if we look contemporary history in the face, we see less combination of Catholic lay forces, less organized effort on the part of the laity than the situation seems to call for. Why this should be it is rather hard to explain. There is no reason why the task of maintaining the prestige of the Catholic Church and her social work should be the exclusive privilege of the clergy and the religious communities. Naturally, one expects to see the clergy, by virtue of their position and their better opportunities for knowing actual needs, directing all efforts for the social uplifting of the people; but one cannot reasonably ask them to do the lion's share of the work. The laity have their duties to perform as well as the clergy; they are the natural helpers of the clergy in works of social betterment. If anything worth while is to be done, their cooperation is essential; their wealth, their time, their advice, are all necessary to supplement, if not to complete, the efforts of the clergy. Still the fact of

their aloofness stares us in the face and proves that there is something wrong somewhere. What is the secret of their apathy? Is it a want of love for the Church? Is it an absence of zeal? Is it because they are rarely asked to cooperate? Is it not rather the mere lack of organisation?

And yet the time has come when we need all our strength to combat the demon of Socialism. The enemy is at the gate. Socialism in its subversive meaning is gaining ground daily, owing to the activity of its promoters. A venal press is pouring out torrents of literature among the working-classes, ostensibly to enlighten them, but really to poison their minds and hearts, to render them jealous of the wealthy, discontented with their lot in life, ready for any work of levelling down that may fall in their way.

From their watch-tower in the Vatican the Sovereign Pontiffs see the world preparing to grapple with Socialism, and they are instructing the millions who owe them allegiance, with an earnestness and a constancy worthy of the best traditions of the

Holy See. They tell the employer to be not merely just but charitable; the wage-earner to work to better his condition, but to be submissive to legitimate authority and respectful of the rights of others. They tell the rich that they are merely the stewards of their wealth, and that a strict account shall one day be asked of them. They tell the poor that poverty and suffering, after the example of the Divine Master Himself, is the royal road to Paradise. The clergy in their turn carry these sublime instructions to their flocks, and thus the words of truth are sown in the minds and hearts of millions.

But the speculative knowledge of the true doctrine is not sufficient; efforts must be made to put it in practice. The mere knowledge that a danger threatens is not sufficient; means must be taken to avert it; and it is here that the laity should assert themselves, in carrying out the programme of the Church and seconding the efforts of the clergy. Leo XIII suggested the formation of Catholic clubs for workingmen and associations for young men, the spreading of

Catholic newspapers and publications; in a word, any effort that makes for Catholic solidarity. The printing and distribution of Catholic reading matter is a simple form of lay action, and one in which laymen could show their zeal for the social betterment of all; and yet how little of it is done. The value of the Apostolate of the Press is appreciated by the Catholic laymen of Germany who assert that if the Church in that Empire is today so united in defence of her legitimate rights, and so successful in securing them, it is due to the judicious use of the power of the Press. On the other hand, Catholic France neglected this power when she might have used it, and we are today witnesses of the result. It is openly admitted by the bishops and statesmen qualified to judge, that if a generation ago the Catholics in France had shown the activity they are now developing in the Apostolate of the Press, they would not be crushed, as they are today, under the heel of Freemasonry. There is no country so safely anchored in the faith that it cannot take the hint that the establishment of Catholic truth

societies and social guilds is one of the most potent means of cultivating Catholic sentiment and of preserving Catholic strength.

Another social work wherein Catholic solidarity should show itself is the establishment of mutual benefit societies. We have many such societies with us, but it is a question whether they are supported as they should be, or whether their influence is as great as it should be. If sordid selfishness is one's chief motive for affiliating with Catholic organizations, little may be hoped for either in social betterment or in Catholic social influence. Contemptible is the Catholic who makes use of such affiliation merely to further his private ends. On the other hand, we too frequently find laymen, under plea of broadmindedness or toleration, who ignore the Church's direction, and affiliate themselves to societies that are condemned or discountenanced by the Church. Such men do not merely injure themselves, but they lessen the strength of the Church in her social action.

The wise distribution of pecuniary aid to the works of the Church is also a matter

that should appeal to Catholic laymen. Charity and alms-giving are, indeed, plentiful among us. Witness our splendid churches and institutions of learning and charity, monuments raised to the credit of Catholic piety. But there is a phase of it that will bear careful scrutiny. Catholic workers should not forget that the sound principle, "the greatest good to the greatest number," is one that is sometimes lost sight of. We spend millions on favored sites and palatial buildings and leave nothing for other works. This is the assertion of a recent writer, and we fear that the truth is too evident. It is a praiseworthy deed to build a monumental church — no temple can be too grand that is to be the home of our King; but where is the Young Men's Club that should stand beside it? Social work and social influences should not be confined to the Sunday services; but where are the centers whence they are to radiate? The extension of Catholic social activity, in a way that will hold our young people together and contribute to their social education, is one of extreme importance, and

one in which the layman can take his part. There is room for all workers. The field of social endeavor is so vast that, even if one has nothing but his enthusiasm to urge him on, he can do a great deal. If he can talk, or play, or tell a story, or organize, in a word, if he has the knack of doing anything at all under the sun, there is a place somewhere where his talent may and should be employed. Above all, any cooperative effort that will fortify young men in the Faith, that will instruct them in their duties as Catholics and as citizens, will do much to preserve the religious spirit among them and keep the plague of Socialism far afield.

And yet while giving credit to those laymen and laywomen who are generous in their personal service and in their almsgiving, one has to deplore the apathy of innumerable Catholics. What is the extent of lay action in too many cases? The payment of a paltry tithe to an overworked pastor when he makes his yearly visit, and an occasional alms thrown in for charity. We use the word "alms" advisedly, for we hardly care to apply a term consecrated

by Our Lord Himself to the purchase of tickets for those various devices for money-making, so common nowadays in religious and social circles, where full value is given back in amusement and excitement. The true almsgiver looks to God alone for his reward.

There is not enough of generosity to the Church and her manifold works, social and religious, not enough of spontaneous cooperation among laymen who are in a position to aid the clergy in their efforts for the betterment of all classes. If our Catholic laity, many of whom are rich in this world's goods, would rise to a sense of their duty, they would solve not merely the Social Problem, but many other problems as well.

XXV

SECRET SOCIETIES

Hearken to me, you that know what is just, my people who have my law in your heart: fear ye not the reproach of men, and be not afraid of their blasphemies... I, I Myself will comfort you: who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a mortal man, and of the son of man, who shall wither away like grass? And hast thou forgotten the Lord thy Maker, who stretched out the heavens, and founded the earth?—ISAIAH LI, 7, 12, 13.

PROVIDENCE has happily watched over the destinies of the Church in this Dominion, and we Catholics of Canada have every reason to rejoice at the strength of our faith and the stability of our institutions. But we should fail in even elementary prudence were we to fold our arms now, and stand idly in mute admiration of ourselves and our present position. In this, as in many other questions where their interests are at stake, the children of light may learn wisdom from the children of darkness.

The motives that urged the illustrious

Pontiff Leo XIII, nearly thirty years ago, to publish his admirable encyclical against Freemasonry, and that obliged him so often during the remaining years of his reign to utter solemn warnings against secret societies in general, are motives that have lost none of their cogency. Recent events in Europe show that the Pope spoke with prophetic vision when he outlined the fate of Catholics who would remain apathetic in the struggle against Masonry and its allied sects.

Although the work of secret societies, outwardly at least, is not so evident with us as it is in other countries—France, for instance—there is no use concealing the fact that Canada has this plague of older nations growing in her bosom. Would it not, then, be a fatal illusion to shut our eyes in the presence of even an incipient danger, or be deaf to the voice of those who have authority to warn us? Confident as we are in the strength of our position and in the justice of our cause, we are too prone to remain quiescent and satisfied with deceptive appearances, when the bitterest enemies of our faith are constantly at work. Eternal

vigilance should be the watchword of Catholics when the vital interests of their Church are at stake. Every one who has her welfare at heart is in duty bound to struggle against her enemies, not merely with the powerful arm of prayer but also by argument and persuasion to discourage young men from joining their ranks.

The solemn words of the Holy Father, as well as the testimony of facts evident to everybody, prove to us that secret societies, and chief among these Freemasonry, are today the arch-enemies of the Church of God. If Freemasonry is singled out as the special object of denunciation, it is because its religious and social programme embraces the work of the other secret organizations. This we have on the testimony of Leo XIII himself, who admirably summed up their organic structure and baneful influence in his encyclical *Humanum Genus*. "There are," wrote His Holiness, "various sects of men which, though they differ in name, rites, form and origin, yet in sameness of aim and likeness of first principles, they are bound together, thereby really agreeing with

the Masonic sect which forms for all a common center whence all proceed and to which all return. Though they just now seem very much to have cast off the garb of secrecy and hold their meetings before the eyes of the world, and even have their own daily press, when we look into the matter we find that they still retain all the characteristics of secret societies. For many things done in them have the nature of strict secrecy, to conceal which with the utmost care, not only from those outside but from very many of their own associates, is a primary law; for instance, their secret and important resolutions, the names and persons of their chief leaders, certain secret and clandestine meetings, as well as their decrees, and the ways and means to be employed in carrying them out. To the same end is the complicated distinction of the members in trades and duties and employments; not less that the established difference in their ranks and degrees and severity and discipline by which all are ruled; while the candidates for enrolment are bound by promise, nay more, by special oath, to

swear, as in most cases they are required, never in any way to divulge their associates, their signs or their doctrines. Thus by a feigned appearance and the same style of pretence, the Masons, like the Manicheans of old, try by every possible means to hide themselves and to have no witnesses of their actions but members of their own sect. They seek hiding places as most convenient, having assumed to themselves the character of learned men and philosophers for the sake of training their associates; in their language they cultivate strict politeness of speech and charity towards the lower classes; they profess only to desire a better state of things for the masses, and to make the greater number participate in the conveniences of civilized life; but even suppose these principles were the true ones, they would by no means represent all their objects. Besides, those who are admitted into these societies must promise and engage that they will render implicit obedience and fidelity to the dictates of their leaders and teachers; that they will carry out their commands at the least sign and indication of

their will; otherwise they will have to meet the most dire consequences and even death itself. And, in fact, if any shall be judged to have betrayed the discipline or resisted the commands of their superiors, extreme punishment is often inflicted on them, and that, indeed, with such boldness and dexterity that 'very frequently the police fail in discovering or bringing the criminals to justice. Moreover, to practise deceit and to conceal themselves; to bind men to themselves as slaves with iron fetters, without alleging any reason; to employ for any crime these slaves of another's will; to bare their arm for slaughter, whilst guarding themselves from punishment, is an enormity at which nature revolts. Wherefore against these associations reason and truth compel one in justice and natural virtue to fight.'¹

This true picture of Freemasonry created a flutter among the adepts and put them under the necessity of defending themselves. Certain dignitaries of the sect, while admitting the truth of some of the charges, disclaimed all connection with extremists,

¹ Encycl. Leo XIII.

and endeavored to diminish in the public mind the effects of the Sovereign Pontiff's denunciation.

"I grieve to think," wrote one of them, "that there are Masonic bodies which may have laid themselves open to many of the charges which the encyclical letter contains." And the same writer, in defence of the assertion that the Pope's sweeping censure should not include all the lodges, appealed to the rules and constitutions of certain English lodges, one and all breathing a spirit of religion and charity, and obedience to the law, etc. But the Holy Father had proven unanswerably that Freemasonry, under any form, was a source of ruin for a people, in that it attacked not only the religion of Christ but civil society and the family as well; that as a secret organization it was subversive of the very principle on which society is founded. Hatred of God and His work, hatred of Christ and His Church, and the perverse wish to drag man away from his Saviour that is universally evident in the work of the sect, show that Masonry was and is still the in-

carnation of the malice of Satan. Like Satan it loves hypocrisy and falsehood; for not to mention the absurdity and vacuity of its ritualism and ceremonies, it decks itself out in false colors, and seeks as an angel of charity to deceive well-meaning men, sometimes even Catholics, into allowing themselves to assume Masonic bonds. Like Satan again, Masonry loves darkness and disorder. If everything is honest in the lodges, if Masonic plans and programmes are so innocuous, why hide them? Why go to the trouble of binding men to secrecy by blood-curdling oaths, to obey they know not whom, to do they know not what, to blindly promote what they may be utterly adverse to? This is an ignoble and immoral surrender of human liberty, and the source of infinite disorder in human society.

When Leo XIII took up the government of the Church he declared that one of his chief aims should be to attack directly the influence of the accursed sect. In this work he had been preceded by seven other Pontiffs. "As soon as the nature and character of the Masonic body had been

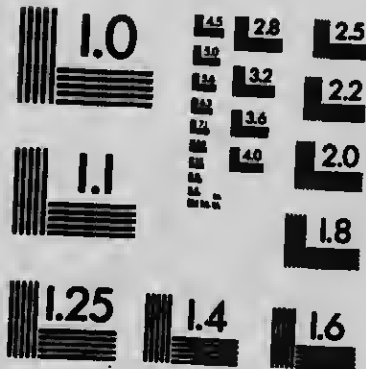
made apparent by unmistakable signs, by the knowledge of its principles, by the publication of its rules, rites and ceremonies—and to these was often added the testimony of the initiated themselves—the Holy See condemned and publicly proclaimed the Masonic sect as contrary to right and justice, and not less baneful to Christianity than to the State. Clement XII was the first to denounce Freemasonry, and his denunciation was confirmed and renewed by Benedict XIV. Pius VII followed in the footsteps of these Pontiffs, and Leo XII, collecting the acts and decrees of former Popes on this subject, ratified and confirmed them for all time. Gregory XVI and, on many occasions, Pius IX spoke in the same sense." ' Leo XIII surpassed all his predecessors in the vigor of his denunciations of the sect. He had hardly put his hand to the helm of the Church when he saw the necessity of resisting this evil, and of raising up against its inroads the bulwark of his apostolic authority. With an admirable clearness of style and with full knowledge of his sub-

¹ Litt. Encycl. cit.



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ject, he attacked Masonic doctrines. With a pathos deeply touching, he asked men to have pity on their own souls and not to allow themselves to be deceived by Masonic leaders and manipulators. Ever on the alert, the Vicar of Christ gave the signal, because the danger was imminent.

After the publication of the Papal document the misguided sect remained apparently quiet for several years. But this tactic was indulged in only to throw unwary Catholics off their guard. Freemasonry had not ceased to elaborate in secret its plans against the Church of God, and when it was ready it grew demonstrative again. In Europe—in France especially—we know with what recrudescence of hatred and audacity those sectaries have in recent years sworn to destroy religion. And while they shall never succeed in shaking the foundation-stone of the edifice built on the rock of Peter, still we know that they may by their artifices hinder her action and effect the loss of a multitude of souls.

It is for these unhappy souls, heedless victims of Masonry, that we should inter-

cede with God. Catholics are in duty bound to unite in prayer and practical effort to baffle this conspiracy against the Church. Prayer, first and foremost; for though we know that God is always the Master and is well able to muzzle the Masonic monster, He often waits for our supplications to reduce it to powerlessness. At the express desire of His Vicar on earth His priests throughout the world, every morning after Mass, ask the glorious Archangel Michael, chief of the heavenly hosts, to spare souls from the snares and wiles of their enemies. To prayer we should add practical work. Begin by doing all in our power to prevent secret societies from gaining new recruits; watch over our young men; unfold to them the dangers to their souls that lie in belonging to societies which are not countenanced by the Church and which present themselves to them under the guise of good fellowship only to draw them the more easily into the Satanic army. Secondly, try to open the eyes of all well-meaning men who have been duped into seeking membership. The number of the dupes has, among

Catholics at least, gone down sensibly in recent years, for thanks to the publicity given to the evil designs of Freemasonry in the press and the pulpit, men know more about this sect than they did formerly. But there are still many who have to be reached. Charity for their souls should oblige us to make some effort to free them from the bondage of secret societies. Let us show our zeal in this work, and help those who do not yet know how to help themselves.

XXVI

THE CHURCH AND PROGRESS

If he pull down, there is no man that can build up; if he shut up a man there is none, that can open. If he withhold the waters, all things shall be dried up; and if he send them out, they shall overturn the earth.—JOB XII, 14, 15.

How could any thing endure, if Thou wouldst not? or be preserved, if not called by Thee?

But Thou sparest all: because they are Thine, O Lord, who lovest souls.—WISDOM XI, 26, 27.

THE Church, which is the immortal work of a merciful God, has for its primary and essential mission to save souls and to put them in the never-ending possession of Heaven. She is, besides, in the domain of purely earthly interests, a source of advantages so precious that no greater could be produced, even though she had been founded chiefly to promote happiness in this life." These words of Leo XIII ring in our ears with a clear, definite sound. There is no mistaking their meaning; nor do they need the experience of nineteen hundred years

¹ *Encycl. Immortale Dei.*

behind them to prove for us the truth contained in them.

It is rather late in the day to assert that the doctrines which Christ left to His Church contain principles subversive of true progress. If progress—or Civilization, to call progress by the name its highest development demands—has for its object the perfecting and well-being of man in actual life, we may rest assured that the Church will not put any obstacles in its way. As a private individual, a Catholic may exact from civilization all that can satisfy the legitimate requirements of his soul and body; as a citizen, he may look to it for the maintenance of order and peace, and whatever else can tone down the rigors of social life. There is nothing in the Gospel of Christ, nor in the teachings of His one true Church, to put a damper on these lawful expectations of man here below.

The proper and direct mission of the Church is to preserve the deposit of revelation that she received from her Founder, to teach man how to apply to his soul the truths contained therein, so that he may

prepare himself to reach heaven. This is the chief end the Church has in view, an end which she pursues vigorously, yet, sweetly. All other ends are secondary; the acquisition of wealth, or honors, or pleasure, progress in art or science—signs of progress that are neither good nor bad in themselves—are quite outside of her scope. If the Church does not see fit to mix herself up with, or patronize, the various phases of human progress that are continually presenting themselves, the only reproach—unfair though it is—that can be made against her is that she is indifferent to them. No one can logically conclude that she is opposed to them. The Church has her own definite sphere of action; her programme is one of her Founder's making and is well defined; and she parts company with blatant apologists of progress the moment they cease to listen to her, or attach to their hobbies an importance these do not deserve. Just a word to illustrate what the Church's attitude is towards the various phases of progress.

Material progress has for its object the

development of wealth, notably in the industries which have grown in this century to proportions unprecedented in the history of the world. It represents abundance of the good things of the earth, facilities for travel and amusement, ease of life and peace in society. Leo XIII tells us very plainly that the Church, far from blaming this industrial advancement, approves of it, for it represents man's conquests over matter, and consequently, in nine cases out of ten, means the betterment of his earthly lot. The Church is pleased to see her children happy and contented, for she knows that worldly happiness and contentment are not necessarily obstacles in the service of God. She rests satisfied with pointing out abuses that may be made of wealth, abuses that go so far sometimes as even to make men forget that they were born for higher things.

The domain of the intellect is another field of progress, wherein the minds of men are continually at work extending the limits of human science. The Church encourages all progress in this vast domain; she even insists on her children undertaking peaceful

conquests therein; she offers every facility in her halls of learning and research; she holds out the strongest inducements to victory; and she crowns the victor when the day is over. Here again she contents herself with warning her men of science not to misuse their knowledge, nor foolishly to seek to put their science in opposition to faith, the truth of which rests on the Word of God itself. She warns thus wisely, not through any fear of injury to herself, for the Church of God is above such adventitious perils, but through love of her children whose faith might suffer.

In a still higher sphere there is spiritual progress; there is the directing of the human will and its onward march towards spiritual perfection. Not merely is the Church not opposed to this form of progress, but it is the kind she desires and fosters more than any other; for it is this that leads men directly to heaven. Is there reason for surprise, then, when we see the Church safeguarding the spiritual interests of her children, by discouraging anything and everything that might injure their souls, and by

hedging their liberty with rules and regulations that are dictated by wisdom? A prudent man will put a fence around the rim of a precipice, lest a blind neighbor fall over it. A prudent mother will carefully hide away the phials labelled "poisonous," lest her untaught child get hold of them and destroy itself. Will not this explain why the Church takes such care of the training of her little ones; why she will not leave to secular, neutral or irreligious Governments the molding of their minds and hearts; why she is so rigid in her discipline over their elders? The Church is convinced that she alone can promote true progress in souls, and in this field she will not brook opposition or listen to compromise.

Let us not be deceived by those speakers and writers who are continually finding fault with the Catholic Church for her so-called obscurantism and her reluctance to cater to fads. While prompt to tell people that her true mission is spiritual and that her kingdom is not of this world, the Church has nevertheless been the champion of men

and their interests, even in the ethical and social sphere. History shows us that never for an instant has the Church ceased to work for the worldly well-being and advancement of her children. "It is remarkable," says Montesquieu, "that the Christian religion not merely aims at compassing man's felicity in the other life, but his happiness in this world as well." She could hardly do otherwise, for she is the great school of justice and charity, two virtues that are the foundation-stones of ethical and social well-being. All she asks from those who owe her allegiance is that, while advancing materially, intellectually, socially, they neglect not the interests of their immortal souls. In true progress, as the Church understands it, virtue should never be subordinate to wealth, faith to science, the interests of heaven to those of the world.

XXVII

PEACE THROUGH THE CHURCH

Thy power is the beginning of justice: and because Thou art Lord of all, Thou makest Thyself gracious to all.—WISDOM XII, 16.

Be in peace with many, but let one of a thousand be thy counsellor.—ECCLES. VI, 6.

Behold, I command thee, take courage and be strong. Fear not, and be not discouraged: because the Lord thy God is with thee in all things whatsoever thou shalt go to.—JOB 1, 9.

WHILE the angels were announcing to the shepherds the birth of the Saviour of mankind, a legion of that heavenly army was heard praising the Creator and singing "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will." ¹ The advent of Christ our King into the world was made during a season of peace. His whole life and His doctrine justified the title of Prince of Peace which was foretold of Him. During His earthly career He taught the blessedness of peace for both nations and individuals, and He left His peace as a legacy

¹ Luke ii, 14

to men. "My peace I leave you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth do I give unto you." ¹ His apostles and disciples taught the same doctrine. Saint Paul wrote: "Follow peace with all men and holiness: without which no man shall see God." ² And elsewhere: "If it be possible, as much as is in you, have peace with all men." ³ "God is not the God of dissension but of peace." ⁴ To preserve this legacy of peace, which is the gift of heaven and the offspring of justice and charity, is a primary duty of every man and citizen.

Unhappily, during the centuries that have elapsed since the coming of the Prince of Peace, men have many a time forgotten this duty. Their craving for power, and wealth, and honors, not less than their desire for revenge, has been the cause of unutterable havoc both among men and things. Human ambition explains why kings and princes have fallen from their thrones; why nations have changed rulers; why national boundaries have been blotted out; in

¹ John xiv, 27

² Hebrews xii, 14

³ Rom. xii, 18

⁴ Corinth. xiv, 33

a word, why the history of the world has become chiefly a record of the wars that men have waged against their fellow-men. One would think that experience should teach men a few salutary lessons, but apparently the lessons are not being taken; the world, instead of growing better, would seem to be drifting farther away from peace. At the present day, nations no longer trust each other; millions of men on land are armed to the teeth; formidable navies are afloat waiting for the word to begin their work of destruction. What a sad commentary on our Christian civilization!

After nineteen hundred years of transitions from war to peace and from peace to war, the world had grown so used to the spectacle of armies and navies that it was a surprise when, a few years ago, the head of the vast Russian Empire, wrote a letter to the foreign plenipotentiaries at his court at St. Petersburg, inviting them to conference to discuss the project of universal disarmament. "The maintenance of universal peace," said Nicholas, in language worthy of an emperor, "and a possible re-

duction of the excessive preparations for war that are heavily weighing on all nations, present themselves, in the present state of the world, as the ideal towards which all Governments should tend."

The enthusiastic manner in which the project was taken up showed that it responded perfectly to the essential interests and legitimate wishes of all the Powers; and it was only reasonable to think that the moment had been favorably chosen for an international discussion, wherein ways and means could be devised to secure for the world a safe and lasting peace.

The voice of the Sovereign Pontiff was one of the first to echo the sentiments of the Russian emperor. "If ever," said the illustrious Leo XIII, in the consistory of February, 1899, "nations have been unanimous in showing peaceful dispositions, it is certainly in these days when the words peace, tranquillity, rest, are in every mouth. Sovereigns and Governments attest aloud that they have but one desire and one end in view, to guarantee to all the benefits of peace. The dislike to war of the various

peoples of the earth is growing more and more manifest every day. And what more wholesome dislike could there be? For, if the shedding of blood may sometimes be necessary, it never happens without an enormous number of calamities following it. And how much greater will these calamities become with the immense standing armies of today, the rapid progress of military science, and the machinery of war so multiplied and perfected! Nothing, then, is more important than to banish from Europe the horrid spectre of war; and all that is done to bring about this end should be considered a work of public utility."

In these words it is easily seen that the Holy Father had heartily entered into the project of a peace discussion long before the international conference had been decided on. His influence would have powerfully contributed to the success of any meeting having in view the maintenance of universal peace. What a spectacle it would have been, and what a subject for an historical pen-picture, to see the representatives of the great nations of the earth dis-

cussing disarmament, with the Sovereign Pontiff, the representative of the Prince of Peace, the legitimate leader of Christendom, at their head, guiding them and dictating with them terms of universal peace! Judge, then, of the surprise the world got when it learned that Pope Leo XIII would be excluded from the deliberations of the conference at the Hague. The spiritual head of over three hundred millions of the world's inhabitants, the greatest king on earth, was told that he could have no part in the task of securing peace to the world!

The light of day has never fully shone on the true inwardness of that insult offered to the Vicar of Christ at a moment when, above all moments, his active cooperation was needed. Events which have since come to pass have shown us what might be expected without the counsels of the wise Pontiff. After many imposing but sterile discussions, the delegates of the conference drew up a formulary, vague and incomplete, in the efficacy of which even the signers themselves had only moderate confidence. This is all that was done; and

future historians shall tell us, when describing the famous peace conference at the Hague, that the plenipotentiaries had hardly terminated their majestic task of giving peace to the world when cannon began to belch forth death-dealing fire in various parts of the world. The representatives had returned to their homes only a few short months when thousands had already ended their days on the battlefield. No other result could be looked for when the military powers of the world excluded from the conference the only authority in the world able to promote peace. In vain will men try to secure peace unless they call to their aid God's true religion which guides and controls the consciences of men. To assure public tranquillity, the display of physical strength, without moral authority and firmness to uphold it, will not suffice. The development of standing armies and the increase of military armament may put off for a time the hostile efforts of a nation's enemies; but who will call this true peace? War preparations tend rather to irritate and excite ill-feeling than to suppress rivalry

and suspicion; minds grow troubled at the fearful possibilities of war, and the unrest occasioned is certainly no permanent guarantee of peace.

Our holy religion asks us to seek the peace of nations at a source more in harmony with nature than physical force. Nature does not forbid us to defend justice and right by force of arms, but what nature does forbid is that armed force should become the efficient cause of right and justice. States as well as individuals must build their peace on the solid foundations of justice and charity. Injure no man; respect his rights; confide in him; practice mutual benevolence—these and similar rules are more powerful weapons to crush the germs of hatred and jealousy and to engender peace than those furnished by physical force.

Where are these lessons of justice and right to be found if not in the Church of God, the true mother and guardian of virtue? The great work of the Church among the nations of the earth is to spread, preserve, defend the laws of justice and charity. It

was the Church that softened the manners of nations, by inculcating the practice of these two virtues. She turned barbarians from their warlike instincts and drew them to a love of the peaceful arts and civilization. It was the Church of God that united the various nations together in the bonds of brotherly love, no matter how much they differed in clime or temperament. Mindful of the precepts and examples of her Divine Head, whose birth was heralded by heavenly messengers of peace, and who came precisely to bring peace into the world, she teaches that men should dwell together in peace. By her many and varied prayers and supplications she asks God to give salvation and prosperity to nations by putting away the horrors of war. She is ready and willing to use her intercessory power every time it is needed, to reconcile men, to keep them from defending unjust causes, and to bring back concord and peace to jarring nations. If the heads of nations would accept the Church's mediation and look for peace through her ministry, an ideal state of things would soon

be realized; and nations and their leaders who now hold aloof from her, either through indifference, or fear, or ignorance, would promptly feel the effects of her help and cooperation.

Let the prayers of Catholics besiege the Sacred Heart of our Lord, and ask Him to bring about this millenium. War and preparations for war are drying up the sources of prosperity in the great nations of Europe; national culture and progress are paralyzed; intellectual and physical strength as well as labor and capital, which form the wealth and sinew of nations, are turned from their national channels and are wasted uselessly. Millions of dollars which should be spent in other ways for the public good are spent annually in inventing and improving destructive engines of war and in warlike experiments. The armed peace of our day has become a burden that is crushing the life and vigor out of civilized peoples. Armed peace is not the peace that God left us when He ascended into heaven; it is simply a violent state which, if heedlessly prolonged, must needs end in a cata-

clysm that will shake the foundations of the earth. Pray God to avert these dangers, and in the language of the Church, ask Him from whom are all holy desires, righteous counsels, and just works, to give to His servants that peace which the world cannot give; that their hearts being disposed to keep His commandments, and the fear of enemies taken away, the world, through His protection, may be at peace.

XXVIII

THE GENEROSITY OF GOD

Let Israel now say that He is good: that His mercy endureth forever.—PSALM CXVII, 2.

They shall publish the memory of the abundance of Thy sweetness: and shall rejoice in Thy justice.—PSALM CXLIV, 7.

Go into thy house to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee.—MARK V. 19.

IN every saint there is some trait of character that comes out more strongly than others and that distinguishes him clearly from other saints. Thus in Job, it was patience; in Moses, meekness; in the Baptist, penance; in Paul, zeal for souls; and so on with the rest.

God our Creator and Redeemer has also His characteristic trait, and that is generosity, which, according to St. Augustine, is well-ordered love, or as the great doctor puts it, "the order of love." So far this virtue resembles justice, for justice, too, is well-ordered love, a love of what is right. But there is this great difference between

these two virtues: justice limits itself to doing the good that is due, while generosity goes beyond the limit and gives more than is due. Justice has its balance ready, and weighs out with precision; it is eye for eye, tooth for tooth; while generosity, which is the daughter of charity, has no measure; and the higher it rises above the precision of strict justice, the greater and nobler it is. This is why generosity is unlike the other virtues whose rule is to hold a middle way, whose perfection is in the golden mean. Generosity knows no such narrow bounds; its perfection lies in its excess. The true, the only model of generosity is the Heart of God; it is His characteristic trait. In Him it has no limits; we might call it excessive if the generosity of God could be excessive. Let us see how He showed it even from the beginning.

After Adam had fallen by his disobedience God was not obliged to reinstate him or give him back any of the graces he had forfeited. Had God acted on the principles of stern justice, Adam and his posterity were hopelessly lost. What, then, impelled

Him to give us, children of Adam, the opportunity to take back the thrones we had forfeited? Nothing impelled Him but His infinite generosity which has its source in His love. Again, in the course of ages He came down among us and took upon Himself all our misery; He alone expiated our sins; He came to be our guide heavenwards. Moved only by the generous impulses of His Sacred Heart, He took on Himself the heavy end of our burden and asked nothing in return but our goodwill and reasonable service.

Had He wished to confine His labors to what was strictly necessary, the work of our redemption would have cost Him but little. As He was God, each act of His, each moment of suffering, was of infinite value. One sigh, one wish of His Heart, would have atoned for the sins of many worlds. A simple prayer of His could have obtained for us all the graces of salvation, and the great work of redemption would have been accomplished. He might have surrounded Himself, even while on earth, with all the pomp and majesty of the kings of this world.

Why, then, did He prefer that life of privation and sorrow which began with the poverty of the manger and ended with the ignominy of the cross? His generosity alone can explain this great problem. To atone for our sins was not enough; He must teach us to atone for them with Him. He must suffer with us to make us realize the value of suffering. He must meet and overcome temptation, to teach us what we should do when assailed. These were the motives that influenced the Heart of Jesus, when, at the moment of His Incarnation, He looked ahead and made a choice between the two ways open before Him, the road of pleasure and glory and the way of sorrow and ignominy. The first suited His dignity better, but the other was the more advantageous for us. His generous Heart was eager for the sacrifice. He did not hesitate for one moment, and like a giant He entered on his course. His starting-point was the highest heavens, and His goal the abyss of humiliation. There was no delay, no half measures, no thought of self, of honor, of personal dignity; He thought only of doing and of giving, and of giving with excess.

Was this generosity enough? He gave all; what more could He give? He Himself, on that last awful night, said to His downcast Apostles, "Man can give nothing more than his life for his friends," and we know how generously He gave His life, shrouding His last moments on earth in the mysteries of love, sorrow and humiliation. And yet the God-Man found other ways of displaying His generosity. The great sacrifice of Calvary had been offered for all men, but each man in particular must be made feel the excess of His love. The Holy Eucharist is the outcome of this generous resolve. It is in this Sacrament that the love of Jesus goes beyond all limits. He gives Himself to all, at all times, in all places: to all without distinction of social rank, age, sex, or holiness, to the most negligent Christian as well as to the saint. He is pleased to reside on marble altars, surrounded by all that taste and refinement can do to adorn His dwelling-place; but He may also be found in the lowly chapel, with nothing but the modest sanctuary lamp to remind the visitor of His sacred

Presence. He lives alone in His tabernacles day and night, and has been living thus for two thousand years all over the world, in order that He may be food for our souls, and that He may be ever near us. Who could have ever shown such excess of love and generosity? Who but the Divine Author of it all?

And what are we going to do in return for all this generosity? Surely if we love His Sacred Heart, we will wage war on our selfishness and try to plant in our souls some of the generosity of Him who spent Himself and finally gave His life for us. Our words, thoughts, deeds, should be one with those of Jesus whose Sacred Heart was a source of generous impulses. In order to succeed in this important work, we cannot do better than imitate a young artist who wishes to copy some great masterpiece. First of all, he makes a careful study of the painting, notes its outlines and all those traits that give it its charm and beauty, and then he endeavors to reproduce them all. Let us, in our turn, study the virtue of generosity as it is found in the Heart

of Jesus, so that we may first try to reproduce it in our hearts, and then in our life and conduct.

We can show our generosity to God by working for His honor and glory. There are at our disposal a thousand little ways to show our zeal, if we care to profit by them. How easy to show our displeasure when we hear our neighbor taking God's holy Name in vain; how easy to make an act of atonement by raising our heart in some short ejaculatory prayer or other; how easy to teach the ignorant the Christian doctrine; how easy to spread good books or leaflets explaining our faith among non-Catholics! There are an infinite number of ways of exercising zeal, all of which presuppose the virtue of generosity. The practice of the little virtues of daily life supposes generosity because these suppose sacrifice. If we wish to reproduce the life of our great Exemplar we must resolve to be generous; the weak-kneed and pusillanimous advance very slowly on the royal road to Heaven. Let us not forget that generosity supposes sacrifice; we need

not pretend that we understand the life of Christ, or the manner in which He lived it, or the motives that animated Him, unless we learn the great lesson that generosity supposes sacrifice.

Let us also remember that our great Model has marked out the course our generosity should take. "If you love Me keep My Commandments." His first and greatest Commandment is that we love one another. This love is to be shown in the way we observe His laws. Not those who say Lord, Lord, but those who do the will of His Father in Heaven—they are His friends. Following the example of Our Lord, let us be generous in forgiving our enemies. This may entail sacrifices, very often great ones, but we cannot pretend to have understood the lessons furnished by the life of the Saviour if we are chary in our words of pardon to those who have wounded us. All the disunion, all the difference of opinion which prevents harmonious work for a good cause, all the jealousy and spite and petty ambitions, all without exception may be traced back to a lack of generosity of soul.

After the example of Christ, we must give and yield, and submit, and forgive till union be possible. And even then we are only partially generous. We must continue to be generous till union be easy, till it be so clear and so complete that there will be no fear of future rupture. Then only can the great ideals of reform and sanctification that men of zeal are ever striving after, meet with the success that their promoters deserve.

After all, it is God's honor and interest we should have at heart, not our own. If to secure His glory, we must witness the victory of a rival, what does defeat matter to a generous, loving soul? If the end be obtained, our humiliation should not grieve us. Let us, then, be generous in thought and deed as well as in word. We shall thereby prove our love for the Sacred Heart; we shall promote His interests; and His promises will be fulfilled in us in this life and hereafter.

XXIX

RECOGNIZING GOD'S GIFTS

What shall I render to the Lord for all the things that He hath rendered to me?—PSALM CXV, 12.

Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul.—PSALM LXV, 16.

THE display of gratitude is a natural impulse of the human heart. The remembrance of a favor received moves us in a mysterious way; no sooner is a kind word spoken to us or kind deed done to us than spontaneously our heart is touched, and expressions seek a vent either in word or look to show how grateful we are. "Gratitude is the fairest blossom that springs from the soul," says a writer, "and the heart knows none more fragrant."

Gratitude is one of those mysterious, though minor, links which bind men together in this world, and which, even among the pagans of old was thoroughly recognized. Ovid tells us that thanks are justly

due for things we get for nothing. It was this sentiment of gratitude that urged the ancients to raise columns and arches to their heroes and gods. After two thousand years, many a tablet in marble or perennial bronze may still be seen, and graven thereon the names of men who earned the gratitude of their fellow-men and whom their fellow-men desired to thank and honor. It is this same sentiment that urges us even our day to commemorate the deeds of great soldiers and statesmen. If a nation wishes to show her gratitude for favors received, a monument is the public expression of this sentiment. But why dilate on this? Is not the simple "Thank you" that rises to every lip an echo of the voice of nature?

If gratitude is so natural to man, how foreign to his true feelings should be the vice of ingratitude! No one takes pride in being ungrateful; no matter how his deeds may be interpreted, no one will acknowledge himself guilty of ingratitude. The world would judge him mercilessly.

This vice of ingratitude assumes a darker hue when it is shown towards those to

whom we are personally indebted. The son or daughter who would forget the gifts of home and parents, is looked on as heartless and unworthy of confidence.

Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend,
More hideous, when thou show'st thee in a child,
Than the sea-monster.¹

Now if ingratitude is base when shown by man to man, how shall we qualify it when it is shown by man to God? After all, man's gifts to man must necessarily be few and paltry; God's supernatural gifts are so munificent and so numerous that ingratitude to Him must be considered not merely heartless but criminal.

Let us enter into details a little. In order to gauge the measure of God's gifts to us and our consequent gratitude for them, it will help us to recall that admirable contemplation on the love of God with which St. Ignatius Loyola crowns his Spiritual Exercises. The mind grows bewildered at the generosity of the Great Giver; and he would have a heart of stone, indeed, who could remain unmoved in the midst of such munificence.

¹ Shak: *King Lear*, i, 4.

In the first place we have to thank God for putting us in this world; existence and life are gifts for which we can never be sufficiently thankful. To the mere gift of life He has added the capacity for enjoying life: witness those five senses, or avenues, through which the splendors of the outer world pass into us, and those three faculties of the soul which help us to penetrate more deeply the secrets of His creative power and His Providence. We have only to reflect a moment to see God living and acting in us, and then crowning His work by the gifts of intelligence and free will whereby we may show our gratitude.

A time came when our free will strayed from the path of righteousness and we abused of God's goodness by committing sin, and yet He did not cease to shower His gifts on us. He gave us something greater than anything that we had yet received, the gift of Redemption. Not merely had He become a Redeemer, paying our debts, washing out our sins with His Blood and freeing us from eternal death, but He became a Master whose law, word and example is

ever at our service; He became our High Priest ever offering Himself for us; our Mediator interceding for us in our needs; yea, even our nourishment in Holy Communion.

Nor is this all; to redeem and save us was not enough to satisfy His love for us. God is utterly profuse in His gifts. He continues to flood our souls with His precious graces. Whence comes, if not from God, the faith that we possess; the vocation to the true Church; all those interior graces which move our mind and heart towards Him; all those examples, those excellent devotions which help so much to augment our knowledge and love for Him?

So great is the magnificence of God's gifts that we may truly say that He is perpetually at work for our sake. He has made us the kings of creation; animals and plants, the very elements and the forces of Nature are become subject to us. His earth gives us food; His sun gives us light; His little birds give us music; His breezes fan our cheeks; all His creatures are constantly giving us pleasure and happiness; the goodness, wisdom and power of God are every

moment at our service. Can we wonder, then, that man should thank God for His gifts? Or is He asking too much when He asks us to show our gratitude?

During His career here on earth we find Him looking for some signs of gratitude from those whom He had helped. Is there anything more pathetic than the passage in the Gospel where He reproaches the conduct of those whom He had cured of their leprosy? One day while on His way to Jerusalem ten lepers came to meet Him, crying out: "Jesus Master, have mercy on us!" Our Lord beheld their sad plight; His tender Heart was moved to pity, and He said to them: "Go, show yourselves to the priests." This they did and they were made clean. The first impulse of a generous soul would have been to return on the spot and give thanks to so great a benefactor. However, only one, a Samaritan, went to thank the merciful Lord for the miracle that had been wrought in him. The Gospel tells us that he fell on his face before the Lord, giving thanks, and Jesus answering, said to him: "Were not ten made clean? Where

are the other nine? Is there no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger?"

The gentle way in which Our Lord reproaches the nine absent men for their ingratitude has been for all ages a wonderful lesson. We are taught by this event that gratitude is a virtue most acceptable to God, nay more, that He expects it of us. St. Paul, in various passages of his Epistles, insists on the obligations we are under to be grateful to God. "In everything, by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God."¹ And elsewhere: "As, therefore, you have received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk ye in Him... abounding in Him in thanksgiving."² "All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him."³ "We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren, as it is fitting, because your faith groweth exceedingly."⁴

¹ Phil. iv, 6.

² Col. ii, 6, 7.

³ Ib. iii, 17.

⁴ 11. Thes. i, 3.

If we are so prompt to recognize our obligations to our fellow-men by simple words of thanks, let us not stifle the natural impulse which prompts us to thank God also for all His benefits. The reproaches that were made to the ungrateful nine lepers should never be levelled at us. "Thanks be to God," should be a familiar phrase with all of us, surging daily and hourly from human hearts overflowing with gratitude. Thanks be to God for all the gifts that come from His hands in the material order: for the rays of the sun that warm us; for the rain that waters our fields; for the food that strengthens our bodies; for the sleep that refreshes them. Thanks be to God for all His gifts in the spiritual order: for the supernatural lights that show us so clearly what to accept and what to avoid in the path of virtue. Thanks be to God for the sickness and suffering which bring us so close to Him, and which prepare us so well for our entry into the kingdom of His glory.

XXX

DEVOTION TO THE SACRED HEART

*The Lord hath appeared from afar to me.
Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love.—*
JEREMIAS XXXI, 3.

*It is better to be humbled with the meek than
to divide spoils with the proud.—*PROVERBS XVI,
19.

WORSHIP of the Sacred Heart is the quintessence of Christianity and the summary of all religion," are the words of an eminent Churchman that gave expression to a truth which is becoming more and more evident to Catholics as the years roll on. If it is true that religion, in the very meaning of the term, is nothing but the link that binds God to man, through Jesus our Lord, the Heart of this same Jesus, source of all grace and ocean of infinite tenderness, must necessarily hold within Itself all that we can ask from religion, namely the remedy for our spiritual weaknesses, and the means of our salvation. The Vicar of Christ, Pius IX, thought so the day he wrote:

"We have no other hope than the Sacred Heart; It alone can cure all our ills." Leo XIII also believed this when, in his Encyclical on the Consecration of Mankind, he used the remarkable words: "In the Sacred Heart we should put all our hopes; from It alone should we ask and receive our salvation."

Solemn words of sanction like these, coming from the lips of the Vicars of Christ, should modify the opinion of certain Catholics who would fain see in the worship of the Sacred Heart only a new-fangled devotion, just as they should challenge the indifference and the want of zeal of those who have it in their power to spread this blessed influence around them and who still remain inactive.

The devotion to the Sacred Heart, far from being new, is as old as Christianity itself. When the Beloved Disciple at the Last Supper leaned over to listen to the throbbings of the Sacred Heart, he knew where to look for consolation and strength in that momentous hour; while he was resting on the bosom of Jesus he was practising

the devotion which has become dear to millions in the Church of God. St. John was the forerunner of the multitudes of holy men and women who have in all ages of the Church turned to the Sacred Heart as to an inexhaustible source of spiritual strength, and who linger there to drink in the sweetness and consolation that the Heart of Jesus alone can give.

Private revelations made by Our Lord in the seventeenth century to a humble religious, were the occasion of the extraordinary spread of the devotion to the Sacred Heart in these latter days. Christ appeared frequently to Blessed Margaret Mary, at Paray-le-Monial, and revealed fully to her what had already been dimly known to saints like Gertrude, Bernard, and Bernardine of Siena. Although the Church has not yet pronounced any final judgment on the extraordinary visions of the holy Visitandine, the "reality and Divine character of them have been tested in every way known to those conversant with such matters and have withstood the test." ¹ However, even though

¹ Hunter: Outlines of Dogm. Theol. II. no 536.

a person thought that he had reason to believe that Margaret Mary was the victim of delusion, still this would not affect the objective reality of the devotion to the Sacred Heart; its goodness and utility would still be unimpeachable. In the declining years of the seventeenth century and in the eighteenth, attempts were made by faithless children of the Church to undermine the theological basis of this devotion; but when the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius VI, condemned the sophistries of the Jansenists and other unloveable sectaries, he gave at the same time the dogmatic outlines of the worship of the Sacred Heart that would stand, even though the revelations to Margaret Mary were shown to be without foundation. The Holy Father taught that "the object of the devotion is the Heart of Our Lord, a part of His Sacred Humanity, as He ascended with It to Heaven, and retains It forever. His Heart being an integral part of the Humanity and inseparably united with the Divine Word, is a lawful object of *latria*, no less than the Precious Blood or the Humanity as a whole. The motive why special

honor is paid to this particular part is found in the text of the Gospel, when Christ Himself speaks of His Heart as the seat of His affections: 'Learn of Me for I am meek and humble of Heart', and this language is in accordance with the mode of speaking which is common among men and is most frequent in almost every Book of Holy Scripture from Genesis to the Apocalypse."¹

This doctrine is perfectly orthodox; and when revelations bearing all the marks of genuineness, like those of Our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary, come to strengthen it dogmatically, we cannot be surprised that results, such as we are witnessing in the world today, should console those who have in their hearts any love for Our Lord.

We have merely to look around us to see what has already been accomplished by this devotion in the work of sanctification of souls, in the spread of the true faith among pagans, and in the renewal of fervor among the faithful. Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus makes Catholic life more real; it infuses into it the spirit of

¹ Hunter: *Ibid.*

Christ; it makes men try to think like Christ, speak like Him, act like Him; it makes them feel the need of leading a more spiritual life and fills them with a desire to imitate Christ and to make others imitate Him. This, however, supposes, first, a knowledge of the devotion, and secondly, the practical application of it to our lives. There are many who are too prone to confound the merely dogmatic knowledge of a devotion with the practice of it. They persuade themselves that they possess the incomparable privileges of a lover of Christ our Lord, because they have made His adorable Heart the object of their study, yea, of their sympathetic admiration. This would be a strange illusion, and would resemble nearly enough that of the Jews who, while proud of the prerogatives attributed by the Lord to the temple of Jerusalem, believed that the dignity and grandeur of that vast structure could replace their own personal merit. "The temple of the Lord!" cried they at every instant, "the temple of the Lord!" and after having pronounced those words they thought they had nothing more

to say or do. Thus might we be tempted to let our devotion consist in speaking of the Heart of Jesus and sounding Its praises, but in leaving the practice of the virtues of the Heart of Jesus out of our lives.

Fortunately, the real spirit of the devotion to the Sacred Heart is known to millions of Catholics as a spirit eminently practical. Men have realized that the Heart of Jesus is the true temple of the Most High, the Holy of Holies, the source of all grace and all merit; and they do not rest satisfied with possessing a speculative knowledge of the devotion; they bring it into their lives, and their daily thoughts, words or actions feel the effects. "He who observes My commandments," says Our Lord, equivalently, "loves Me truly."¹ Any other love is only the phantasm of love. "Not every one that saith to Me, 'Lord, Lord', shall enter the kingdom of Heaven, but he that *doth* the will of My Father."²

A practical knowledge of the devotion is the best means of testing its efficacy; the very reasonableness of it will soon be-

¹ John xv. 25.

² Matt. vii. 21.

come evident to any one who has rested for a while on the bosom of Jesus and, like St. John, has felt the pulsations of His loving Heart. To those who still ask for enlightenment, we have only to say that all the motives that could possibly be brought forward to induce us to love and practise the devotion to the Sacred Heart in our daily lives lose none of their cogency, even if they are merely speculative. What more excellent, indeed, than the material object of the devotion, the Heart Itself of the Man-God, the very source whence flowed the Blood which has washed out the sins of the world? What is more sublime than the spiritual object, which is the very love of the Divine Saviour for us sinners? What more captivating than the devotion that puts before us the Heart of a God living and dying out of love for us? It is from the Sacred Heart as from a fountain-head of warmth and light that the rays of God's love shine with incomparable refulgence, piercing the coldness of men's hearts.

Elsewhere we shall show the utility of the devotion, and the ease with which it

may be practised; suffice it to say here that by it we are in truth united to God. in His desires, His affections, His hopes. An intimate union is effected between us and the Model of all virtue, the result of which is felt even on the chilly outside world. Society not less than individuals find in the devotion to the Sacred Heart the warmth and invigorating influence needed so much in our age. And such is the salutary influence of this heavenly devotion that society, once decrepit and vigorless, is drawing fervor out of its abundance. What is transforming the hearts of men more rapidly than devotion to the Sacred Heart? Ask those zealous pastors of souls who have it deeply rooted in their parishes. Ask those hundreds of thousands of weekly and daily communicants throughout our land who look to the Divine Heart as the source of their fervor. St. Gertrude, as far back as the thirteenth century, told us that the souls of men would find in the Heart of Jesus all the warmth and life they need for their sanctification.

Even more explicitly did the Saviour

reveal to Margaret Mary the effect of this devotion on human souls. It was with boundless confidence in her truth-telling that the Blessed Visitandine asserted that if we knew how agreeable the practice of this devotion is to Jesus Christ, or how efficacious it would be for our own souls, there is no Catholic who has the least love for the Divine Redeemer who would not practise it. And what cheering messages He had to communicate to her! A craving for our love was the ordinary theme of His revelations. He never tired of repeating to her that it was His desire to be loved by men; that nothing consoled Him so much as when men returned love for love, just as nothing grieved Him so much as men's ingratitude. This craving for our love, coupled with the need of some kind of atonement on our part for the sinfulness of our fellow-men, throws a flood of heavenly light on the relations that God evidently desires to see existing between Himself and His creatures. If then we have any wish to be reckoned among those who truly love the Saviour, let us pledge our word to prac-

tise this devotion and to make others do likewise; not merely because it is the most excellent, the most touching, the most useful, but because it is the easiest and simplest form of the service of God. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, reduced to its final and most practical expression, is to render love for love, to rejoice with Our Lord when He is honored, to grieve when He is dishonored, to make reparation when we can, and in the way we can; in a word, to look after the interests of Jesus in this world. This is the highest object we can work for, the noblest we can have in this vale of tears.

XXXI

REIGN OF THE SACRED HEART

I have made known Thy name to them, and will make It known; that the love wherewith Thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.
—JOHN XVII, 26.

Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart; and you shall find rest for your souls.—MATT. XI, 29.

THE movement of souls towards the Sacred Heart of Jesus is undoubtedly the most consoling sign of the age we live in. While the enemies of God are making every effort to ignore Him and His benefits, there are millions of Catholics in every country, and of every color and condition, who are meeting at this common source of grace, and taking away with them strength and courage to help them in their struggles through life. Nearly thirty millions of God-fearing Catholics, fully organized and resolute, like an army confident of victory, are on their knees daily offering up their prayers and sacrifices, to hasten the reign of the Sacred Heart of Jesus over the world.

The stupendous spread of the devotion to the Sacred Heart during the past fifty years, and its influence on men's minds and hearts, is a fact chroniclers must not ignore when they write the religious history of this age. Like the expansion of Christianity in primitive times, its influence is being felt everywhere; and truly might an apologist of the devotion say, as Tertullian did of old: "We are but of yesterday, and already have we filled your cities, towns, islands, your council halls and camps..."

The revelations underlying this devotion were made by the Divine Saviour Himself to Margaret Mary Alacoque, a humble Visitation nun in France, in the seventeenth century. In that age when prudence obliged priests and prelates to tread their way cautiously, amid a number of untried and unauthorized practices of piety, this devotion necessarily spread slowly. But the evidently authentic revelations of Jesus Christ to His lowly handmaid; the decisions of the sovereign authority of the Church; the learned commentaries of Catholic theologians, and the effects of the devotion on souls, dis-

pelled forever all doubts regarding the orthodoxy of the devotion, and forced the most reluctant into the strong conviction that the Holy Ghost was again making an effort to capture the hearts of men.

However, it was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that this blessed devotion in all its beauty and efficacy began to rise from the comparative oblivion into which it had sunk. A new sun gradually arose above the horizon to shed its effulgence on the spiritual world, and millions of souls warmed into fervor under its rays. The efforts that have been put forth, during half a century, to make up for lost time, as it were, have been so successful that we may say truly that this amiable devotion now encircles the earth. In fact, so striking has been its expansion that writers have not hesitated to call it a miracle. Already the devotion reigns in every Catholic country. There is, perhaps, not a diocese in the whole world that has not been specially consecrated to the Sacred Heart; not a parish that does not count at least a few adorers of the Sacred Heart; not a church, or home,

that has not a reminder for its members in an image or statue of this symbol of inexhaustible love. Verily, the world is destined in the near future to become the kingdom of the Sacred Heart.

Why is it that this devotion makes such rapid conquests? What is the secret of its vitality? The answer is, first, because devotion to the Sacred Heart appeals to us as the one most suited to the actual wants of society; and secondly, because Christ promised that the events we are now witnessing, and which give so much spiritual consolation to souls, should come to pass. When St. John the Evangelist appeared in a vision to Gertrude of Saxony, the saintly abbess asked him why he had not revealed to the world what were the sentiments of his heart while he leaned on the bosom of the Lord, during the Last Supper. The holy Evangelist replied that the echo of the pulsations of the Heart of Jesus would be turned into living words in later ages, and would be heard throughout the world; that the time would come when the world grown old and cold, should regain its pristine warmth,

through the revelations of the mysteries of the love of the Heart of Jesus.

The Saviour Himself reaffirmed the same truth in the visions to Blessed Margaret Mary. "He let me know," said she, "that the great desire He had to be fully loved by men had made Him form the plan of manifesting His Heart to them. . He promised me that He would shower down in abundance into the hearts of those who honor Him all the gifts that filled His own. He told me that the devotion was a final effort of His love in behalf of Christians, in these latter ages." There was Our Lord making consoling promises to the holy Visitandine; our own experience tells us whether He has kept them or not.

The Vicar of Christ Himself, Pius IX, declared that "the Church and society have no other help than in the Sacred Heart of Jesus," for the Heart of Jesus alone "would furnish a remedy for every evil;" and the Holy Pontiff, in a moment of enthusiasm, exclaimed, "Preach this devotion everywhere; it is going to save the world." After Pius IX, his successor Leo XIII proclaimed on

a solemn occasion, that "the manifestation of this devotion has been a new and earnest pledge of the love of Jesus Christ," who by this means wishes to bring back to Himself an erring world, to reconcile it to God, and "to make it taste abundantly of the fruits of the redemption."

In the light of these authoritative testimonies, conviction clear and strong is brought home to us that the devotion to the Sacred Heart is the devotion of the future. The rapid progress it has made, and is still making, is an earnest of this, and warns us that if we want to signalize ourselves in the service of God it must be in the endeavor to spread the reign of the Sacred Heart over the hearts of men.

Great things have already been accomplished in Catholic countries by those who felt that this was the final effort of the love of our Saviour to bring back souls to God. Through this devotion millions have been initiated into Christian piety; they have felt how sweet the Lord is in His manifestations, and have learned to love Him all the more deeply. But much remains to be

done. A cold and ungrateful world has a long road to cover before it regains the fervor of the early centuries. Cast a glance over the nations and see how many other millions there are who know nothing of the consoling promises of the Sacred Heart. The sight of multitudes still living in lands where a ray of this devotion has not yet penetrated, should excite our compassion. We who have tasted of the sweetness of the Heart of Jesus and the truth of His promises, should show our zeal in doing all we can to make His adorable Heart better known and loved.

How can this be done? Simply by doing our utmost to spread far and wide the organization known as the Apostleship of Prayer in union with the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Talk to people about the revelations and promises made to Margaret Mary; try to make them go to Communion on the first Fridays; distribute leaflets which explain the practices of the Apostleship, etc. Tell all, friend and foe alike, that they shall find in this loveable devotion the help necessary for their state of life, peace in their

families, ease in their works, answers to their prayers; tell them that the blessings of Heaven shall crown their enterprises, and consolation shall end their trials; that they shall find a sure refuge in the Sacred Heart during life and above all at the moment of death. These are the promises of Christ Himself; what more can even the most tepid ask to encourage him to draw near to this fountain of love?

But how can laymen or laywomen, in their isolation, accomplish anything in extending the reign of the Heart of Jesus? What influence can a few units have amid the millions who surround them? And the answer again is, We can do all things in Him who strengthens us. Jesus Christ is, at the present moment, employing the humblest as well as the most powerful instruments to spread the knowledge and love of His Sacred Heart. All classes, high and low, rich and poor, master and servant, mistress and maid, are at work in thousands of homes teaching their fellow-men and fellow-women the practices of the League, explaining the three degrees, the promises,

the work of reparation, the first Fridays, the holy hour; and so on.

We are not, therefore, asked to leave the position in which Providence has placed us, in order to exercise a fruitful apostleship and to extend the reign of the Sacred Heart. The layman as well as the priest and religious, has near him at all moments the source whence have sprung the great models of the apostolic life. Isolation, or lack of zeal, or want of adaptability, is no excuse when God's help may be relied on to carry on a work which He Himself earnestly asks us to do. Our own weakness should not be an obstacle to our zeal and devotedness. There is no class of men who realize their helplessness and their unworthiness more fully than foreign missionaries, who live lives of solitude among peoples whose ideas, sentiments and manners inspire repugnance; and yet they reap rich harvests of souls. Once united to the Heart of Jesus, the dumb become eloquent, the weak become strong; we are no longer alone; there is no further isolation. We may not be called upon to work in foreign countries,

but God asks us to work at least at home among those we know and love. How easy it is to exercise our zeal by urging our neighbor to join the League of the Sacred Heart, to make the morning offering, to say the daily decade of beads, and to go to Communion often, etc. All this may seem trifling in our eyes; but it means much for souls. When we urge others to begin and continue these simple practices of the devotion we are extending the kingdom of God on earth. Bear in mind that people must be taught to love God; that His name must be revered; that the interests of religion must be defended. This work we can do if we have a mind to; the field is always open and success is assured, for we may depend on it we are not working alone. To work with entire devotedness to spread the reign of Christ and His Sacred Heart, is a great source of merit in this world and a sure pledge of glory in the next.

A helpful consideration is the conviction that working in union with the Heart of Jesus brings with it a greater union with God and with our fellow-men. Life in this

world has its inevitable train of conflicting interests, divergencies of views, incompatibility of ideas, which are opposed to a perfect union of hearts. We may live under the same roof without being united, just as we may be united without living under the same roof. The reign of Jesus is the source of perfect Christian union; the Heart of Jesus which loves us all equally well, and communicates Its love to us, is the living bond that should link God's children together on earth, as It does the Elect in Heaven. Hearts that are united to His generously sacrifice their own interests, and form, by that same, a union of sweet intimacy and unchangeable firmness which ties of blood or worldly interests can never equal. Neither natural obstacles, nor distance, nor human influence, can neutralize the Divine affinity which the Heart of Jesus establishes among souls animated by His spirit. These souls recognize each other without previous intercourse; they are lovers of the Heart of Love; no other introduction is required. They have the same tendencies, the same tastes, the same sympathies;

one were tempted to say that they were cast in the same mold. Hence when they meet, they easily unite; and though separated one from the other by all sorts of barriers, they are one in their common love for the Heart of Jesus, and they draw from this incomparable source strength to brace them up and make them bear mutually the trials and sorrows of life.

Such are the fruits of the true devotion to the Heart of Jesus; such would be its fruits in this world if it reigned supreme in the hearts of men. To help to spread the reign of the Heart of Jesus is undeniably the most perfect work we could undertake, just as the most perfect fruit would be the complete realization of that sublime prayer of Christ on the Mount, "Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

XXXII

THE BANE OF EGOTISM

Why hast thou emulation for me? O that all the people might prophesy, and that the Lord would give them His spirit!—NUMBERS XI, 29.

You are now full: you are now become rich: you reign without us; and I would to God you did reign, that we also might reign with you.—I COR. IV, 8.

A WELL-KNOWN writer tells us that the egotist is the pest of human society. When egotism takes possession of a man he ceases in a sense to be a social being. He becomes one of those who are convinced that they can have no dearer friends than themselves; and who are ever willing and ready to act up to their conviction. The consequence is that true charity, "that plant divinely nursed," suffers for want of nourishment and is apt to wilt and droop. The greatest of our poets says that we are born to do benefits..... "O what a precious comfort 'tis to have so many, like brothers, commanding one another's fortunes."

This is also sound Christian teaching; and yet it is disquieting to see how many of our brethren there are who belie their destiny when it comes to practice. In a world where we must live together, suffer trials and enjoy blessings together, where there should be so much mutual compensation, the egotist must feel that he is a misplaced being. There is hardly anything more unloveable in this world of ours than the man who is continually trying to serve his own interests, than the man who, ever regardless of others, looks only at the advantages that may accrue to himself, the one who knows not how to do a favor, unless there is a corresponding favor in store for him. How little there is of the true Catholic spirit in this is seen at a glance, and how little there is in common with the great Prototype of all virtue, who "went about doing good" not to Himself but to others.

It would matter little if egotism were the portion of the few. The rest of us could point out the few, if only to make others shun their example. But, sad to think, most men are naturally prone to this vice, so

prone that those who do not struggle strenuously against it lapse into the unenviable category that Emerson took the trouble to depict. Egotism runs rife in the world; not merely does it affect the private life of individuals and make social intercourse a school of hypocrisy, but even the public spirit is affected by it. The very natural and civic virtues that men are supposed to possess, and that should make a nation vigorous, are tainted with egotism. Who would dare assert that it is love of country or the desire for the spread of empire, purely and simply, that moves men to heroic deeds nowadays, and not rather some prospective title or other, or official mention, or special sign of recognition? Who will say that pure charity or even philanthropy is the formal motive of the great benefactions we read about, and not rather the prospect of some monumental and lasting bronze or marble, that will satisfy the egotistic donor's thirst for praise and notoriety?

It is the old story. When the Gospel loses its power over men, the world and its influence drag them down. This has be-

come so common at the present day that it requires rare powers of mental analysis to discover, in even the best of our public men, virtues that are not impregnated with egotism. The evil has gone so far, and confidence is so shaken in civic virtue, that an author tells us it is hard nowadays to get a man to believe that any other man can act from disinterested motives. This is the fruit of experience. If we take men as we meet them we shall find that they are rare specimens, indeed, who in their calculations will ignore their own interests. Disinterestedness, on the contrary, is synonymous with unselfishness. The disinterested man is the one who, in his efforts to help others, leaves self out for the moment. The element of generosity must enter into this quasi-definition, for without generosity the human heart pulsates but feebly. To be unselfish enough to think of others, we must be generous enough to forget ourselves; for charity is a virtue of the heart.

There are, indeed, in this world unselfish men who are moved by mere natural virtue, and who, without hope of reward,

sacrifice their pleasures and interests for the sake of others. Such men merit our praise, and writers in all ages have not been sparing of it. This is the class that is satisfied with the shadow while the substance is in sight. But there is something higher than this; there is the disinterestedness that is quickened by supernatural motives. When God's grace asserts its influence on unselfish souls, a new element is introduced, and we are in the presence of the material of which our martyrs and saintly heroes are made. Such souls penetrate the deeper meaning of the great law of Christ which commands them to love God and their neighbor, which forbids all that could wound that love; they make it their law of life; it is always present to them, permeates them to such an extent that their own interests become secondary in their desire to promote God's glory and their neighbor's salvation. This is Catholic unselfishness, the kind of charity that St. Paul mentions in his first Letter to the Corinthians.

In order, therefore, to be truly disinterested we must make the interests of

Christ pass before our own. We must think rather of extending His reign over souls than of our own advancement on the path of wealth and honors. We must be ready to sacrifice all these and our very selves if His work calls for it; and God's glory and our neighbors' welfare may sometimes call for it. This may sound heroic; but what do thousands of our fellow-Catholics do who give up home and kindred to follow Christ more closely? They retire to cloisters, and die to the world the better to hide their disinterestedness from the eyes of men who cannot understand their motives; or they start out to foreign and barbarous lands to bring the message of the Saviour to men who are utter strangers to them, and who have no claim to their sympathies except that they have the image of God graven on their immortal souls. Is not this true unselfishness? and can a man show greater charity than to give up all that the world holds dear, to work for his fellow-men?

But we must not forget that the practice of such heroic disinterestedness reveals

a special vocation, a special grace of God, which it is only the privilege of the minority to claim. We do not pretend that the practice of this virtue in a heroic degree should be undertaken by the greater number, so far as to make it necessary for them to give up all and retire to solitude. Catholics are not all called upon to neglect the duties of their state of life, or the obligations that bind parents and children, masters and servants, etc., in order, for instance, to rush into the calm of prayer and contemplation or into ill-timed works of zeal. A mother who would show her disinterestedness and devotedness to God by spending long hours in church or in helping the poor, meanwhile neglecting her children, at home, would be laboring under an illusion. On the other hand, this incompatibility is not absolute; our special duties should not take up our time so completely as to hinder us from thinking of God and His interests. The "golden mean" should be observed here as elsewhere. Suffice it to know that Catholic disinterestedness urges us to do our share, each one according to

his means, to bring about the realization of the wish expressed in the Lord's own prayer, "Thy kingdom come." When there is something to be done, or said, or suffered, for the cause of God or our neighbor, suffice it to know that we should be generous with our sweat and toil, and not to stand idly by wrapped up in our own selfishness.

Even if we are not called by special vocation to practise heroic virtue, occasions offer themselves frequently of giving our services to our fellow-men, and of showing them compassion and charity; we are in a sense our brother's keeper. Not to mention the first duty, a negative one, of Catholic disinterestedness which is to cause no hurt or prejudice to our neighbor, there are the poor, the sick and afflicted, whom we have always with us, and who may often need our counsel and help. Without neglecting those who have primary claims on our charity and devotedness, Catholic disinterestedness urges us to widen our sphere of action in union with the Heart of Jesus. Are we generous and large-hearted in the exercise of our charity? Do we give of our time and

substance disinterestedly and without afterthought of return? Alas, our conscience tells us that our very smallest works of charity are not infrequently tainted with an all-absorbing egotism.

A concrete instance will bring this fact home to us. Is it not true that, in order to induce us to pull open our purse-strings to help some deserving work or charitable object, all possible compensation must be given back to us? Is it not true that human ingenuity is nearing the end of its resources in trying to invent means of amusement and excitement to bring people together for charitable purposes? Instead of giving generously according to our means, when we are asked to contribute; instead of looking to God alone for reward for our charity and alms-giving, the first question we put is, What are the attractions in store for us? This is egotism quite unworthy of a follower of Christ.

And yet the Sacred Heart of Jesus invites us to forget self in our thoughts, words, and actions, to think also of God and His interests, to think of our neighbor

and of his needs temporal and spiritual. If we heed this invitation He in whose bosom the Divine Heart throbs will show us how generous He can be in return. "Seek ye therefore, first, the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

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XXXIII

THE STUDY OF SELF

The steps of man are guided by the Lord: but who is the man that can understand his own way?
—PROV. XX, 24.

Receive my instruction, and not money: choose knowledge rather than gold: for wisdom is better than all the most precious things: and whatsoever may be desired cannot be compared to it.—PROV. VIII, 10, 11.

HUMILITY is the virtue which makes us think little of ourselves and desire to be thought little of by others. When we do not know ourselves, we are prone to pride, and anxious to be thought a great deal of. But as soon as we have acquired self-knowledge and learned to know how little we really are, the conviction comes home to us that it would be unjust to honor such littleness; and if we are frank with ourselves, we refrain from doing so. Self-knowledge leads to humility; and this alone explains not merely why the saints had such a low estimate of themselves, but also why they wished others to entertain a similar estimate

of them. The saints always hated to sail under false colors; respect for elementary truth and justice urged them to let the world see themselves as they really were.

The ancient pagans may not have discerned the existence of the sublime virtue of humility as we understand it, but if they did, they certainly did not practise it; and our quasi-pagans, the worldlings of today, are quite keen in following their example. Humility, in the Christian acceptance of the term, would seem to be utterly beyond their powers of discernment. Nor need we be surprised at this. One might just as well ask a blind man to name the autumn tints on the distant mountain-side as to ask men imbued with the spirit of the world to understand or to define, much less to analyze, the secrets of self-abasement.

And yet it will be hardly fair to reproach worldlings for this spiritual blindness. The kind of education men receive nowadays, the false ideals of virtue that are held up to them, the infiltration of pride under the guise of self-respect, personal honor, and such like, that is continually in-

fluencing their thinking and doing, and more than all, the utter absence of self-knowledge, are obstacles not merely to the acquisition of the virtue of humility but even to a speculative grasp of it, or of how it should influence their lives.

Still the world has felt the need of a substitute for Christian humility, and it thinks it has found one. Mr. Lecky tells us that "the feeling of self-respect is the most remarkable characteristic that distinguishes Protestant from Catholic populations, and which has proved among the former an invaluable moral agent, forming frank, independent natures, and checking every servile habit and all mean, degrading vice." Why, then, he would have us conclude, should people go to the trouble of acquiring the virtue of Christian humility, when a simple feeling of self-respect will suffice to keep them virtuous? Unfortunately, too many Catholics, who should know better, are actuated by motives of this kind. Expediency, self-respect—which even among Catholics is very often only another name for pride—mistaken views of

honor, and so on, are their substitutes for the truly Catholic virtue of humility.

This, however, is not the brand of virtue that Christ taught and practised. His doctrine, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven,"¹ and His example, "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart,"² should be the standards of both belief and action in Catholic life. Besides, the Scriptures tell us elsewhere that pride is at the bottom of all vice, that pride is hateful before God and man;³ that pride is the beginning of all sin; that he that holdeth it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end.⁴

Pride is a sin of the intellect and may be manifested in a great many ways. It accomodates itself to the strongest natures as well as to the weakest; it is found under the rags of poverty, yet wealth and position are direct incentives to it, a reason possibly why there is so little humility among the great. Men take delight in any fancied excellence, natural or acquired, they may possess; they give themselves cre-

¹ Matt. v, 3. ² 1b. xi 29. ³ Eccl. x, 7. ⁴ 1b. x, 14, 15.

dit for it, and never think of referring it to Him from whom alone all from good things come, and to whom alone all the honor should be given. Pride, says Addison somewhere, flows from want of reflection and ignorance; and another author tells us that

Pride (of all others the most dang'rous fault)
Proceeds from want of sense, or want of thought.

Should we not rather say that it proceeds from a lack of self-knowledge? And yet how few care to undertake the task of studying themselves. Is it because they fear the revelations that would inevitably ensue?

We cannot begin a nobler or more salutary work than the study of self. To wish to see ourselves and to know ourselves as we really are, that is, just as God sees us, is not a degradation of the mind, but rather a seeking after truth, with the design of conforming our minds to the mind of God. This, of course, would mean self-abasement, a virtue which is no longer fashionable in the age in which we live.

How easily we deceive ourselves! If we look at ourselves closely and ask ourselves what we have that we may boast about,

the answer flashes back to us: Nothing but a mass of physical, intellectual and moral misery. "No man hath anything of his own save lying and sin." And the poet exclaims,

Man, proud man,
Drest in a little brief authority,
Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd.
His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,
As make the angels weep.

All that we have, all that we are, comes from God, and not from ourselves. For this we can glory in the goodness and generosity of God but in nothing else. Are not creation, preservation, redemption, and sanctification, all gifts of God? Besides, with lavish hand He has given us whatever natural gifts we possess: life and its train of benefits; the senses of the body to enjoy external nature; the faculties of the soul to recall, know and love all that He has done for us. What have we of our own in all these natural gifts to be proud of?

If we turn to the supernatural element in us, what have we here that we can call our own? Is it the gifts of grace that adorn our soul, or the gift of free will? Is it our

vocation not merely to the Christian faith but to the Catholic Church? If no man can come to the Son unless it be given to him by the Father, whence come those lights we receive whereby our minds may know Him better? Or those movements of the will whereby we may love Him more ardently? Can we even claim as ours the very means that are given us for our sanctification—the sacraments, the prayers that are said for us, the examples of the saints, the devotions that help us to walk so sweetly along the rugged road to heaven? We can lay no claim to any of these things; nay, rather, we are the unhappy authors of ingratitude and sin. How, then, can we be puffed up with pride?

Self-knowledge is a fertile source of humility. But a speculative knowledge of ourselves, or our own helplessness, does not suffice to make us humble; we must not only know but achieve as well. The best way to acquire humility is to experience humiliations; it seems little to admit the truth that humbles us, if we do not feel and acknowledge the justice of it.

It is not the doctrines and practices of the world that will banish pride or teach us humility. Forgiveness of injuries, patience in ignominy, fortitude in tribulation, the bearing of insults for Christ's sake, are virtues that have no place in the worldling's code of morality. Away with the sophistry and the proud ways of men! Self-respect and personal honor are good enough in themselves; but how little have they in common with the virtue St. Paul had in view when he said, "Let no man deceive himself; if any man among you seem to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may become wise." ¹ Christ is our light and our guide, and to Him we should turn when we look for lessons in virtue. "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by Me," and we know the examples of humility His set before us. We should also learn humility from those who really loved Our Lord and practised His virtues. They were His saints, the doctors of His Church, all the masters of spiritual life; to them we

¹ I Corinth. iii, 18² John xiv, 6.

should go to learn what the virtue of humility is and how to practise it.

And the reward? To those who work earnestly to acquire this virtue Christ has promised rewards in this world and in the next: in this world peace of heart, grace in abundance, strength and zeal to accomplish a good and fruitful apostolate; in the other, a right to a high place in the assembly of the Elect. "The last shall be first." "The fruit of humility is the fear of God, riches and glory and life."

¹ Matt. xix, 30

² Prov. xxii, 4

XXXIV

DISINTERESTEDNESS

If you love them that love you, what thanks are to you? for sinners also love those that love them. And if you do good to them who do good to you, what thanks are to you? for sinners also do this. And if you lend to them of whom you hope to receive, what thanks are to you? for sinners also lend to sinners, for to receive as much.
—LUKE VI, 32, 33, 34.

THE world is prone to admire the nobility of soul that prompts a man to devote himself and his energies to the welfare of others, without the afterthought of personal interest or ambition. Certain it is that, when a man proves that he possesses disinterestedness, the public give him full credit for it; like other virtues, disinterestedness brings its own reward, even from one's fellow-men. The spectacle is rare, however, amid the universal debasement of character; in the present age, it is hard to get men to believe that other men can act from disinterested motives.

Still, the prevalence of egotism does not

prevent many souls from doing their share to prove that generosity has not taken its flight from this world of ours; it would be unfair to assert that disinterestedness is no longer practised. There are still hundreds of thousands of men and women who have abandoned all earthly joys and advantages, and who are working exclusively for God and their neighbor at home and in foreign fields. There are other tens of thousands who, without having bound themselves by any religious obligations, are following the inspirations of their hearts and are carrying their disinterested charity into the homes of their fellow-beings, helping them thereby to bear up under the crosses of this passing existence. And yet notwithstanding the relative frequency of the cases that might be cited, how infinitely small is their number when compared with the millions of Catholics who have only self in view and who are constantly seeking their own ends, regardless of those of their neighbors; whose one aim in life is the assertion of their rights and privileges, and whose lives are taken up in reaching out after them.

Catholic disinterestedness consists in putting the interests of God and our neighbor before our own; in forgetting self when there is question of doing something for the glory of God or for the welfare of others in whom we see the image of God. This does not necessarily mean abnegation, nor yet generosity, nor greatness of soul, nor a simple devotedness to a cause; it is rather the flowering of all these virtues in the soul. "Seek first the kingdom of God," by charity and zeal, "and all things shall be added unto you." The aim of the disinterested Catholic is, first of all, to make sure of the "one thing necessary." He knows very well—the words of the Divine Master are the guarantee—that the rest will come.

If we analyze Catholic disinterestedness we may distinguish three phases. The first is that detachment from earthly things and the contempt for them, which urge us to put the accomplishment of duty above even what we consider our dearest interests. A more complete phase is the ignoring of ourselves when zeal moves us to work for the special welfare of others. But the most per-

fect of all, and the one that really deserves the name of Catholic disinterestedness, is that which makes us forget self to such an extent as to devote ourselves entirely to the spiritual and temporal interests of others, and to give up our lives if necessary to the work. This is the disinterestedness of the apostolate and of missionary work of various kinds in the Church of God.

Any one of these three degrees helps us to raise ourselves above the passing fancies of this life, be they never so enticing. The first is the disinterestedness of the man who feels that, to a certain extent at least, he is his "brother's keeper." The second and third are reserved for those generous souls who, sensitive to the whisperings of grace, glance over the immense vineyard of the Master only to see so many souls to save, so many infidels to convert, so much misery to alleviate, so many poor crying for food and clothing, so many unfortunate people to console, so many good works to foster and uphold for the triumph of the Catholic faith, the strengthening of morality and the salvation of souls.

The disinterestedness of the priest or the religious who feels the apostolic calling, cannot be satisfied with the mere accomplishment of the routine duties demanded by the first or even the second of these phases. The charity of Christ urgeth him; and his life's work must be consecrated to the advancement of God's kingdom. He feels irresistibly drawn towards all who suffer in soul rather than in body. Moved by the appalling conviction that God is so little known by those whom He created to His image, and so little loved by them, he leaves the narrow, cramped-up circle of his own personal interests to give greater scope to his zeal. If he is not at liberty to do anything else he prays incessantly for souls; yet so great is the torrent of iniquity that he chafes under the impossibility of his doing more. This is the disinterestedness of the apostle, and happily there has never been a lack of generosity of this kind in the Catholic Church.

The disinterestedness of the lay Catholic does not usually call for such heroic sacrifice, and yet we have many examples

of such virtue. Two instances come to our mind as we write. Samuel de Champlain, the first colonizer of New France, tells us that the conversion of an infidel is a greater deed than the conquest of a kingdom. Although a layman, his only object in life was not the acquisition of wealth but the spreading of the Catholic Faith. We are told by an historian that *Sieur Chomedey de Maisonneuve*, the founder of Montreal, could, had he so wished, have secured great wealth in traffic, but "he cared no more about money than he did about dirt." The love of evangelical poverty had taken possession of the hearts of those men, to the exclusion of the love of perishable things. Their disinterestedness was the outcome of true Catholic charity and apostolic zeal.

The great obstacle to disinterestedness is self-love. It is against this enemy that we must wage a merciless warfare if we desire to make progress in the virtue so dear to Our Lord. There is an irreconcilable enmity between zeal and charity on the one hand and the love of self on the other; the triumph of the one necessitates the immo-

lation of the other. "Charity," says St. Augustine, "is the love of God even unto the hatred of self. Self-love, on the contrary, is the love of self even to the hatred of God." It is easy to understand how self-love can vitiate all projects in which disinterestedness should play its part. Self-love is a principle of action. Man, like other created beings, naturally seeks his own interests. This is in the very nature of things; for without self-love the instinct of self-preservation would find little scope. The claims of others cannot go so far as to ask a man to injure himself through disinterestedness; but there is a limit even to that well ordained charity which is called self-preservation. We are reasonable beings who may see around us sights that should move us to effort, even though it would mean some little sacrifice to ourselves. God has promised us a hundred-fold for the cup of cold water given in His name; and yet water is plentiful and may be had for the asking. What will be our reward when, for the same noble motive, namely, the love of God, we give to our neighbor things rarer

and more precious than water? Our time, our toil, our alms, our prayer, our zeal, our charity, have all their worth in the sight of Heaven. If they are disinterestedly bestowed on those less fortunate than ourselves, the Sacred Heart of Our Lord the source of all true riches, will not be outdone in generosity when the great day of reckoning comes.

XXXV

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

There is nothing sweeter than to have regard to the commandments of God.—ECCLES. XXIII. 37.

Let us all hear together the conclusion of the discourse. Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is all man.—ECCLES. XII. 13.

Follow the Lord your God, and fear Him, and keep His commandments: Him you shall serve, and to Him you shall cleave.—DEUT. X. 4.

He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them: he it is that loveth Me.—JOHN XIV. 21.

AN act of Almighty God drew us out of nothingness and gave us not merely our being, but the rational life as well which we now enjoy. An act of the same Almighty preserves us in life; His powerful arm is always at our service, whether to shield us from harm or to do us some positive good. As a result of this relationship, we are the puny servants of God, dependent on Him for everything and bound to obey His orders. Once His wishes are made known to us, it is for us to carry them out.

The Natural Law, imbedded in the soul

of every rational creature, which shows us instinctively the difference between good and evil, and the obligations flowing therefrom, was in the early ages of our race sufficient to tell us what was God's will. This is the only norm that hundreds of millions of pagans have, even at the present time, to direct them in the way to salvation. If they are faithful to this law of right and wrong, which, after all is the expression of the eternal will of God, they too shall have a share in His infinite bounties.

But this implanting of the Natural Law in the heart of man was not enough for a loving God. To meet the needs of our fallen nature, and to give us a more specific direction in the tortuous, upward path, He vouchsafed to write with His own hand on tablets of stone, ten great laws, or Commandments; He then delivered them to Moses, "amid thunder and lightning and fire," on Mount Sinai, and ordered him to promulgate them among His chosen people. They received their final ratification in the solemn lessons taught by the Saviour, fifteen centuries later, when the reign of fear was supplanted by the reign of love.

These ten laws control our duties, first to the great Law-giver Himself, then to our fellow-men. Regarding God, they insist on our worship of Him and of Him alone, on reverence for His holy name; they concern all matters pertaining to His honor and glory. The knowledge we have of God is circumscribed by our observance of the Commandments. "By this we know," says St. John, "that we have known Him if we keep His Commandments. He that saith that he knoweth Him, and keepeth not His Commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Even our love for God is measured by our assiduity in observing those ten great laws. "If you love Me," says Christ, "keep My Commandments. He that hath My Commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me."

Regarding our neighbor, the Commandments control our thoughts, words and deeds, not merely towards men who hold God's place in authority, but also towards our equals and inferiors. As a result, our neighbor's honor and happiness must be sacred to us; his life and property inviolate. To

sum up, love and reverence must be uppermost in all our dealings with God; justice and charity, in our dealings with one another. What sublime obligations are here outlined, and what respect we should have for the laws from which they spring!

Unlike human laws, which are framed to meet special conditions, the Ten Commandments bind all men without exception, at least in their substance. They are severe and explicit in their statement of truth and order, and stand for moral rectitude in the same way as the Creed stands for faith. The Creed tells us what we should believe; the Decalogue tells us how we should act; and "whoever shall offend in one point," says St. James, "is become guilty of all."

If we analyze further, we shall see that the duties imposed by the Commandments are a necessary consequence of our relations with God our Creator. Having made us rational beings, and having assigned to us the end which we must try to attain, God owed it to His justice as well as to His charity, to give us specific directions by which we should be able freely and reason-

ably to reach that end. The Commandments themselves are merely the development of the obligations of the Natural Law, namely, to avoid evil and do good, and to do unto others what we should have others do unto us—sublime teaching without which there could be neither order nor harmony in this universe. The truths which God reveals to us free our minds from ignorance, because they teach us all we need to know about Him and His attributes. This knowledge is precious since it tends to augment our love for God, and gives us motives for serving Him. His revealed Commandments are a further proof of His goodness, because they teach us explicitly what our duties are. It is a great boon conferred on weak, fallible men, panting on their way to eternity and torn by conflicting passions, the result fallen nature, to be told authoritatively what they should do and what they should not do. The Ten Commandments specify our duties and obligations, both positive and negative.

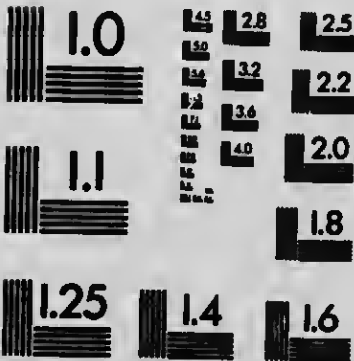
God is certainly practical in His dealings with us. He makes the work of salvation easy for us; He acts like the land-owner

who puts up sign-posts along the highways and byways to tell strangers what obstacles to avoid, what hills to go around, what short cuts to take, in order to get more quickly to their goal. But how should we appreciate the foresight and the kindness of a land-owner who, not satisfied with pointing out the shortest way, would push his kindness so far as to take us in and give us food and drink to strengthen us for the rest of the journey? And yet God does this, too. The way of the Commandments is rough and difficult; obstacles from within and without present themselves to our weak wills at every turn, and would probably overcome us were we left to our own devices. But the kind Heart of God sees us in our plight, and He comes to our aid. Just as the land-owner gives food to refresh the traveller, so does God strengthen our soul with His graces; and thus the journey towards Heaven becomes relatively easy and pleasurable.

Undoubtedly, the Commandments are difficult for weak human nature, but St. Paul tells us that God will not suffer us to



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be tempted above our strength. When the obligations are hard, harder even than nature can cope with, grace is always forthcoming to help us through. This is the consoling phase of any struggle we may have in the spiritual life; we should know, once for all, that we have God with us. And just as helm and sails are both required to insure the straight course of a vessel on the limitless ocean, in like manner God's grace supplements our human efforts to keep His laws. The two combined will bring us safely into the heavenly port.

Again, because the Commandments are obligatory for all men, it follows that the observance of them is possible. The great Law-giver never binds us to impossible laws. He who wills the salvation of all men, and holds them responsible for their salvation, could not reasonably impose obligations which are beyond their strength. God's wisdom, goodness, and justice even, would rebel against such a doctrine, and those who assert that the Commandments are laws too hard to be kept, show that they know not whereof we speak. When we are tempted

to despair from the experience of our own weakness, let us raise our eyes to Heaven, and behold seated in glory the millions who once travelled over the same road which we are now on. They, too, had to observe the Commandments in their entirety, and yet they succeeded, and they are now wearing the laurel crowns of victory. Let us ask those apostles who carried God's name to the farthest ends of the earth, those martyrs who shed their blood, those confessors and virgins who spent their lives in His exclusive service—let us ask them what was the secret of their triumph; they will tell us it was God's grace that supplemented the efforts they made to keep the Commandments. Let us ask those millions in every station of life who are still on the way, working in season and out of season to save their souls, and they will tell us if not in words, at least by their eloquent example, that they are relying on the observance of the Commandments for their final triumph, and that they know God's grace will be always with them. They will tell us that no Commandment of God is impossible ex-

cept to those who trust in their own strength; that His burden is heavy only to those who never look up to Heaven for help. All who humbly crave His assistance will receive help and courage from His bountiful hand. It was the observance of the Ten Commandments that the Saviour had in mind when He uttered those memorable words: "The kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence and the violent bear it away." How consoling to know that Heaven shall be the reward of the efforts we make to keep the Commandments. In a very few years these efforts of ours will have ceased; in a few months perhaps the sands of life will have run their course. It matters not how long the intervening time may be, we shall some day, one and all, stand before the great judgment seat. How consoling it will be to hear again the words that once fell from the lips of Christ: "Well done, good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will place thee over many things. Enter thou into the joy of the Lord."

XXXVI

SOULS IN MORTAL SIN

He that shall sin against Me shall hurt his own soul.—PROVERBS VIII, 36.

He that sinneth against his own soul shall be despised.—ECCLUS, XIX, 4.

A SAD spectacle would present itself to our gaze, if it were given to us to take in at a glance the souls of men who are living in the state of mortal sin. We should see millions of them in all stages of spiritual degradation, the willing victims of their triple enemy, the world, the flesh and the devil. Hideous, indeed, would the spectacle be; and yet it is the one that is continually before the all-seeing gaze of the Most High. The great and good God has ever present before Him the iniquities of men; and repulsive in the extreme must be the sight of those souls weighted down with the burden of their sins. In order to diminish the sorrow of God for this spectacle, and in our feeble way to appease His just anger, we

should have pity on souls in mortal sin, and pray for them. It is consoling to know that we can give God some honor if by our prayers and good works we contribute our share of help to reduce the amount of sin in the world, and to atone in our own way for the outrages which are daily committed against Him.

What a dreadful thing it is that there are countless souls, formed to the image of God, wallowing in the mire of sin; millions living on through the short years of this life without merit for their works, without a thought of the terrible fate that awaits them should they die in their sins. It may be that the seriousness of their condition does not fully appeal to them, for the habit of sin deadens the conscience; and the sentiment of dread, once vivid in them, has become blunted from seeing, hearing and feeling sin on every side of them. A traveller lost in the forest, where the size of the trees and their number cut off the horizon, stumbles on aimlessly towards a point he knows not. In like manner the limited vision of the sinner deceives him in the

understanding of this great evil of sinfulness; and while as a rule he is conscious of it in some way, he becomes so accustomed to sin that the intensity and extent of its hideousness fail to impress him. And yet this want of discernment does not change the objective character of the evil, nor will it avert the consequences of it. The moment sanctifying grace disappears from a soul, it is deserted by God and left to its own devices; Satan takes possession of the citadel; he becomes the master thereof, and opens the door wide to every excess.

Needless to say, when a soul reaches this condition, it outrages the majesty of God, and disturbs the harmony which should exist between the creature and the Creator. Man was made to glorify God by loving, revering and serving Him. When he sins, he refuses Him this homage and gives it to some one else. Instead of recognizing God as the only Sovereign Good, he affirms by his sins his preference for creatures, thus showing, in a striking manner, that creatures are worth more in his esteem, and consequently more worthy of his love. This

is an outrage offered by a creature to the infinite majesty of God.

But there is a further evil in connection with sin which should excite our fear, namely the destruction of sanctifying grace in the soul. This grace may be called a radiation of the Divine glory which imparts to the soul a resemblance to God. Mortal sin destroys this radiation, turns the brilliancy of the Divine image into darkness and leaves the blinded soul a prey to passion. Nay more, sin opposes hatred to God's love, ignorance to His wisdom, pride to His meekness, and thus establishes a deformity which radically affects the soul's relations with God. This destruction of sanctifying grace in the soul is a calamity the extent of which we shall never in this world be able to measure. The beauty of the human soul consists precisely in this, that it participates in some measure in God's perfections, or as the Apostle Saint Peter asserts, it partakes of the Divine nature. A soul created to the image of God is worthy of its Prototype as far as a creature can be worthy of its Creator. But when mortal sin

once enters into this hallowed sanctuary, a sudden transformation takes place, not a mere deprivation of life or beauty, but the going out of God Himself, the Sum of all goodness, the Author of all life and beauty. Sin puts an end to the participation of the Divine nature, and the heir to the kingdom of Heaven becomes a castaway.

Sin is the supreme evil and is terrible in its influences both in this world and in the eternity which is to come. What is appalling is that it is a transitory act, and may be committed in the twinkling of an eye. An evil deed, or word, or thought, is all that is required; the dire event happens, and the results of sin begin. Like a deadly venom, it permeates the innermost circles of the soul; and unless the antidote is applied, it continues its work of weakening until the final collapse comes. This effect on the soul constitutes one of the most dreadful elements of sin; passion takes forcible possession, and souls made to glorify God, violate His Commandments with impunity, despise His authority, ignore His threats and belittle the magnificence of His

rewards. Further, if we consider mortal sin in its relation to Our Lord and Redeemer, we cannot fail to see that it crucifies Him again and again, for it renews the cause which would oblige Him to suffer a second time had not one sufficed.

The first duty, then, of a Catholic who values his soul, is to recognize the danger that he lives in of falling into mortal sin; or, if he is already in that dreadful state, the danger of remaining in it. The uncertainties of life are so appalling, and so utterly powerless are we in the face of eternity, that prudence teaches us we should keep ourselves as far away as possible from sin and its occasions. A man at the bottom of an abyss will use every means to get out of it. If he stands on the brink, he will quickly change his position, in order to avoid the dizziness that courts a fall. This is what we should do, if we desire to keep our souls safe. If we are so unhappy as to be in mortal sin, we should make every effort to rise out of it. If we are weak and prone to fall, our duty is to avoid the occasions of sin. If we are strong in

virtue, we should not for that reason glory in our strength; for many a time stronger than we have fallen.

But to recognize the danger and to avoid it is not enough. The second duty of a sinner is that of repentance. We are not justified the moment we cease to sin, or when we resolve to sin no more. Sorrow and atonement are required for the evil deeds of the past. Even though we sin no more, the results of past sin affect the soul, and keep on affecting it until a formal act of repentance and love of God recalls the assent. If repentance is withheld, even though we sin not, the will continues to adhere to sin, and one who courts the danger will sooner or later perish. Confession of sin, absolution, satisfaction, and the resolution to amend, are elements that assure us in our future course. Prayer, fasting, alms-deeds, acts of self denial, and other acts of virtue also strengthen us and prevent us from falling again.

If therefore we desire to preserve unsullied within us the image of God, let us accustom ourselves to the practice of these

virtues. One of the great preservatives from sin is devotion to the Sacred Heart. If we really desire to keep in God's favor, we can do no better thing than to cultivate a love for this Divine Heart. Let us ask the source of light and grace to revive in us sentiments of love for God and hatred of sin, so that when the awful moment comes when we shall have to render an account of every thought, word, deed and omission of our whole lives, we may approach the great tribunal with humble confidence. It is not the will of God to punish sinners, but rather that they should be converted and live in His grace in this world, in order to enjoy His presence in the next.

XXXVII

LUKEWARMNESS

*A perverse heart is abominable to the Lord;
and His will is in them that walk sincerely.—
PROVERBS XI, 20.*

*In many things we all offend. If any man
offend not in word, the same is a perfect man.—
JAMES III, 2.*

LUKEWARMNESS is a want of fervor in the service of God, a distaste for religious life and practices. While it is not an actual sin, it implies a neglect of Divine grace and an implicit contempt of the things of God, which are the forerunners of greater spiritual evils. Among the many signs that distinguish lukewarm souls may be mentioned affection for venial sin, deliberate omission of the means to avoid it, habitual absence of zeal, lack of generosity in doing good works, imperfection in performing religious duties, indifference to spiritual things, want of solid virtue—all these are ear-marks whereby we may recognize tepid souls.

Spiritual writers tell us that lukewarm-

ness is a really dangerous malady, and one very difficult to cure, because it is insidious, and because those afflicted by it are the last to be convinced of the danger of their state. To demonstrate this, it will not be necessary to develop specifically the symptoms mentioned above. Let it suffice to take one phase of lukewarmness, apparently the most harmless, to show how dangerous it is, and at the same time how practical may be the treatment of it; for instance, the affection of lukewarm souls for venial sin and its occasions, and the risks they incur by running into them.

Venial sin does not entail complete separation from God, as in the case of mortal sin, but it is a wound inflicted on the Heart of the One who is our best friend. In human society, true friendship tries to avoid the minor slights that would disturb our pleasurable relations with those around us, or tend to diminish our love and respect for them. These slights may be looked at from various points of view, and society has its own way of dealing with them. But what might be passed over in human so-

ciety, as not worth our attention, is of great concern when God and our own spiritual welfare are interested. We may do without the friendship of men, but we cannot forego the good will and friendship of God.

Leaving aside the question of gratitude to Him to whom we owe everything both in the realms of nature and of grace, it is unjust to our own souls to lessen our merit for eternity, or to incur the risk of falling into God's disfavor. Ordinary prudence will keep a child from going too close to the bank of a dangerous stream, for, in an unguarded moment, he might fall in and lose his life by drowning. In the same way, a child of God should keep far away from all that could offend his Father. Now lukewarm souls do not take this precaution; they live in a dangerous state of apathy. Although they may be fully aware of the importance of salvation, of the nature of sin and its consequences, they give these ever-present truths little or no consideration; in a word, they neither fear nor hate the danger. Like the moth that flutters around the candle-flame, they keep just far

enough away to prevent serious injury to themselves. But they have no pledge of immunity; and through not avoiding the occasions of venial sin, a catastrophe is almost sure to come. Those who love the danger will sooner or later perish in it.

A classic example of the result of courting the occasions of sin is given us in the fall of Saint Peter, Prince of the Apostles. This great friend of Jesus enjoyed many spiritual privileges. Extraordinary graces were granted him at the hands of the Saviour. He lived three years with Him; he witnessed most of His miracles; he was permitted to get a glimpse of the brilliancy of the Godhead in the Transfiguration on Mount Thabor; he was chosen to be the corner-stone of the Christian Church and to be the first in its line of Pontiffs. And yet he presumed too much on his own spiritual strength. Apparently, he did not avoid lesser evils so that he might escape the greater ones. The result was that, when a supreme test of fidelity presented itself, he apostatized; he deliberately denied his Master. Ascetic writers are emphatic in telling

us that this fearful downfall was not of sudden coming. No one falls so quickly from the pinnacle of virtue; there are always causes leading on to it. In Saint Peter these causes have been clearly diagnosed. The Prince of the Apostles trusted too much in his own strength and not enough in God's grace. In the Garden of Gethsemane, when he should have been watching and praying with his Master, he allowed himself to be overcome by sloth. It was curiosity that got the better of him when he followed the Jewish populace to the house of the high-priest; for, fearing trouble for himself, he watched his Saviour from a distance, when he should have been at His side. His proneness to sensualism was evident when he went to the fire in the courtyard to warm himself, at the very moment his Master was suffering physical tortures. What wonder, then, that he showed craven fear when the voice of a servant, asking him a simple question, made him fall into the dreadful sin of apostasy! The plain recital of the fact of the Gospel reveals to us that Peter was prone to sloth, sensuality

and cowardice, all of which prove that he had not yet learned the necessity of avoiding sin and its occasions.

This example has always been cited as the result of a Christian's over-confidence in self, and of want of zeal and generosity in the service of the Divine Master. But the great Apostle soon shook off this torpid state. One glance of the Saviour, while passing through the courtyard of the high-priest, was all that was needed to pierce his soul. Sorrow and remorse took possession of him, and he amply atoned during the rest of his life for his momentary weakness. St. Clement tells us that tears furrowed his cheeks in after years, so abundantly were they shed. In the end, by the sacrifice of his life, he generously made amends for his former affection for venial sin and his consequent apostasy.

It is for us to profit by the example of the penitent Apostle. Lukewarmness and frequenting sinful occasions are evils that easily lead down to spiritual death. The reason is evident. Tepid souls are beset by greater temptations, and being less stre-

nuous in resisting, owing to their habitually loose methods of thinking and acting, they more readily fall into grievous sin. To this weakening of the hold which God should have on His own, and to the neglect of His grace, other misfortunes necessarily follow. Worldliness tends to wax strong in lukewarm souls, for in proportion as the spiritual life and the love of heavenly things diminish, riches and honors and pleasures assume a new value in their esteem. "They that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable desires which drown men into destruction and perdition."

Perhaps the worst aspect of lukewarmness is that, in this state, God's graces are deliberately neglected. Good works, prayer, and other religious duties have no longer their accustomed sweetness and efficacy; and unless active and vigorous measures are taken to shake them off, the spiritual energy that should strengthen souls and guide them safely through the temptations of this life, is necessarily supplanted by weaknesses that

¹ I Tim. vi. 9.

are fatal. Taking active and aggressive measures is not an easy task, for lukewarmness is a disease that is difficult to heal; it is an enemy hard to overcome. A tepid soul is loath to acknowledge the presence of any evil within. It will not trust the spiritual physician nor follow his prescriptions; it shows no regret for the losses it has suffered in the past; it has no aspirations for the future; the ease and the petty pleasures of the present are sufficient. Indifference to religious practices and sanctions inevitably drifts into indifference to religious truth itself. This spiritual supineness makes the state of lukewarm souls very dangerous, for to venial sin, committed without fear or sorrow, will sooner or later succeed sin that completely crushes out sanctifying grace. When this stage is reached, unless strong antidotes are applied, the pain of eternal loss will surely follow.

No one will dare deny that lukewarmness is an evil among many Catholics of the present day. If this be not so, how can we explain the state of the Church and the inertia of her children in so many

countries? If the members of the Catholic Church were as active and full of fervor as they should be, the Church would not have to undergo the persecutions she is suffering at the present time, nor would she witness the leakages that are weakening her influence in certain countries.

What is the remedy for lukewarmness? Our Lord Himself has told us. Speaking one day to His faithful spouse, Blessed Margaret Mary, He promised her that "tepid souls who would love His Sacred Heart should grow fervent," and that "fervent souls should quickly mount to high perfection." If we try to love the Divine Heart as It desires to be loved, we are taking all necessary precautions against lukewarmness. And with this easy means at hand it would be unpardonable in us if we did not show by our words, and by the example of our lives, that we have become the sworn enemies of this dangerous spiritual state.

In order to work efficaciously, we should give some time to study the evil both in its cause and its effects. We should then be in a position to face the foe fearlessly.

An easy and practical way would be to accustom ourselves to ask immediate pardon of God when we fall into venial sin, to go to confession often, and thus keep our souls in His grace. In this way, the strong friendship that should exist between God and our souls will never be weakened. Friendship begets love, and when the love of God takes possession of the soul, lukewarmness can gain no footing. After having attended to our own souls, we shall be able to labor with greater zeal and efficacy for the spiritual welfare of others. Naturally, a return to fervor will bring with it an increase of zeal. The fruit we shall receive from the graces which emanate from the Divine Heart will be to urge others to shake off dangerous lukewarmness, and join with us in trying to make up for the time that has been lost.

XXXVIII

ATONEMENT FOR SIN

My eyes have sent forth springs of water, because they have not kept Thy law.—PSALM CXVIII, 136.

But the soul that is sorrowful for the greatness of the evil she hath done, and goeth bowed down, and feeble, and the eyes that fail, and the hungry soul, giveth glory and justice to Thee the Lord.—BAR. II, 18.

Cleanse your hands, ye sinners: and purify your hearts, ye double-minded. Be afflicted and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into sorrow. Be humbled in the sight of the Lord, and He will exalt you.—JAMES IV, 8, 9, 10.

WHEN the note of discord sounded in Eden for the first time, reparation became a live issue in the moral world. The work of atonement for sin began the moment our First Parents passed out through the gates of their earthly paradise; it continued in varying intensity down through the ages of the Law and the Prophets, appeasing the anger of God by sacrifices and other propitiatory offerings. But so deplorable was the effect of Original Sin on the

descendants of Adam, and so tremendous was the debt the human race owed to God's justice, that the sacrifices of the Mosaic dispensation could not suffice; something greater was required. After four thousand years of waiting, the great Victim of atonement, who had been promised from the beginning, came at last, and the hopes of the nations revived. It was reserved for Jesus Christ, the spotless Lamb and the atoning Sacrifice, to make complete reparation for the sins of men.

To grasp the full import of the mystery of the Incarnation, merely in its relation to atonement for sin, we should have to form an adequate concept of the greatness of God Himself as well as of the unutterable malice of sin. This no mortal mind can presume to do; the sublimity of God's essence and the depth of His wisdom, His hatred of sin and the measure of His justice, are inaccessible to our finite intelligence. Let it suffice to know that the Incarnation was necessary in view of the indispensable atonement. Christ had to leave the bosom of His eternal Father and hum-

bly become man in the womb of a virgin to be a Victim of expiation.

How He must have loved us to have taken on Himself all our sorrows, to have come down to us in the midst of our misery! As a Child, frail and subject to pain, and yet conscious because He was God, He wept and suffered for us; as a Youth, He experienced the sorrows of exile for us, the pinching of hunger, privation and toil; as a Man, He experienced the anguish of abandonment, the horrors of the cross, and, above all, the thanklessness of those whom He came to redeem. But He came to suffer as a Victim of reparation, and as such He lived and died. When the great sacrifice was consummated on Calvary the work of redemption was complete.

But while the Precious Blood strengthens us, it does not confirm us in grace, nor does it deprive us of our free will. We are still prone to fall. Sin has not ceased to ravage human souls; it continues to flaunt itself brazenly in the face of God; and we must, by our prayers, good works and sufferings, continue with Christ the work of atone-

ment by doing what we can to apply the merits of the redemption to our own souls and to the souls of others, "to fill up," as St. Paul says, "those things that are wanting to the sufferings of Christ in our flesh."

We should go about the work systematically. One of the sad aspects of our relations with God is the little trouble we take to enter into the motives of His Passion and Death. As a result, any reparation we make is only half-hearted and meaningless; it never comes home to us as it should that we have a quasi-mediatorial office to fill or that we can do something in the way of atoning for our own sins and the sins of others.

Alas for the ingratitude and hard-heartedness of men! Insults and injuries are hurled at our Best Friend not merely by those who have renounced allegiance to Him or who profess to hate Him, but by those very souls on whom He has showered down the treasures of His grace! It is this treatment that He receives from His own that causes inexpressible sorrow to the Heart of Our Lord, as He has more than once made

known to us. How bitterly He complains, in His many apparitions to Blessed Margaret Mary, of the ingratitude of those who are near and dear to Him. "Behold the Heart which has loved men so much that It has spared nothing, even to exhausting and consuming Itself, in order to testify Its love; and in return I receive from the greater part nothing but ingratitude by reason of the contempt, irreverence, sacrilege, and coldness, which they show Me in the Sacrament of My love."

Atonement for sin in some form or other appeals strongly to all fervent souls, and Christ expects it from them. After all, He was not obliged to do all He did for us. He might have left us to shift for ourselves after we had for the first time misused our free will and betrayed Him. But the clemency of His Heart made Him sympathize with us and made Him offer Himself as a victim of love for our sake. Were we to give Him our hearts as He wishes us to give them, and were we to spend our lives in reparation for sin, we should be only filling a measure of justice in paying back a debt we already fully owe.

But there is a nobler motive than justice to animate any work of reparation that we may undertake. Our Lord desires us to imitate Him and to let our acts of atonement find their source in His love, for it is love that is the mainspring of His relations with us. One day He addressed Margaret Mary regarding the outrages which men were pouring out 'on Him, and while exhorting her to make reparation, He said, "If men made Me some return for My love, I should think but little of all that I have done for them. Do thou at least give Me this consolation by supplying for their ingratitude as far as thou art able." He commanded her to receive Him in Holy Communion as often as possible, especially on the first Friday of every month, no matter what mortification or inconvenience it might cause her. He commanded her to urge the establishment of a feast in honor of His Sacred Heart, which was to be a day of atonement for sin. He commanded her also to share in His sadness at Gethsemane by watching from eleven o'clock till midnight between Thursday and Friday of each week.

She was to do this in order to appease the Divine anger and to beg mercy for sinners.

The objection has more than once been put forward that Christ by His Passion and Death atoned sufficiently for our sins. Did He not pay all our debts? What further atonement is needed? True, Christ more than satisfied for our sins, because the value of His merits is infinite. But are we aware that, in order that His merits may be applied to our souls, Christ desired that we should couple our expiation with His? This was the condition of the Redemption, and this is what St. Paul meant in his First Epistle to the Colossians, when he mentions his own sufferings that "fill up those things that are wanting to the sufferings of Christ." Not that Christ counts much on any sufferings so insignificant and so unworthy as those that we could offer Him, but He deigns to make them meritorious by associating them with His own. What we do is of little avail when taken by itself, but it acquires some value when it is coupled with what Jesus Christ has done. One immense advantage we gain in this

work of reparation is that by it we not only pay our debts to God, but we also apply medicine to our souls. "There are two things in sin," says St. Bernard, "the fault and the wound. The mercy of God removes the fault, but penance is required to heal the wound." And St. John Chrysostom adds that it is not enough to have plucked the arrow from the body, the soul must seize every chance of fortifying itself against future falls, and must prepare itself for fresh struggles. The penance we do in reparation for sin adds strength to our souls, for it makes us resemble Christ more and more. "If we suffer with Him we shall be glorified with Him." A great saint said somewhere that there is nothing more incongruous than the sight of a soldier seeking his own ease under a chief crowned with thorns.

The question that we naturally put to ourselves is, How can we do our share in the work of reparation? And yet the very question opens up before us a horizon vast as the world. To understand the nature of sin, the reparation of Christ for it, and our own duty regarding it, we must go to

Gethsemane. It was there that the sins of the world, past, present and future, for which He made Himself responsible, were present to Him in their countless multitudes and their unutterable hideousness, and they crushed Him under their weight. Try to count even the sins of this day. How many mortal sins are committed in the world every hour? How many in a month; in a year; in a century? How many shall be committed till the end of the world? All these have to be atoned for. Let us count our personal sins and those we make others commit, those that are marked in the Book of Life against us, that cannot be blotted out unless we do our share in expiation of them.

We do not need to be formed apostles, or to be clothed with the dignity of the priesthood, in order to offer our little sacrifices to the Sacred Heart in atonement for our own and others' sins. How many expiatory acts we could perform as laymen and laywomen, if we simply observed faithfully our privileges as Catholics. Think of the prayers and, above all, the Masses of

reparation that we could have offered. We ask for Masses of thanksgiving and for the Holy Souls—excellent intentions in themselves—but how few of us think of asking our pastors to offer Masses of reparation! Then we have the Communions of reparation, in union with the Heart of Jesus, the Holy Hour, the helping of the poor, visiting the sick, giving alms, depriving ourselves of this or that pleasure, and a thousand and one other means at our disposal to fill the end we have in view. Those who love God and who have His interests at heart will not merely find many things to atone for, but will also find the means to do it. Atoning for sin is a consoling ministry for those who take up the work strenuously. Aiding them they have God Himself who is never weary of forgiving, and who, while he draws a veil over the past life of the really penitent, ignores his future infidelities. The present moment is the one to profit by if we desire that the lives of poor sinners shall feel the effects of our mediatorship. We should then be up and doing, to keep our fellow-men in their pro-

gress towards Heaven. Pius IX tells us that "reparation is a work destined to save decrepit society." The rapid strides which such works as the League of the Sacred Heart, the Apostleship of Prayer, and kindred organizations, are making in the world, and the excellent results that are being effected by the spirit of reparation which they inculcate in souls, show that the words of the holy Pontiff were prophetic. Let us, then, by our efforts try to spread this spirit as much as we can, whether our efforts be great or small, and we shall be actively participating in the work of the salvation of souls, the work so dear to the Heart of Our Lord.

XXXIX

OUR HEAVENLY QUEEN

Many daughters have gathered together riches; thou hast surpassed them all.—PROV. XXXI, 29.

Blessed art thou by thy God in every tabernacle of Jacob, for in every nation which shall hear thy name, the God of Israel shall be magnified on occasion of thee.—JUDITH XIII, 31.

IF the title of Catholic which we proudly bear obliges us to believe all that the Church teaches because she is our infallible guide in the truths of salvation, the same title obliges us with equal cogency to practise all that the Church practises, for she is also the infallible guide of our heart and will. One of the most cherished beliefs of the Church is belief in the dignity and the power of the Blessed Mother of God, while recourse to her intercession in temporal and spiritual needs is one of the Church's most cherished practices.

During the long centuries of her existence the Mystic Spouse of Christ has not merely defended dogmatically, one by one,

the privileges of the Blessed Virgin Mary against the assaults of heretics, beginning in the fourth century with the refutation of the impious Nestorius, who dared question her title of Mother of God, down to the definition of her Immaculate Conception in the nineteenth century; but the Church has always urged us as well to love her with a special love and to look up to her as our most devoted protectress in the court of Heaven. Is it presuming too much, therefore, to ask Catholic parents and children to continue this tradition of the centuries, and with renewed earnestness to give their allegiance to the Queen of Heaven?

It is a common opinion among the Doctors of the Church that a tender devotion to Mary is a sign of predestination. Not that this devotion is a formal pledge of salvation, as Scaramelli remarks, but it is a sign which is ordinarily coupled with eternal predestination. St. Boniface assures us that "those who, by a solid devotion to Mary, make themselves acceptable to her, will be recognized by the inhabitants of Heaven." The Holy Ghost Himself seems to

invite us to accept this truth, for commentators generally apply to the Mother of God those words of Scripture which the Church employs in the great solemnities in her honor: "He that shall find me shall find life, and shall have salvation from the Lord;"¹ or as Cornelius à Lapide interprets them: "He that shall find me shall find grace and eternal life." In her turn, the Blessed Virgin Mary may very well say to us: "He that finds me by a tender devotion and a sincere confidence in the power which I possess near my Son, shall find not precious stones, nor perishable wealth, nor contemptible pleasures, but the only true riches which are those of eternity."

The more we try to realize the rare privileges which Mary enjoyed, the more is her dignity and power enhanced in our esteem. Her exemption from original sin in her Immaculate Conception, places her on a higher lever than the other saints; so that a pious writer tells us that "the last stage of the greatest saint's life is far inferior to Mary's first stage in grace; and

¹ Prov. viii. 35.

that she began her ascent where the greatest saint left off." Corresponding influence and power must necessarily be hers in the realms of bliss, for it is but fitting that God should manifest His magnificence and goodness and liberality in a special manner, through this blessed creature who is superior to all the other works of His hands.

The friendship of a powerful intercessor like Mary is no small advantage for us mortals in our struggle towards eternal happiness. A worldling who seeks favors from an earthly prince is well pleased to have friends at court; he knows that their words have a weight which will be all the greater in proportion to their nearness to the throne as well as to the services they may have rendered to the one who occupies it; and he knows, too, that because of these circumstances, their intercession in his behalf will more than likely obtain for him the favors he is asking. Why not reason in a similar way in matters of a supernatural order? Mary lives near the throne of the King of kings in Heaven, and her power with Him must be correspondingly great.

If we care to look for further reasons for believing in her intercessory power, we have only to consider the position she holds in the Divine plan. St. James tells us that the continual prayer of the Just availeth much. Justice makes them the friends of God; hence it renders God more apt to listen to the appeals of the Just for themselves and for others in whom they are interested. Surely, then, the pure creature whom the Archangel saluted as "full of grace," who was chosen to give flesh to the human nature of the Saviour of mankind, who lived with Him during thirty years in the intimate relations of mother and son, who is now seated with Him in glory, whom all generations shall call "Blessed"—surely she must possess great power of intercession for us poor mortals, and must be able to obtain for us whatever favors we may need!

Besides, Mary was the most perfect and most faithful of God's creatures, and consequently the most beloved of them all. How easy for the loved one to move the will of such a Lover! Clearly we have here

an instance of two hearts throbbing as one and possessed of the same desires, that of procuring the Father's external glory. Now that she is in Heaven and sees the Beloved face to face, Mary's desire is intensified; as a result, she is naturally anxious to move God to help by His graces those who seek His glory. How can God be otherwise than anxious to respond? Verily, the Queen of Heaven is a friend at court.

Again, Mary is the mother of Our Lord and Saviour. The mother of a king has exceptional means of getting her royal son to yield to her wishes. The very title of "mother" gives Mary ample facilities to approach the throne whence all favors to us mortals are dispensed. She sits in glory so near her Son that her slightest wish may mean much for us in the order of grace. We read in the life of Saint Brigid that this saint once heard Jesus saying to His mother: "Thou didst deny Me nothing on earth, I can refuse thee nothing in Heaven. Ask for whatever it pleases thee, for thy requests will be always granted." The wish of a mother partakes of the nature of a

command; hence it is impossible that Mary should not be heard. Another saint, Theophilus of Alexandria, did not hesitate to say: "The Son loves to hear His mother petitioning for favors, and He grants her all that she asks in this way, in order to repay her for what she did for Him when she became His mother."

Moreover, seeing that Mary exercised her intercessory power while on earth, is there any valid reason why this power should be curtailed in a sphere where both her dignity and her glory are greater? Saint John Chrysostom, treating of the episode at Cana, and of Mary's request that her Divine Son would turn water into wine as a favor for the wedding-guests, has this to say: "Jesus replied to His mother's suggestion in words that seemed to refuse the favor she was asking: 'My hour is not yet come. Woman, what is it to Me or to thee?' And still in the end He yielded; He did not hesitate to begin a long series of miracles in order to do as she desired."

And who knows that this was the only instance of the success of her intercessory

power? The Scriptures speak rarely of her actions; they are so occupied with the Son that they make little mention of His blessed mother. When they do speak of her it is to record a few of the marvellous privileges granted to her—the visit of the Angel Gabriel, the incidents at Bethlehem and Nazareth, her trials, her sorrows—all of them representing that she was, even on earth, in great favor with God.

Moreover, we have only to open the history of the Church from Calvary to Lourdes, to learn what her power and her action have been in the economy of the spiritual universe. Recall the events, so numerous in the chronicles of Christian nations, which testify to Mary's beneficent intercession both in peace and war. Recall those innumerable shrines throughout Christendom, built in every century to commemorate some fact, fully authenticated, of the goodness of our heavenly mother and her interest in us and in all our physical and spiritual ailments. Read the lives of the saints and see how they bear witness to her powerful intercession before the throne.

To her they give credit for their call to the higher life; to her they attribute the special graces they received which enabled them to rise rapidly in the path of holiness; to her they turned in their afflictions and trials; to her they went for protection in temptations; to her they devoted themselves and their services; to her they consecrated all their years; into her keeping they confided the last moments of their lives—critical moments when the arch-enemy of men doubled his efforts to gain possession of their souls. We may even recall our own experiences, and we shall bring to mind many personal favors, spiritual ones most of them, that were clearly the result of Mary's intercession.

What further need have we of proofs of her influence and power near God? Often in the annals of Heaven was the scene renewed that we read of in the Third Book of Kings.¹ "The mother of the king said to him, 'I desire one small petition of thee; do not put me to confusion.' And the king said to her, 'My mother, ask; for I must

¹ 111 Kings ii, 20.

not turn away thy face.' " Mary is the adopted mother and protectress of the saints; she is also our mother, for the Saviour gave her to us as such on Calvary. He certainly will not turn a deaf ear to her pleading, but will listen to her while she intercedes for us poor sinners still clothed in frail flesh, who struggle so often unavailingly to know how to do what we should do, and to avoid what we should not do.

These considerations should help to augment our confidence in Mary and should urge us to ask her to intercede for us. We need so many things both in the temporal and in the spiritual order, that our recourse to her should be frequent and earnest. In the temporal order the many ills that Mary has put an end to at her shrines throughout Christendom, prove that her intercessory power with God has never waned; even to this day she continues to secure from Him sight for the blind, speech for the dumb, and strength for the weak. It is rather in the spiritual order, however, that the efficacy of her intercession will be felt. The soul has its ailments as well as the body;

its eyes may be blinded by sin so as not to be able to distinguish the only true riches; its ears may be closed to the sweet sounds of God's voice whispering words of reproach for waywardness and sin; its tongue may be tied so that it utters no words of sorrow or remorse. But while the prodigal lives on with his husks and his swine, the gracious mother is kneeling at the foot of the throne interceding for her wayward child. How easy it should be for him to cooperate with the great mediatrix, and fervently say "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray earnestly for me, a poor sinner!"

We now know a few of the reasons that guide the Church in the view she takes of Mary, and why she urges us to have a devotion to her. Mary, in the first place, is the well-beloved of God the Father; a loved child may safely ask for favors that an outsider could not hope to obtain. Secondly, Mary is the mother of the Son of God, and we can understand the readiness of the Son to listen to such a mother. The intimate relationship between the two so closely united could not be restricted to

blood alone; there is here a sympathy in sentiment and a union in activity between mother and Son which should never be overlooked.

No doubt, therefore, of the power of the Mother of God in Heaven, nor of the soundness of the doctrine of the Catholic Church regarding her use of that power. "Virgin most powerful" expresses the Catholic verdict on Mary, and never had three words a truer ring or a more consoling meaning. Our reason teaches us that since Mary has power and influence in Heaven, these attributes have not been given to her that they should remain inactive, but that they should be used for the benefit of others. Considering our weakness and our need of help in so many ways, it is not reasonable to think that Jesus on the cross left Mary to men to be their mother and then ignore her motherly intercession for them in after ages. The prerogative of motherhood, with all this admirable title stands for, did not disappear when she entered into glory, nor did her activity become quiescent; rather did they both become infinitely enhanced and

productive of good for us who are still on earth. A mother is always a mother, and her children do not cease to consider her as such even when she leaves them for a short season of separation beyond the portals of eternity.

In presence of these motives should we not be insincere in our belief and lacking in gratitude, if we failed to give the mother of our Redeemer the place she should occupy in our hearts? And can we be surprised that the Church should ask us to consecrate ourselves to her? This consecration, freely and generously made, will augment the glory of Mary, a glory we Catholics should all be jealous of, when veneration of her is called in question by so many outside the Fold. A great servant of the Blessed Virgin, Grignon de Montfort, asserts that Mary hid herself from the world and obtained from God the grace to remain hidden, even in the Gospels. We Catholics can do a great deal to make her better known here on earth by showing confidence in her power, by consecrating ourselves to her as loyal subjects, and by seeking her inter-

cession. "Through her," says Blessed de Montfort, "the Redeemer entered the world for the first time; through her He will come again, but not in the same manner." Through her, we may add, the Redeemer will give us many graces which will smooth our pathway in life and help us to store up merits for eternity.

XL

BOOKS AND READING

Study wisdom, my son, and make my heart joyful, that thou mayst give an answer to him that reproacheth.—PROV. XXVII. 11.

Be not ashamed to inform the unwise and foolish, and the aged, that are judged by young men: and thou shalt be well instructed in all things, and well approved in the sight of all men living.—ECCLES. XLII. 8.

THERE are people who would have us believe that there is no such thing as a good or a bad book; that a book is, after all, an indifferent thing; that the reading thereof is an action in itself neither good nor bad; that the morality of the act of reading depends on the reader's temperament. Their theory is that we should be allowed to read all kinds of books, and to decide for ourselves what is good and what is bad, what is useful and what is not. The harm or profit derived therefrom—if any—would then be a subjective something which depended on the moral weakness or strength of the reader.

This theory, however plausible, is about as workable as the one that would permit a blind man to taste of everything indiscriminately, in order to decide for himself what is poisonous and what is not. There is a striking analogy between the food of the soul and that of the body. No parent in his sound senses will allow his child to run at random in a drug-store before he had labelled or safely stored away the poisonous drugs. He knows that there are salts and liquids which, if absorbed, would quickly kill the body, or at least debilitate it even to the point of death.

So it is with literature. There is prose that, if assimilated, would ruin the soul. Reading is to the soul what food is to the body; or as Addison puts it, "Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body. As by one, health is preserved and strengthened, by the other, virtue—which is the health of the mind—is kept alive, cherished and confirmed." Sound reading instructs and fortifies the mind and heart against the surprises of nature and the arch-enemy; while the reading of bad books or news-

papers is an action that is dangerous to both faith and morals; and to persist in giving the soul such food is to expose it to the danger of perishing.

There is a maxim current among a certain class which, if reduced to words, would read: "If you see it in print it must be so." The printed page represents to their minds so much preliminary study and conviction in the author thereof, that the conclusions contained therein are stamped with the note of finality. But this maxim is false both in conception and utterance, and readers who can discriminate know how dangerous and misleading it is.

The fact that an assertion has been put in type and printed does not change its objective truth or falseness. If a printed page is true in what it asserts, the truth in it remains unchanged no matter who reads it or what meaning he would wish to give it; if what is printed is untrue, it remain untrue forever, with the added risk of sowing the seeds of error in the minds of thousands of readers. While we marvel at the possibilities of the printed page for

the spread of truth, we may also marvel at its possibilities for the spread of error; and we should stand aghast at the responsibilities assumed by those who use this means to spread false doctrines.

Identical reasoning holds good in the domain of the will. If the literature which is assimilated is true and edifying, the work of edification goes on as long as the printed page lasts; if it is immoral and debasing, it becomes a soul destroyer; and it may be that we shall have the opportunity offered us some day of counting the number of souls lost through its influence along the highways of life.

The fascination which the printed page has over men, and the facilities it offers for the propagation of error, have been the reasons why the Church has ever exercised vigilance over the reading of her children. As she is the fountain-head of truth and the fostering mother of virtue, she fully realizes the extent of her responsibility in this respect. Her pastors throughout the world keep an unceasing watch over the books and current literature that flow from

the press, and while they commend all that is true and good, they mercilessly condemn all that might injure the souls of those committed to their care. While it is their privilege to encourage the reading of works that are conducive to the spread of truth and morality, it is also their duty to prevent as much as they can the spread of works that tend to undermine true doctrines or corrupt the heart.

Never in the history of the race were the minds of men so active as they are today. The itching that writers have to see their prose in print, urges them to inflict on a suffering world the result of their labors. We need only spend a few hours in any public library to see for ourselves the fearful mass of half-digested learning that is flung to the public yearly as intellectual food. Amid thousands of volumes of real merit, there are thousands of others reeking with erroneous or immoral doctrines—silent malefactors, in their gaudy covers, standing side by side on the shelves awaiting readers to devour their contents.

It might matter little if readers were

able to distinguish truth from falsehood, the good from the bad. There might then be less danger of perversion, for they could cast aside the evil and retain the good. But how few of our people, with their limited education, are able to distinguish the wheat from the chaff; and sadder still, how few there are who take the trouble to discriminate, when the food is served up in an attractive style, or when the name of a well-known author is on the title page!

A time comes in the lives of many when the habit of reading develops into a passion. One of our recent writers has asserted that it is a kind of folly that may take possession of a people, and is as dangerous as the alcoholic habit. We find evidence of this in young readers. Their abnormal desire to know the *denouement* of some silly work of fiction urges them often to do without sleep or food. Now this is not natural. Their curiosity has become a passion, even though they know that they will ruin their health if they follow out the object. We find this passion again in older people, for instance, in their longing for

their morning paper. If the newsboy is a few minutes late, the master of the household struts through the hall and breakfast-room abusing everybody. And why? Because with his rolls and coffee he has been deprived of his daily meal of railway accidents, divorce proceedings, neighbors' squabbles, and the thousand other things that are served up in the columns of his favorite morning visitor. He is perfectly conscious all the while that these details should have no interest for him, that his mind shall in no way profit by the perusal of them, that in fact he will lose an hour of precious time over them; still his hunger to know the doings of the previous day has not been satisfied, and the little newsboy has to feel the bitterness of his resentment.

Leaving aside its other disadvantages, the reading passion produces two baneful effects: it makes us lose our time and it dissipates our mind. Time is money in this age of strenuous endeavor. Time is of greater worth than all riches, for in it we purchase our eternity. If we had centuries to live we could afford possibly to lose a few years

in useless employments, but our days are counted; and if we do not profit by every moment of the present life the loss is ours for eternity. How then can we resign ourselves to the spending of so much time every day in the perusal of useless newspapers and perhaps harmful books? As rational beings we should try to measure our responsibilities.

Again the habit of desultory and unsystematic reading produces dissipation of mind. The man who spends the best hour of the day filling his brain with phantasms of the news of the world, becomes in time unable to concentrate his thoughts. The thousand and one details absorbed in the daily press lessen his powers of application, and matters which are perhaps for him of vital importance are allowed to pass without their meed of attention. "The solitary side of our nature," says Froude, "demands a leisure for reflection upon the subjects which the dash and whirl of daily business forbid to fasten itself." The business man, as well as the professional and the student, may secure this leisure by temperance in

reading; but perhaps this truth will dawn on them only after they have learned through sad experience that the power of concentration is one of the great levers of success in every walk of life.

For those of our readers who are devoted to piety, a few counsels may not be out of place. Spiritual books are powerful agents in the realm of the soul. St. Athanasius tells us that no one is truly intent upon God's service who is not also given to spiritual reading. We cannot always hear an instruction, but we can always read a good book. The substance of a sermon may pass away from our minds and be forgotten, but a book is always at our hand to refresh out memory. Good books are no respecters of persons, and they are always excellent company. Through them we live in the companionship of the highest and noblest—even of the saints.

There are various methods given by writers to teach us how to profit by our reading. Read slowly, they tell us, not hurriedly, as if for pleasure, but dwelling on the passages which instruct or edify, or to

which we can give a personal application. It is not well to read too much at a time. Reading with moderation enables us to remember more easily what we read, and to apply the lessons more efficaciously.

In this age, with its libraries and its oceans of unsound literature, we Catholics have obligations imposed upon us. We should be sufficiently enlightened in our faith to be able to explain away the errors of modern faddists. We should be able to account for the philosophical, moral, social theories which form the rule of our own daily actions. To refuse to read or to neglect enlightenment would be to condemn ourselves to live in an ignorance often more dangerous than ill-digested science. We must know our duties as men and Catholics — a knowledge not so easy to acquire nowadays, owing to a multitude of conflicting theories and practices — and we must learn how to answer difficulties that are put to us. We must, besides, know how to give to the faint and discouraged soul the word that cheers and consoles. The facilities for doing all this may be found in a judicious use of the printed page.

Two practical resolutions are suggested; first, to hold in horror all reading that is dangerous to mind and heart; secondly, to cultivate the society of good and useful books which shall, according to our degree of education, teach us to see more clearly and walk more surely.

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XLI

ZEAL FOR SOULS

My brethren, of any of you err from the truth and one convert him: he must know that he who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins.—JAMES V, 19, 20.

To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men, that I might save all,—I COR. IX. 22.

JUST before Christ our Lord quitted this earth, to return to the bosom of His Father, He gave the Apostles their commission to preach His Gospel to all nations. He commanded them to teach other men what He Himself had taught them, viz., their duties to God, to their neighbor and themselves; He urged them to warn men that all does not end with this life, and that salvation was the one thing necessary. The sublime work of saving souls was to be the work of the Apostles thenceforward. "Go ye into the whole world," He said to them, "and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is bap-

tized shall be saved: but he that believeth not shall be condemned."¹ "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."²

Assuredly, this commission was intended to interest more than the few thousands who should happen to be within the sound of the voices of the twelve Apostles. It is God's will that all men be saved; consequently, the Divine command embraced not merely the Apostles but also their successors, and was destined to affect all men, in all ages, even till the end of time. To give them courage to carry on in its entirety this tremendous work of saving souls and glorifying God, Our Lord supplemented His Divine command with the assurance that they should not work alone. He added: "Behold, I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."³ It is

¹ Mark xvi, 15, 16.

² Matt. xxviii, 19, 20.

³ Ib. xxviii, 20.

this assurance that gives heart to the priest and missionary as well as to the layman in their works of zeal. With Christ as their witness and helpmate, nothing further is needed to fill them with courage for the work they have to do.

Zeal, we are told, is the perfection of charity. It has been admirably said that if the love of God and our neighbor be likened to a fire, zeal is the heat that springs from it; and the greater the fire the more intense the heat. Zeal is the passion that gnaws at the heart of him who loves God to make others love Him also; it is the sublime indignation that fills the soul of a man who sees a loving and loveable God misunderstood, misinterpreted, insulted and even outraged; it is the overwhelming desire that a man has to convert souls and bring them captive to the foot of God's throne, and to augment indefinitely their number. The Psalmist was overpowered by this sublime passion when he exclaimed: "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up, O Lord." "A fainting hath taken hold of me, because of the wicked that forsake Thy

law." "My zeal hath made me pine away, because my enemies forgot Thy words." The contemplation of the mercies of God impressed the royal singer so deeply that he could not bear to see men wicked and indifferent amid such a wealth of tenderness and love.

So should it be with us; we who know God should be inspired with the same zeal; we should desire to have His Name known, glorified, and loved by other men; we should long to have others participate in the good things we ourselves possess. No sacrifice should be too great, no work too wearying when there is question of bringing men to a knowledge and love of God. This is the zeal that has, in all ages, urged men and women to leave home and kindred, to lead lives of poverty and suffering in imitation of the Redeemer, the better to accomplish their purpose of procuring the glory of God. It is this zeal that, at the present time, is filling the foreign mission fields of the Roman Catholic Church with apostles who are carrying to heathen nations a knowledge of the mercies of God. It is this zeal

that strengthens faltering nature in those laborers in God's vineyard, when they are asked to give up their lives in His service, yea, even to shed their blood for Him. The love of God, then, is the first motive that fosters zeal in men.

The second motive is the love of our neighbor's soul. The human soul is a precious treasure, so precious that all other things must yield to it in value. It is the one priceless treasure that we possess. It is the gift of God which, if saved, is the occasion of never-ending happiness and joy; if lost, is an irreparable catastrophe. The loss of a soul means the loss of Heaven with its endless joys and the vision of God, and the gain, alas! of endless misery.

This fearful alternative fills us with a deep fear of the judgments of God, and a deep longing for our neighbor's welfare in the world to come. If we love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we naturally desire his salvation as the highest good he can possess. What is more reasonable, then, than to take the means needed to realize this desire; to awaken in our neighbor a

sense of his moral responsibility; to warn him of the dangers that threaten his immortal soul? We have here the other secret of all missionary enterprise in the world. The love of souls, the longing for their salvation, and a willingness to suffer even death in order to secure it for them : this is the sum and substance of the annals of all Christian missionary effort. To be truly zealous we must, first of all, try to make others love God as we ourselves love Him, and thus naturally help them to save their souls for the sake of that love.

The practical exercise of Christian zeal does not involve equal obligations on all. Suffice it to say that we all have our obligations in this matter; but the limits of the practice of our zeal will depend on the circumstances of our position in life. God gives to some the grace of more extended opportunities; to others He gives less. To some the vocation is given to work exclusively in vast missionary fields for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; to others, home and family and immediate surroundings are allotted as the theatres

of their zeal. The priest and the religious, whose lives are wholly wrapt up in the quest for souls and in works of charity, have opportunities of exercising their zeal and of accomplishing more actual work than those have who have not received the Divine call. Our Catholic missionaries of both sexes are doing noble work in various parts of this world, laboring in season and out of season to advance the interests of Christ's kingdom on earth. They are the ones who can truthfully say with St. Paul: "Whereas I was free as to all, I made myself a servant to all, that I might gain the more. And I became to the Jews as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews. To the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak. I became all things to all men that I might save all. And I do all things for the Gospel's sake: that I may be made partaker thereof."

While the greater number are not called to this sublime apostolate, there still remain many and imperative duties of zeal for God and souls that laymen and lay-

¹ 1 Cor. ix, 19, 23.

women may undertake. And though it be in a minor degree, the obligation laid on us all of working for this two-fold object is not less real. This is a truth that many ignore; as a consequence, it is pathetic to see how little the majority of men try to accomplish for the other world. Utterly indifferent to the desires of God, and contemptuous of His plans, they neglect the souls of their neighbors, and they neglect their own. Procuring the glory of God is a work that has little attraction for them. "May I not be my brother's keeper?" is a question they never ask. Or if betimes they do ask, they turn away and leave the answer to those who make the ministry of souls the special work of their lives.

And yet there is so much that could be done by the Catholic laity if they would cease to be passive and lend a helping hand to those who are actively and officially employed in works of zeal. Their influence and their wealth could be of tremendous value in furthering Catholic works. Think of the number of churches, hospitals, colleges, schools, libraries, newspapers, etc., all

devoted to Catholic interests, that are eking out a painful existence, through want of sympathy and help from those Catholics who can well afford to contribute both influence and wealth. It is sad to think that these works will continue to eke out the same painful existence for long years to come, simply because zeal for God's glory and for the salvation of souls does not appeal to Catholic men and women who are filled with the spirit of the world and who find their complete satisfaction in earthly enjoyments.

These considerations should make us pause to enquire how we stand in this matter; the time spent in reflection will not be lost. If we desire motives to encourage us in works of zeal, the example of others who are really zealous should be a powerful incentive. If thousands of Christians placed in positions similar to ours are doing so much for the cause of God and His Church, we too may do something. The examples of those who have gone before us, the lives of the martyrs and the saints, the career of so many men and women in the Catholic

Church who have made untold sacrifices of time and wealth to show their zeal for God and their neighbor, should be sufficient to urge us to greater effort. And then, if some stronger motive is called for, let us turn to the example of our dear Lord Himself, and try, in a small way, and, as it were, from afar, to imitate His insatiable zeal for the glory of His Father. He was unwearied in His journeyings over the mountains and through the valleys of Palestine to announce the good tidings of salvation to the souls of men. The shores of the rivers and streams heard His voice, as well as the walls of the temple and the synagogues. He gave up His precious life to show how very much in earnest He was in His zeal.

If we are not called to work in the vast field of the apostolate, we can at least take as objects of our zeal, our children, our parents, our servants, our masters, our friends; we may strive by our words and example, or at least by our prayers, to make them love God more and more. If we do this earnestly, and in a spirit of faith, no matter what our station in life may be,

we shall be apostles. It is to develop this spirit of zeal that the devotion to the Heart of Jesus is mainly directed. Let us turn to Him who loves us so ardently, and try to repay love by loving in turn. In this way we shall do all in our power to procure His glory and help to save the souls whom He has redeemed.

XLII

WORK AMONG THE POOR

Bow down thy ear cheerfully to the poor, and pay what thou owest, and answer him peaceable words with mildness.—ECCLUS. IV, 8.

The just taketh notice of the cause of the poor; the wicked is void of knowledge.—PROV. XXIX, 7.

[T is all very well talking and arguing and holding our own against them, but why can we not do something?" This was the very practical question that Frederic Ozanam, founder of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, put to himself and his seven friends in a little room in Paris, in 1833. Ozanam was a brilliant young French Catholic who had been for some time crossing swords with atheists and scoffers at religion, the aftermath of the French Revolution, and he had grown weary of a well-nigh fruitless task. He had learned by practical experience that there is little to be gained in controversy with scoffers; deeds will often move them when words have failed. Love and intelligent sympathy shown

in outward deeds was the secret that Ozanam had discovered, and he was to show Catholics, the world over, how to apply it in his intercourse with the poor and the homeless.

The suggestion to turn from controversy to some work of active charity came as a surprise to his companions; and although it did not meet with an immediate hearty response from them, it was not unwelcome. What form should their charity take? Plans were discussed, and after mature deliberation it was decided that their work should be the service of God's poor, whom they were to visit and assist by every means in their power. The service of the poor appeared to the mind of Ozanam and his friends to be a sure way of showing the sanctity of the Catholic religion and love for their neighbor, as well as an easy way of reaping profit for their own souls. "He that hath mercy to the poor lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him."¹

The deeply religious spirit with which those eight young men were animated

¹ Prov. xix, 17.

opened up a vast horizon to them; and we are not surprised to hear one of them say at the very first meeting: "If we intend our work to be really efficacious, if we are in earnest about helping the poor as well as ourselves, we must not let it be a mere doling out of alms, bringing to each our pittance of money or food. We must make it a medium of moral assistance; we must also give the alms of good advice."

On this double foundation of corporal and spiritual charity the great edifice was begun; there and then the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul were founded. Ozanam drew up a few simple rules to guide the efforts of the members; all eight started out on their errands of mercy; the future became brighter for the hungry and naked and homeless in this cold, selfish world.

It was at first determined to restrict the Society to its eight primitive members. Ozanam feared lest the simplicity of its design might suffer, and that it would grow into a bustling, official organization. But in the eyes of the others such restriction would be an unwarrantable curb to its use-

fulness. The Society was destined to grow, and the founder, yielding to the cogent arguments of his companions, decided to admit others to help him in the work.

The Society grew beyond the expectations of the founders. A few years later the eight members had increased to two thousand in Paris alone, where five thousand indigent families were visited and helped. The work of the Conferences was established in other cities in France; it soon reached Rome, London, Dublin, Brussels, Liege, Munich, Constantinople, Mexico and the United States. In 1846, that is, thirteen years after its foundation, the Society had ten thousand members enrolled in two hundred and thirty Conferences.

It was in that year that its beneficent work was extended to Canada. A young physician, Dr. Painchaud, while studying in Paris, had seen the Society at work, and so impressed was he with its simplicity and efficacy, that his first care after his return to Quebec was to establish a flourishing Conference. Dr. Painchaud has justly been called the Canadian Ozanam. He was a

man full of admirable devotedness to the poor and the unfortunate, and he closed a noble career in 1855 by a heroic death. He gave up his life in the service of the plague-stricken in Mexico.

The impetus given to the work in the old city of Quebec by this Catholic layman was seconded by the clergy, and was soon felt in other parts of Canada. In 1850, Mr. George Manly Muir, another layman of great faith and piety, succeeded in implanting the Society in Toronto. Shortly afterwards, Montreal, Ottawa, Three Rivers, Hamilton, and the Maritime Provinces, had their own Conferences. These in turn rapidly branched out into innumerable others; and thus year after year, for over sixty-five years, the work of organized charity in favor of God's poor has been going on silently and hidden from the eyes of men, but at the same time efficaciously, after the manner of all great deeds done for God.

In 1896, the Golden Jubilee of the foundation of the Society in Canada was celebrated in the old basilica that had witnessed its inception fifty years before. Four hun-

dred delegates, drawn from every condition in life, and hailing from all parts of Canada, representing one hundred and four Conferences and four thousand six hundred and seventy members, celebrated in Quebec an anniversary memorable in the annals of Canadian charity. It was an admirable sight, that of four hundred strangers, men of the stamp of Ozanam, discussing unostentatiously the ways and means for advancing the interests of their Society, with no other end in view than God's glory and the welfare of His poor, and looking for no other reward than that which is eternal.

How different are the methods of those wealthy philanthropists who have their good works continually flaunted before the eyes of the world, and who must needs see their names graven in marble as a condition of their alms-giving! They show at least that they are not fully imbued with the spirit of Christ, who said: "When thou dost give alms let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth; that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee."¹

¹ Matt. vi, 3, 4.

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul carries out to the letter the salutary counsel of our Divine Lord to hide their charity. Secrecy and delicacy in acting are characteristic virtues of its members. The alms doled out to the poor is done in secret; the kind word is spoken where there is no echo; it suffices to know that God sees and hears. And God has blessed the work; the success of the Society has been extraordinary from the beginning. He who feeds the sparrow and clothes the lily, inspires men to give of their substance to help the poor. The money collected annually by members of the Conferences throughout the world amounts to about \$2,500,000, and the number of poor who are helped reaches into the millions.

Considering these results, it is not surprising that Sovereign Pontiffs have given so much praise to the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, and enriched it with so many indulgences; or that Leo XIII, in his Encyclical Letter, *Humanum Genus*, specially recommended this Society as one of the most efficacious remedies against Freema-

sonry, the great social evil of our times, and expressed the desire to see this apostleship of charity given still further extension in the world.

The work appeals especially to Catholic young men; the Society of St. Vincent de Paul were founded by young men; and it is among young men that it looks preferably for its recruits. Without seeking to underrate the merit of those who can give only their time, who, may we ask, are in a better position to work efficaciously among the poor than our young men who have not merely time to spare but who have been blessed with wealth and position? Unhappily, human respect is very strongly developed in our young men, and their co-operation in works of zeal and charity is sadly deficient. The jubilee congress of the Society held in Quebec, some years ago, expressed regret at this state of affairs, and suggested, as a means of securing members among professional young men, that they should be led, even during their college years, into the mysteries of almsgiving, and experience for themselves the consolations

attending this and other practical works of charity. The suggestion has since been carried out in several Canadian Colleges where Conferences are now successfully established among the students. What is to prevent other institutions from doing the same thing, and thus providing successors to those who are now laboring so heartily among God's poor? Few works would bring greater honor to the Church or greater consolation to the Heart of Jesus.

Meanwhile, let us ask the Sacred Heart to continue to protect the members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and to keep lively in them the three virtues that should distinguish them from other men: i) Humility: the favorite virtue of all those who desire to follow in the footsteps of St. Vincent de Paul. Ostentation in almsgiving and good works is an offspring of pride and robs men of their merit. ii) Love for the poor: not love based on vain, sentimental philanthropy, which is excited by the sight of suffering and poverty, but the true charity, which sees in the poor the image of Christ. iii) Peace and union among them-

selves, when nationality, race, dignity, rank, disappear in the presence of poverty. Suffice it for them to know that they are the self-constituted members of a body which seeks to relieve, spiritually and corporally, the suffering members of Christ. Peace and union, humility and love, will keep their Society strong and fruitful; without these all human works are of short duration. "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another."

¹ John xiii, 35.

XLIII

THE MEEK OF HEART

Thou hast caused judgment to be heard from heaven: the earth trembled and was still, when God arose in judgment to save all the meek of the earth.—PSALM LXXV, 9, 10:

Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart.—MATT. XI. 29.

MEELINESS is a virtue which helps us to overcome the passions of the irascible appetite. It moderates anger, that "momentary madness," which, even a pagan writer tells us, "we should master before it masters us." Meekness, then, urges us to act towards others with becoming charity, to bear with them and their imperfections with due moderation. It does not consist in never showing signs of anger—for all anger is not sinful¹—but rather in being able to keep it under control when the occasion demands that we should show it.

Meekness crushes within the human heart the desire for revenge; it keeps down the

¹ Ephes. iv, 26.

impulses of self-love and other inordinate affections. When we are smarting under an injury, real and imaginary, our irascible nature struggles hard to give vent to its feelings; nature chafing under a sense of injustice, strongly desires to retaliate, and to indulge in what Juvenal calls "the weak pleasure of a narrow mind." But meekness appeals to the tribunal of reason, calms us, soothes—sympathizes even with—wounded feelings, leaves us complete masters of the position and satisfied with our victory over ourselves.

While consistent with firmness and the exercise of authority, the virtue of meekness implies docility, tenderness, love of one's enemies, and kindness towards them. It implies sympathy with others, after the doctrine and example of the Saviour Himself. It implies humility, for our Divine Lord coupled meekness and humility together when He asked us to learn of Him because He was meek and humble of heart.

The union of these two virtues is not a mere coincidence; without humility there can be no meekness, at least no Christian

meekness. The proud are selfish, ambitious, jealous and prone to vengeance, and consequently without mercy for those with whom they have to deal. They are forever talking and boasting about their works, concealing or excusing their faults, criticizing others, engaging in angry discussions, seeking to have their own way in everything. Where is there room for meekness in such souls?

Patience is another virtue that leads up to meekness. To be ready at any moment to become irritated against men and things, and to show irritation by word and manner, are defects incompatible with this virtue. Patience and humility are qualities looked for in the meek, but so comprehensive is meekness that they are not the only ones essential. Strength of character is also necessary to overcome those passions without which meekness would be only weakness; it is needed to help the meek to give substance to their virtue by resisting the shocks of daily life.

The practical wish to think kindly and to act accordingly, which constitutes goodness, is also one of the elements of meek-

ness. In fact, goodness is its characteristic earmark, but it is goodness that reveals itself in discretion and amiability, qualities invariably found in all the saints who have made meekness their distinctive virtue.

The proof that this virtue is pleasing to God, and that it is worth our while to try to acquire and practise it, may be found in the sanction given to it in many places in Scripture. The Psalmist¹ tells us that "the Lord lifteth up the meek." In the Book of Numbers² we read that God Himself took the defence of the Jewish legislator against Mary and Aaron, because "Moses was a man exceeding meek above all men that dwelt upon earth."

Our Saviour, the great Model and Prototype of virtue, insisted on the cultivation and practice of this virtue. "Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." His hidden life was spent in the spirit and practice of meekness. There is a tradition that the Jews used to go over to Nazareth to con-

¹Psalm cxlvi, 6.

²Num. xii, 3.

template the actions of the Boy-Saviour, whose graciousness and amiability they had learned to admire. In after years, when those same Jews treated Him as one possessed of a devil, He bore their insults with extraordinary sweetness. How many are the instances in the Gospels wherein He showed his forbearance of His enemies! He sought unceasingly to draw them to a sense of their sinfulness rather by the influence of His kind ways and His attractive manner, than by the terror of His frown. Where can we find the virtue of meekness so well displayed as in the sad hours of His Sacred Passion? Isaias tells us that He permitted Himself to be led like a "lamb before the shearer," and did not open His mouth. In the language of Jeremias, He was as "a meek lamb that is carried to be a victim." He bore the buffetings and the vile treatment of the Jews and their servants without a word of murmuring or reproach. At the supreme moment, when the greatest crime in human history was about to be consummated, He asked His Eternal Father to forgive the perpetrators, "for they know not

what they do." And to show how persevering He is in reminding us of this virtue of meekness, even after His Resurrection He appropriates and applies to His own the names given to the meekest of His irrational creatures. We are His lambs and His sheep; He is the Shepherd of the flock.

After the Son, the Virgin Mother is, in the words of the Church's favorite hymn in her honor, proclaimed *inter omnes mitis*—the meekest of the daughters of men. And truly her reception of the Angel Gabriel was a sublime act of meekness. In her later life, a sword of sorrow pierced her heart; she drank deeply of the bitter cup; but we have yet to learn that one act of rebellion disturbed the equanimity of her soul. St. Bernard asks us to search the Gospel narrative and try to find any, even the slightest, tinge of bitterness in word or deed in her whole career.

The example of this fairest and meekest of God's creatures, coupled with that of her Divine Son, has given a powerful impulse to the practice of meekness among the saints; and following in their footsteps, in-

numerable are they who have succeeded in acquiring it in a high degree. Illustrious among them was St. Francis of Sales, who, as we read in his life, was by nature testy and irascible, but who succeeded in conquering himself so completely that his biographers present him to us as the most accomplished model of meekness in the calendar of the saints. This amiable virtue manifested itself not merely in his dealings with his fellow-men but also in his correspondence. Thus in a letter to St. Jeanne Fremiot de Chantal: "I fear," he wrote, in his own characteristic style, "that you are more prone to justice than to kindness. I do not like to see you so just! We must be more given to meekness than to justice." These words made such an impression on the saintly foundress of the Visitation Order that for many a day she meditated on the deep meaning contained in them.

The virtue of meekness is one that should be cultivated by those exercising authority over others. It is not inconsistent with firmness or strength of character, as we see by the example of our Divine Lord.

His meekness did not suffer during His dealings with the hypocritical Pharisees, even when He was driving the money-changers out of the temple. *Suaviter in modo; fortiter in re*, is the axiom that sums up the character of the meekness proper to those in authority, and points out a delightful and efficacious way of attaining the end desired from those in subjection. For this reason meekness is worth acquiring not merely for its own sake, but also because it is a valuable instrument in the hands of all who govern others. Human nature is so constituted that it yields more easily to kindness than to rigidity. Cicero tells us that it is hard to say how much men's minds are conciliated by a kind manner and gentle speech. The meek word turns away wrath and impels to submission, while the strong expression, or the sign of anger in the voice commanding, invariably excites to resistance.

Similar motives urge equals and inferiors to acquire this virtue; for much of our happiness in this world depends upon the manner in which we treat with those

around us. There are always opportunities to show our meekness in some form or other every time we meet a fellow-being. If a kindness kindly rendered is a kindness double done, we can see at a glance how profitable meekness is to ourselves not merely from the supernatural standpoint but for purely worldly reasons as well. "Making friends" is an amiable calling, one that, if seriously undertaken, would render this world of ours a more interesting place to live in. Who makes more friends than the neighbor who is kind and obliging to all?

Jesus our Saviour is, above all, our model here. Meek and humble of heart, He went about doing good and showing kindness to others. While thus following in the footsteps of Our Lord and His saints, in practising a virtue taught by them both in word and act, we are laying up treasures in heaven, and at the same time making friends for ourselves among men. In an age of egotism and uncharitableness this is an aim worthy of consideration.

XLIV

THE VALUE OF SUFFERING

Afflicted in few things, in many they shall be well rewarded: because God hath tried them, and found them worthy of Himself.—WISDOM III, 5.

Gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation.—ECCLES. II, 5.

[F there is in this world much that gives us pleasure and helps us for the moment to forget the cares of life, there are also many sources of pain and disheartenment. Trials and sufferings are ever disputing with happiness and pleasure their rights and titles to the mastery of our souls. An inspired writer tells us "that the time of our life is short and tedious,"¹ and his words have found an echo in every age. Another calls this world a "valley of tears";² another likens the life of man to a warfare, and "his days to the days of a hireling."³

We have only to consult our own experience to realize how much truth there is

¹ Wisdom ii, 1.

² Psalm lxxxiii, 7.

³ Job vii, 1.

in their words. There are few of us who have not tasted of the sorrows of life, few who have not shared in that legacy which one generation hands down to another, and with which the centuries have made our race familiar. The tears we shed, the separations we submit to, the illusions we entertain, the deceptions we meet with, the trials of both body and soul that are our share in life, intensified by the sighs of the multitudes who surround us, convince us that the sacrifice of suffering and sorrow that is renewed each day, is an inevitable debt of fallen human nature. And yet, instead of sitting down and deploring the inevitable, should we not rather pause and ask ourselves how we may profit by it? Should we not try to see in this so-called "inexorable destiny" the finger of God leading us surely, if painfully, up to higher things?

If this life were the end of all, with nothing to hope for hereafter, man would surely deserve the sympathy of the spheres. Happily, the God who placed us here, and carved His image on our souls, has deigned to raise a corner of the veil that hides His

admirable designs from us, to show us the meaning of it all. The sum of His message is the immortal hope that there is a land beyond the grave, where arms will lovingly welcome all who have suffered and wept here below. Jesus the Consoler came to point out the way to that land, but the effort cost Him a crown of thorns and a cross on Calvary. Even in His case, the way to Heaven was the way of suffering; He was the Man of Sorrows. May we look for better fortune? "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted." In these words what motives for peace and joy for a tear-stained soul! Ponder over them and see how light they render the crosses of this life. The words of Jesus cheer us; they make our petty trials and sufferings vanish like mist before the noon-day sun; they fill the human heart with confidence and hope.

The virtue of hope so eloquently taught us by our Divine Master is hardly known in the non-Christian world, and the condition of men who live there, under the pressure

of suffering and sorrow, is pitiful in the extreme. Without hope, without even the religion that begets hope, they live on with nothing to sustain them in the reverses that crush the heart. A blind and merciless fatalism, which has never learned the supernatural value of suffering, or tasted the sweet consolations of hope, banishes love from their human hearts that crave for sympathy and leaves in its stead only grim despair. Will not this explain many of the crimes against society, suicide, for instance, that we read of in the daily press? When religion does not rule men's lives, when the lessons of patience and resignation which religion can alone teach are never heard, when the future is a mere blank, those who suffer persuade themselves that there is nothing worth living for, and they end it all in—self-destruction.

Very different are the methods of those who have been taught the value of suffering. Religion raises their thoughts and aspirations above this transitory life and urges them to think of the life to come. She draws the veil aside and points out

the joys of the future to the down-trodden and tear-begrimed. She tells them to take courage, that the end is not yet. We hear her exclaiming, "What matter a few years of sorrow? Tears must be shed, trials must be borne, sorrows must be met; but these are the pledges of life everlasting. The road is not long; the world is receding; the hour of delivery is approaching; the door of Eternity is opening." How encouraging it is for those who groan under the burdens of life to know that their sorrows will soon cease! How consoling for captives to know that their chains will soon drop off!

One of the consolations of our exile here below is the knowledge that Heaven exists, that there is a land of rest where there shall be no pain, no deception, no heartache, no abandonment, where God Himself will receive us, and where the warmth of His adorable Presence will turn our tears into pearls. They who enter Heaven shall be "inebriated with the plenty of His house; they shall drink of the torrent of His pleasures."

¹ Psalm xxxv, 9.

This is the first great benefit that religion offers us. She consoles us in our sufferings voluntarily borne for God, by pointing out the happiness of the life beyond. She transforms hope into a virtue, a feat which alone, a great writer tells us, would prove that she is Divine.

But religion goes further than this. While she teaches us to bear patiently the ills of life, she also ennobles sufferings; she clothes them with a sublime attractiveness; she tells us that they are something to be sought for; she even urges us to go out and meet them. The highest degree of moral strength ever reached in the non-Christian world was stoic submission to sorrow. When trials came, the pagan awaited them stolidly; they crushed him sometimes, but he yielded in silence to their weight. This stoicism revealed a heroism—the heroism of despair. When the Great Consoler came to transform the world, He did not say “Suffer and be silent,” but rather “Suffer and rejoice.” Instead of shrinking from sorrow, the true disciple was invited to accept it joyfully, nay, anxiously to look for it. The

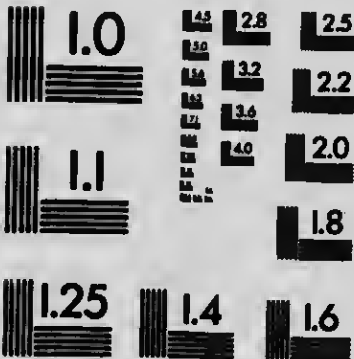
saints knew the value of suffering, and they travelled joyfully along the royal road seeking only the thorns, knowing full well that, as the *Imitation* informed them, "the hour would come sooner or later when all labor and tumult would cease."

The annals of the Church tell us that millions of souls have been captivated by the love of sufferings, that life without them would have become a source of suffering. "To suffer or die," has been the watchword of all who, in past centuries, have gloried in the folly of the cross. This is the triumph of faith, a state of things that only confidence in the promises of God and the hope of Heaven could make possible. Suffering accepted not merely with resignation, but actually sought after for His sake, is the strongest pledge of our love of God; it is the perfecting of our souls; it is the baptism of the Elect. "He who loves Me will follow Me," said our great Exemplar; and millions have followed Him in the narrow, upward path of suffering; other millions are following now, not for the pleasure of the journey, but because



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they want to imitate Him. Some keep close to Him, others follow at a distance, but all have their eyes fixed on the Divine Cross-bearer ahead of them. Faith, hope and love have been ennobled by this spectacle. By it man's weakness has been turned into strength, enabling him not merely to receive sufferings resignedly, but even to go seeking for them.

Resignation in trial is one of the best proofs of the divinizing power of our holy religion. The apostolate of tears has an eloquence all its own; tears sanctified by religion move the Heart of God as easily as they move the hearts of men. If we wish our lives to be fruitful, let us be resigned in sufferings, and let our example teach resignation to others. If we wish to be generous in the service of God, let us not be afraid to walk in the footprints of the saints and accept the sufferings that God will generously provide.

XLV

THE WILL OF GOD

Take all that shall be brought upon thee, and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience.—ECCLUS. II, 4.

Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God.—PSALM. CXLII, 10.

LIVING in a Christian spirit is the habit we have acquired of making the life of our Blessed Lord the rule of our lives. One who is imbued with this salutary spirit lives, as far as human limitations will allow, and in the measure of God's grace, conformably to the laws of justice, piety, faith, charity, patience and meekness, as outlined by St. Paul. While admitting the importance of these virtues specifically, it seems to us that the practical definition to be given of the Christian spirit, when there is question of home or family, is the habit its members, whether parents or children, masters or servants, have acquired, of living and acting under the eye of God; of receiving everything as coming from His hand;

of making all their duties subservient to His holy will. It is chiefly in this spirit of conformity that is to be found the secret of happiness in a home; and this is the reason why the practice of it is so earnestly advocated by all those who have the mission to teach us.

Ascetical writers are continually dilating on the necessity of a full understanding of the virtue of conformity to the will of God. In so doing they render us an admirable service, for the scope and importance of conformity in practical spiritual life is very great. It will suffice to have travelled but a short distance on the narrow, upward way to realize how very much one needs this virtue. At every twist and turn of life, occasions present themselves wherein we long to know the will of God; and it is needless to say how necessary is a blessed trust in an all-seeing Providence to soften down the trials of everyday life.

We are told that the Son of God came down from Heaven for a twofold purpose, first, to redeem and save us, and secondly, to teach us by His doctrine and example

the way to Heaven. What doctrine did His example confirm more clearly than that of conformity to the will of His Father? On the Mount while teaching His disciples how to pray, one of His first lessons was, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."¹ Elsewhere He said, "I came down from heaven not to do My will but the will of Him that sent Me."² And He confirmed this doctrine by His example at the most solemn moment of His life. If we desire proofs of Our Lord's earnestness in teaching conformity, let us recall Gethsemane, where, in the midst of a fearful crisis, the will of His Father was foremost in His mind. When the weight of our sins crushed His innocent Body to the earth, and when His Sacred Blood began to ooze from every pore, He cried out in His agony, "If it be possible let this chalice pass from Me; however," continued He, in perfect resignation, "not as I will but as Thou wilt."³

Two great principles are needed in order to establish the reasonableness of the

¹ Matt. vi, 10.

² John vi, 38.

³ Matt. xxvi, 39.

exercise of true conformity. One of these is evident, though sometimes misunderstood or ignored. It is that nothing happens and nothing can happen in this world, sin alone excepted, but by the will or permission of God. How rarely we stop, even in Christian homes, to consider that the leaves on the forest trees are counted, and the blades of grass in the meadows; yet this is so. And how consoling it is to us to know that not a leaf nor a blade of grass may fall to the ground without the permission of God. The birds of the air neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and the Heavenly Father feeds them. The lilies of the field labor not, neither do they spin, and yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed as one of them. What consolation it is for us, members of truly Catholic families, to know that we are in the hands of God, to know with certainty that the sorrows and tears that so often temper our home-joys are the gifts of God; and how different would the world be if we could look at the misfortunes of life in this light, and cease chafing under the inevitable!

A second principle, also important, is that all advancement in Christian perfection consists in the practice of conformity to God's will. So true is this, the saints tell us, that the greater the conformity of our will to the Divine will, the greater also will be our advancement in holiness. This is evident, for the more we try to imitate the Author of all sanctity the more saintly we ourselves shall become.

These two principles were dominating factors in the lives of all the saints; God's will and it alone was ever the chief object of their search. They had continually on their lips those words of Saul, stricken on the road to Damascus, "Lord, what wouldst Thou have me to do?" And the Lord, with ineffable sweetness, inspired their thoughts, words and deeds, so strenuously and so constantly, that their lives reproduced His life, not merely during one, or two, or five years, or even during a few passing skirmishes, but throughout their long careers. So that we may safely say the spirit of conformity to God's will is the key to sanctity in every phase or condition of life.

In the home it begets respect and mutual help, charity and foresight, because it is the will of God that these virtues should be practised there; in parents, it begets undying zeal, abnegation and firmness in the discharge of duties which are sometimes painful; in children, it begets filial respect and love; in masters, justice tempered with mercy and kindness; in servants, obedience and devotedness to their masters' interests. These virtues, which are required in the many and various situations in life, should be practised not from any human motive, but from a desire of pleasing God, and conforming our conduct to His holy will. They thus become not merely the foundation-stones of a Catholic home but the material which must be used in the building up of the temple of personal holiness in each of its members.

We need not ask today, why it is that so few amongst us are remarkable for these virtues; but rather let us ask the reason why so many homes are torn by dissension, or upset by their want of order and subordination. One answer that can be given,

is because there is no bond of union; no great principle regulating the thoughts and words, and guiding the actions, of the members of our Catholic homes. Everyone is looking after his own interests, seeking his own pleasures, avoiding the common burden. Ignoring the holy will of God, selfish parents wish to profit by their children's presence in their homes, but without imposing on themselves the sacrifices required to rear them up; avaricious employers exact all they can, without a thought of what they owe to those who are under them. On the other hand, children and servants emancipate themselves too easily, and crave an independence which, for many of them, is but the prelude of disaster. Matters have reached this stage that the homes of Catholics—homes which should be modelled on the admirable home at Nazareth, filled with harmony and peace, because the will of God was the golden principle ruling there—have become quite rare; family unity in the true Christian sense is almost a thing of the past.

How different would the world be, if

the Christian spirit of conformity to the will of God were better understood and practised, and what different views would men take of the ups and downs of life! If the world had this doctrine of conformity ever present, we should hear fewer people bewailing their ill-luck; we should read less of suicides and those other crimes that are the outcome of despair.

St. Basil tells us that all sanctity and all perfection of the Christian life consists in seeking and finding the finger of God in the events of life. How consoling it would be to hear from the lips of a Christian father or mother in misfortune such words as, "God permitted this," "This is God's will," "God's will be done," etc., for these are the external manifestations of the perfect resignation of soul which the saints—and they ought to know—consider the foundation of all tranquillity of soul. Resignation of soul presupposes a perfect mortification of all the passions and evil inclinations of man, and consequently must be the most grateful and most acceptable sacrifice than man could make to God; for it is

the sacrifice of his whole self. Doing God's will is beatitude here on earth, and a foretaste of what we all hope to enjoy one day in the coming eternity. Let us ask the Sacred Heart of our Divine Master to revive in all Catholic homes the spirit of conformity to the will of God, the spirit of charity and mutual devotedness to the common weal, the spirit of holy and joyous intimacy and of obedience to the laws of God; in a word, the spirit which makes the Christian hearth a spectacle worthy of the admiration of angels and of men.

XLVI

THE RIGHTS OF GOD

O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it: Why hast thou made me thus?—ROM. ix, 20.

Thou art the Lord of all, and there is none that can resist Thy majesty.—ESTHER xiii, 11.

FREEDOM is a gift from Heaven. When God gave life to men He gave them freedom; and men alone among visible beings possess it. Freedom is to men and nations what health is to the body; without health men cannot enjoy life; without freedom society can enjoy no happiness. Need we wonder, then, that men are so jealous of their freedom, or that nations struggle so hard to gain it and make such sacrifices to keep it?

*'Tis liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its lustre and perfume,
And we are weeds without it.*

Freedom is the state of being able to act or not to act; it is an exemption from

the restraint of physical or moral forces which could prevent us from willing or not willing, just as it suits us; In a word, it puts the circumstances of time and place and manner of life under our control. This definition shows us that freedom has a vast field for action in the affairs of life; but like so many other definitions, that of freedom has undergone modification at the hands of men; and what was once, by right Divine, the prerogative of virtue, is now claimed by good and bad alike. In the sacred name of freedom a protecting wing hovers over vice and sin, and, as a result, intellectual and moral degradation is rife in the world. False theories of freedom have penetrated every avenue of human activity; we have today the freedom that will not brook interference of man with man and his hobbies, be these never so irrational or blasphemous. And what tends to make matters worse, men who champion these theories do so in the persuasion that they are acting within their rights. They regard the freedom they enjoy not as they should, merely as simple toleration

in order to avoid greater evils, but as a sacred right which cannot be taken from them without violating the natural law.

Needless to say, their doctrine is erroneous in principle and dangerous in practice. The freedom we possess as children of God is limited. It is a freedom only to do good; we are not free to do evil. Liberty, it has often been truly said, is not license. Men must keep their activity within bounds. There are relations with God and our fellow-men which impose painful limits to our freedom. There are social and moral exigencies which oblige us to submit to laws human and Divine; and those who pretend to free themselves from these obligations are either knaves or fools.

The rulers of a powerful nation endeavored, a little over a hundred years ago, to emancipate themselves completely from their obligations as men and Christians, and to taste the delights of freedom. They carried on their struggle against God and His Church in the name of the rights of man; and the history of the world does not record other such examples of crime and but-

chery as were crowded into the five years during which those champions of human freedom held sway. The French Revolution left the rivers and highways of France crimsoned with blood; it left the country desolate and without hope; it was only after the leaders had been seized and guillotined that Frenchmen began to breathe freely; only when the craving for God had been satiated by the reestablishment of religion, that the fearful effects of that rebellion against the rights of God and human freedom could be measured, and handed down to posterity as a striking example of what can result from forgetfulness of the lessons of the Gospel.

In the presence of these and similar results of pride and insubordination, filial submission is the duty of every man and citizen. St. Peter exhorts us thus in his first Epistle: "Be ye subject to every human creature for God's sake, whether it be to the king as excelling, or to the governors as sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers and for the practice of the good. For so it is the will of God that by doing well

you may put to silence the ignorance of of foolish men. As free and not as making liberty a cloak for malice, but as the servants of God."¹ And the Apostle of the Gentiles, writing to the Romans, says: "Let every soul be subject to higher powers; for there is no power but from God; and those that are, are ordained of God. Therefore, he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God. And they that resist purchase to themselves damnation."²

Submission to the will of God is the sign of superiority, not of slavery, and in it we recognize the sublimity of our role as Christians. True greatness does not consist in gnawing at the chains that bind us, or in sighing under the yoke that weighs us down, or in cursing the task-masters from whom we cannot free ourselves, but rather in humble submission to the will of God made known to us by Himself or by those who take His place. Submission is not pusillanimity, but it teaches us to acknowledge our limitations and to accept generously, and without murmuring, the

¹ I Peter ii, 13-16.

² Rom. xiii, 1, 2.

restrictions to our freedom which our duty and dignity as men and Christians require. Any other line of conduct must necessarily be attended with disastrous consequences. When insubordination is rife, the gradual weakening and even extinction of faith and religious practices are the results. Our fallen nature drags us down so quickly and so inevitably that it is hard for us to keep our heads up, even with all the helps that religion puts within our reach; how much harder it must be when the very air we breathe is impregnated with religious indifference; when the examples of those who should know better, holding themselves aloof from frank adhesion to the tenets of religion, are constantly before us! When our mental view grows dim, religion takes a secondary place in our esteem; and from perversion of the intellect to corruption of the will the path is open and easy. The man who no longer cares to know God or submit his will to Him, will soon not care to love Him, nor fear His justice, nor hope for His rewards. He has nothing to spur him on to virtue, and he lives in a realm

of godlessness, the necessary fruit of his ill-used freedom.

Considerations like these show us the necessity and advantages of Christian submission. And yet there may be moments when submission is no longer a virtue. St. Paul exhorts Titus to admonish the brethren "to be subject to princes and powers, to obey at a word, to be ready to every good work."¹ But here our submission ends. When obedience to others would make us wound charity or justice, or infringe the smallest law of God, we must answer princes and powers in the words of St. Peter, "We ought to obey God rather than man."²

A practical illustration will make the matter plainer. The Catholic Church claims obedience from all men who would save their souls. She professes the only true faith, and it is consequently obligatory on all men to profess it with her. All doctrines which militate against her doctrines, all moral codes which oppose hers, must be condemned without appeal; for it is the

¹ Titus iii, 1.

² Acts v. 29.

exclusive right of the Catholic Church to teach the truth to her children. Now right and obligation are correlative terms. If the Church has the right to teach, her children are obliged to listen and obey. No Government, no individual can legitimately put an obstacle to this exclusive right of the Church; nor can a Government or individual recognize as legitimate the existence of error or evil, such as heresy, impiety, immorality, etc.

This is the ideal state of things. Alas! that the practice does not correspond with it. Leo XIII wrote, a very few years ago: "The evils of the present age, the number and gravity of which we need not hide, are born, for the greater part, of our much vaunted liberties."

We have Liberty of Worship, for instance, which ignores the true Church of God and gives every one the right to practise and propagate any religion he pleases, or to profess none at all if it suits him better. The secular power, the natural guardian of religion, must remain neutral; no religious privileges must be granted the true

faith, even though the majority adhere to it. We have Liberty of the Press, which affirms in the name of freedom the right of expressing with the pen error as well as truth, and in propagating whatever one pleases in ethical, political, social, religious affairs. We have Liberty of Education, which tolerates as natural the right to spread every wind of doctrine, heterodox as well as orthodox, through the ordinary collegiate channels, even at the expense of the State. We have Liberty of Association which permits and protects all maneuvering of secret societies against the true Church. All these phases of freedom are antagonistic to God and His truth, and our duty in the presence of such errors should be one of uncompromising opposition. Seeing that the doctrines and practices of the Church are sacred, they should be upheld by us, even at the price of our blood.

This position does not prevent us from showing sympathy for the erring ones. Our Pontiffs tell us that the Church, in her maternal appreciation, takes into account the weight of human weakness, and does not

ignore the movement which, in our age, is drawing men hither and thither. If she condemns in principle that false and hurtful freedom which men arrogate to themselves, she knows that there are circumstances wherein toleration must be accepted as the lesser of two evils. The interests of religion, the teachings of theology, the methods of the Church's rulers at various epochs of her history, prove the legitimacy of such toleration. In this the Church has chosen to follow the example of Christ, who came not to punish sinners but to save them; and the voice of centuries has proclaimed the wisdom of her action. If the Church did not tolerate—however unwillingly and for a time—the weaknesses of others, would she not have obliged Constantine, on the day of his conversion, to destroy the pagan gods? It is supremely unjust, then, to tax the Church with intolerance or tyranny, when she endeavors to curb the activity of the mind and will of man by imposing limits to his facilities for doing evil. Seeing that we are not able to guide ourselves, these restrictions placed on our powers of

action, far from doing violence to us, are the greatest benefits that could be conferred on us. They make the accomplishment of duty easy and the violation of it difficult. If we may praise a man for lighting up our path so that we stumble not and injure ourselves, should we not pay the tribute of our praise to the Church that lights up our intellect and moves our will, simply to hinder us from doing injury to our own souls or to the souls of others? Let the powerful arm of prayer come to the aid of the Church in her endeavors to bend the minds and wills of her proud children. This wise Mother asks us to pray that the true concept of freedom and the spirit of Christian submission may prevail among Catholics, in order that their own salvation and that of countless others may crown our united efforts.

XLVII

THE HEAVENLY BANQUET

He hath satisfied the empty soul, and hath filled the hungry soul with good things.—PSALM CVI, 9.

Is it credible then that God should dwell with men on the earth?—II PARAL. VI, 18.

WITHIN recent years the practice of frequent and even daily Communion has been rapidly spreading throughout the Catholic world. The impetus was given by the Holy Father in his Decree of 1905, wherein His Holiness urgently renewed the desire formulated four centuries ago by the Fathers of the Council of Trent, that "at every Mass the faithful should communicate not only spiritually, by way of internal affection, but also sacramentally, by the actual reception of the Blessed Eucharist."

As this Decree has been long enough in the hands of the faithful and as it has undoubtedly been read by all, it will not be necessary in these pages to do more than weigh the reasons which should urge

us to practise frequent Communion, and to appreciate the benefits which follow its use, benefits so great that they should impel all Catholics to try within the limit of their opportunities to conform themselves to the desire so urgently expressed by our beloved Pontiff. In another chapter a few pages will be added to outline the dispositions required in those who go to Communion frequently.

The Holy Eucharist is the food of our souls, and just as we are forced to take food frequently, in order to sustain the strength of the body, so also, if we wish our souls to be strong enough to resist the attacks of its enemies, we must give it at frequent intervals the Food of which it stands in need. It is quite true that Our Lord whom we receive in the Blessed Eucharist could sanctify us by a single sacramental visit, as He healed the sick and raised the dead to life by a single touch of His Divine Hand. But, as we know, the raising of the dead to life is a great and rare miracle; the sanctification of men by a single Communion would be one scarcely

less great. In the present order of Providence the soul, not unlike the body, grows by successive increase; and just as a single meal will not suffice to bring the body to its full development, so also the soul must be nourished by frequent Holy Communion in order to attain the perfection and the sanctity to which it is called by God.

Now although our Divine Saviour nowhere tells us in explicit terms the number of Communions He expects of us, His intention is clearly evident from the Scriptures. In the Gospel of St. John He says that His Body is the bread which gives life to the world. In the "Our Father," He bids us to ask of God our daily bread, by which the Holy Fathers understand principally His Divine Flesh. And even if He had not used the word "daily" bread, the mere name of bread, given to this sacrament, is a clear indication of the frequent, even daily, use we should make of it.

How often then should we approach the holy table? The answer has been already given. At every Mass the faithful who are present should not be satisfied with the de-

sire for Communion, but should actually receive the Holy Eucharist. This salutary, if rigid, discipline which Catholics should impose upon themselves is needed all the more in an age when human weakness has presented to it so many occasions of offending God. We must safeguard our souls even at the price of much personal inconvenience. "The antidote whereby we are delivered from daily faults and preserved from deadly sins," as the Council of Trent calls the Eucharist, must be employed by us to acquire strength to resist our sensuality and to overcome the excesses that result from human frailty.

This is the substance of the direction laid down for the faithful, but we know only too well that the conditions in which the lot of the majority is cast prevent the literal carrying out of it. If therefore we cannot go to Communion every day, we should go every time we assist at Mass. If we go to Mass only on Sundays and holydays, as hundreds of thousands of us do, we should receive Holy Communion every Sunday and holyday. This is frequent Communion in

the sense of the Decree, and it puts all who wish to obey the Holy Father under the obligation of preparing themselves by prayer and mortification for the event whenever it comes. It makes frequent communicants, as well as those who communicate daily, wage an unceasing warfare against their evil inclinations, in order to profit the more by the graces which are sure to accompany the brief visits of their Lord in the Sacrament of His enduring love.

For those who have the privilege of going to Communion every day, what profound humility should they possess; what love of God, coupled with intense longing to be united to Him! The Church teaches us that the Christian soul can never be too pure to receive the God of all purity; the angels and saints could inform us in this matter if they were permitted to visit us. Yet we should not allow ourselves to be discouraged by this high ideal. We should, indeed, strive to love Our Lord with ever-increasing fervor; we should do our best to overcome our defects, to avoid venial sin, to be patient and meek and mortified,

and like St. Paul, to lead a life hidden with Christ in God; we should, besides, excite in ourselves an ardent desire to be united with our Divine Saviour. When we have done all this to the best of our ability, even though we should still have to sigh over sins and imperfections, let us be of good courage and approach the holy table with perfect confidence, knowing, as we do, that freedom from mortal sin and the presence of a pure intention are the only conditions mentioned in the Papal Decree.

One of the signs by which we may judge whether we are profiting by our Communions or not, is the degree of longing for this Holy Food which we experience within ourselves. If the desire is keen and strong, and due to supernatural motives, that is, if it is excited in us not by any craving for sensible sweetness, still less by vanity, but rather by a profound feeling of our own wretchedness, a desire for perfection and an appreciation of God's infinite goodness, we may in all humility be convinced that we have the sentiments that the saints cultivated in themselves and were

wont to insist on most strongly in all who tried to climb the narrow way. Sentiments like these are a test of our fitness for the reception of Holy Communion, and make up for the lack of dispositions of soul that might otherwise be required.

Another test of our fitness is the benefit which we derive from our Communions. St. Thomas tells us that if any one knows by experience that daily Communion increases the fervor of his devotion, without in any way diminishing his respect and reverence for the Blessed Sacrament, such a person should receive every day. But the Holy Father would seem to be more generous than that. We should not at any time be held back from Holy Communion by the consideration of the greatness of the Sacrament or of our own unworthiness. It is precisely because we feel we are so weak and unworthy that we should crave a share of the strength that God is willing to impart; it is because we are of the world and feel the chill of its ambient air, that we need the fire of His love to infuse warmth into our poor human hearts.

And this consideration, consoling as it certainly is, should appeal not merely to those humble souls who have begun to realize how great is the God they receive, and whose very humility makes them feel that they need the Sacrament more than others do, but to those as well who live at the very opposite pole of the spiritual life, namely, those poor sinners who, constantly beset by violent temptations, or slaves to degrading habits, are still anxious to shake off their fetters and break away from the bondage of sin. The Holy Eucharist, frequently and devoutly received, is for such persons the most efficacious remedy. It would be well, therefore, that they should receive Communion every day, or as often as they can, provided of course that they fulfil the double condition mentioned above. If they continue this practice, they will recover perfect moral health and gain a complete victory over themselves.

St. Philip Neri, who devoted his life to the sanctification of the young men of Rome, and whose testimony comes to us with the double weight of sanctity and ex-

ceptional experience, used to say that frequent Communion, to which he added devotion to the Blessed Virgin, was not only the best but the only means of preserving the faith and morals of young men, and of helping them to rise again after their falls. How he carried out this principle in practice will be seen by the following example. A student came to him one day and begged his assistance in ridding himself of some habit to which he had long been a slave. The saint encouraged the young man, gave him good advice, and after hearing his confession, absolved him and sent him away happy with the permission to receive Holy Communion on the morrow. "If you should be so unfortunate as to fall again, come and see me at once," he added, "and in the meantime put your entire confidence in God." The next evening the youth returned to confess a relapse. St. Philip treated him exactly as before, encouraged him to struggle bravely, absolved him, and let him approach the holy table the next day. The student harassed by the tyranny of the evil habit, and yet eager to return to God,

drew from this compassionate direction and from the reception of the Holy Eucharist, such an energy and constancy of purpose that for thirteen days in succession he returned daily to the saint's confessional. Finally, charity carried the day, and Our Lord gained a new recruit. The young man made such rapid strides in the way of perfection that St. Philip judged him worthy of aspiring to the priesthood. He eventually became an Oratorian, edified all Rome by his zeal and his virtues, and died still young in the odor of sanctity. To the end of his life he never wearied of telling the story of his conversion in order to encourage sinners, and to make young men understand that their only hope lay in frequent Communion.

Such, then, are its powerful effects in desperate cases, but what are the usual results of frequent Communion in the case of ordinary Christians? The scholarly Bishop of Newport tells us: — "It delivers us from daily or venial sins by multiplying those acts of the love of God which not only occupy the mind and heart in good, but burn up and cleanse

away the guilt and penalty of venial sin. It preserves us from mortal sin by firmly uniting our will to the will of God. Indeed the word union, which is so constantly (and naturally) used by the Fathers to describe the effect of the Holy Eucharist, includes two thoughts: it indicates, first, the incomprehensible love of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in desiring to have a spiritual union with man, which is symbolized by His making Himself our food, and, next, it denotes that very condition, that state of spiritual clinging and adhesion of man's will to God's which is man's ideally safe and happy state on earth. We become one with Jesus; that is, we have the same 'will' as He has. What He loves we love; what He desires we desire; what He says ought to be done we long to do and try to do; His judgments are ours; His behaviour under every kind of condition, under all circumstances of persons and occurrences, is the behaviour we are always striving to reproduce in our own life and action. Thus it is no exaggeration to say that in Holy Communion Jesus Christ gives us His own

Heart, taking our heart away. His Heart is the Heart of charity, of purity, of sacrifice. And these terms describe the effect of Holy Communion upon the hearts of His servants."

XLVIII

DISPOSITIONS FOR COMMUNION

Who then can be able to build Him a worthy house? If heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Him: who am I that I should be able to build him a house?—II PARAL. II, 6.

The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before Him.—HABAC. II, 20.

[N the parable related in the fourteenth chapter of St. Luke, we have a figure of the Eucharistic Banquet to which the Master invites all, so that they may eat and refresh their souls. Unhappily there are many who, like the guests in the parable, find reasons for staying away from this life-giving Food. Want of preparation, unworthiness, fear of sacrilege, scrupulousness, the fruitlessness of previous Communion as recognized in themselves and in others, and a dozen other futile reasons, keep from the holy table a vast number of the faithful whom it would please Our Lord to see there every day.

While the question of the dispositions

of soul required for Holy Communion is undoubtedly one that is worth the consideration of Catholics, it is one that has received the most generous attention from those qualified to treat it. In their endeavor to enlighten us, moralists and confessors have spent their time and their talents, in drawing subtle lines of distinction among the different states in which a soul may find itself, and in weighing the degrees of its worthiness for the reception of Holy Communion. While their work had excellent results in preparing vigorous souls for the heavenly Food, it had a tendency to disturb the scrupulously inclined. Timorous souls found only too often, in the decisions of moralists, occasion to ask whether or not they had the dispositions required "to approach the altar-rail; and the fear that they had not kept them away.

But the Father of the faithful in his consoling Decree, issued six years ago, simplified very much the task of theologians and spiritual directors, when he authoritatively told Catholics that the only dispositions required for a worthy reception of

Holy Communion were: i) to be in a state of grace, and ii) to receive with a right intention. One should not go to Communion "out of routine or through vain glory or human respect, but rather for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united to Him by charity, and seeking this Divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects." In other words, he who goes to Holy Communion should seek in this heavenly Food what is contained in it and what it can give. If he does this, his intention is right and pure. It would not show a pure intention to go to the holy table daily because others do, or because we wish to be seen and perhaps to be praised for our piety. Vainglory or human respect should have no part in this tremendous act. The right intention insisted upon by the Holy Father is the intention to profit by the threefold benefits that Communion brings with it, a more intimate union with God, a deeper knowledge of the virtues of Christ, and a stronger desire to get rid of all the stains of sin. So that Communion is profitable not merely in seasons of greater temptation

and when our virtue is in danger, but at other seasons as well when we have in view an increase of sanctifying grace.

There was a time, not so long ago, when moralists and spiritual directors were accustomed to distinguish between those who could receive monthly, or weekly, or oftener, and when our neighbors could gauge the state of our soul by the frequency of our Communions. But the Holy Father has insisted on the fact that Communion is not a reward for virtue acquired but rather a means to acquire virtue. One passage in the Decree of 1905 deals a death-blow to rigorism, even in its mildest form, when it says, "Although it is most expedient that those who communicate frequently or daily should be free from venial sins, especially such as are fully deliberate, and from any affection thereto, nevertheless it is sufficient that they be free from mortal sin, with the purpose of never sinning mortally in future; and if they have this sincere purpose it is impossible but that daily communicants should gradually emancipate themselves even from venial sins and from all affection there-

to." So that while it unites us to the God of love, the chief end of Holy Communion is to give us the strength to repress our evil passions, to purify us from the light faults that we commit every day, to help us make provision against the more grievous sins to which human frailty is prone. It cannot, then, be too strongly insisted upon that while Holy Communion is its own reward for virtue acquired, it is rather a means to acquire virtue. If we are in need of strength, frequently approaching the holy table will give us the vigor of superabundant spiritual life. If we wish our soul to be purified from lighter faults, Holy Communion is the fire that will do the work; our cooperation with the ardent charity of Christ will reduce the defects of daily life to a minimum. Finally, if we seek an agent to preserve us against the baneful effects of Original Sin, we shall find it in the frequent reception of the Sacrament of the altar. Let us then listen to the pressing invitation of Christ speaking through the lips of His Vicar on earth.

And yet in urging us to communicate

daily, Pius X was introducing no new doctrine into the Church of God. He was only inviting us to resume a practice that had been in vogue from those early ages when Christians "persevered in the doctrine of the Apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayer." "Breaking bread from house to house," is the way the early writers described the daily sacramental life of the first Christians. Tertullian, commenting on the prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread," tells us that these words may be taken both in the spiritual and in the natural sense, both senses by a Divine usefulness being profitable to our souls. "We beg the bread," he writes, "to be given to us daily, lest through the intervention of sin, we be separated from Christ's body... Therefore, we pray that our Bread, that is, Christ, be given to us daily that we, who dwell and live in Christ, may not depart from His sanctification and be cut off from His body." St. Jerome interprets "our daily bread" as the special and preeminent Bread which we beg from Him who said, "I am the living

Bread which came down from Heaven." St. Ambrose pertinently asks the Christians of his time, "If it is daily bread, why dost thou take it only after a year has run out? Take thou daily that which is daily profitable to thee. He that is not worthy to receive daily is not worthy to receive yearly." St. John Chrysostom inveighed energetically against the spiritual languor which contented itself with a mere annual Communion. The Venerable Bede urges preachers to say "how profitable is the daily reception of Our Lord's Body and Blood to every class of Christians, according to the practice which they well know the Church to uphold throughout Italy, Gaul, Africa, Greece, and the whole East." And most authoritative of all, the Council of Trent declared that pastors should often remind the faithful that "as they consider it necessary to nourish their bodies every day, they should not neglect to nourish their souls every day with the Sacrament, because it is certain that the soul needs spiritual sustenance just as the body needs natural sustenance."

We have in the writing of the Fathers and in the Decrees of Councils, the mind and the will of the Church from the apostolic ages downwards; and Pius X in introducing frequent and daily Communion was simply reviving a practice which, owing to the corruption and laxity of men, seconded by Jansenistic tendencies, had almost ceased to exist among the faithful. To be more specific, where has this Jansenistic leaning shown itself more openly than in the infinite, almost fearful, precautions that, up to within recent months, have been taken to prepare children for their first Communion? Apparently, an over-estimate of what was an adequate preparation for Communion, mingled possibly with an immoderate fear of sacrilege, rather than the spiritual welfare of their children, have preoccupied the minds of parents and those who take their places. The result has been that whole generations of human souls, in whom free will and its responsibilities had begun to dawn, and who were hungering for the Bread of Life, were left to starve for five or six years before they were allowed to

kneel at the holy table for the first time. Not until they had reached the age of ten or twelve or sometimes even fourteen years, were they allowed to approach Him who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." Imagine the fate of a flower in blossom if left for an indefinite time without the dew of heaven to moisten its leaves and strengthen its fibers!

Happily, a recent Decree,¹ just as emancipating in its effects as its predecessor of 1905, has come to us from the Pope of the Eucharist, that abolishes, we hope forever, a custom that deprived our youth of both sexes of innumerable graces at a time of life when they stand in the direst need of them. Children may now go to Communion without the elaborate preliminaries that until recently had been holding them back; they are no longer required to possess a knowledge of the catechism that would perhaps perplex many of their elders. As soon as they are able to distinguish the Eucharistic Species from common and material

¹ *Quam singulari*, Aug, 1910.

bread; as soon as they have assimilated a few explicit truths easily acquired, and know how to approach the altar with becoming devotion, they are to be not only permitted but even urged to partake frequently of the Food that gives life eternal.

Parents, therefore, and those who represent parents—in a word, Catholics in general—should not worry too much for themselves or for others about the dispositions of soul required for daily Communion. They have only to try to profit by the words of the Pope and put into practice the wise instructions given in the Decree of 1905.

Still, notwithstanding these instructions there are many faithful souls who would like to communicate every day but who are afraid of becoming too familiar with holy things. Such timid souls must at least be reasonable. If their familiarity means "routine," that is, the habit of going to Communion mechanically, as if it were a commonplace act, they can hardly blame daily Communion for this, but rather their own lack of good will. The way to overcome this routine is to revive their faith

and try to realize beforehand the solemnity of the deed, to prepare for it fittingly by prayer and little sacrifices, and then leave the rest to the infinite goodness of Him whom they are going to receive. If, however, by familiarity faithful souls mean a sweet and intimate union with God, far from fearing it, they should desire and seek it, for this is the familiarity practised by those who try to love Him. Our Lord told His Apostles, "I will not call you My servants; I will call you My friends;" and was He not their best friend? Besides, familiarity does not exclude respect. The saints were familiar with Our Lord; and who had more respect for Him than they, and who loved Him more than they? Experience teaches us that daily Communion creates within us not a servile fear of Him, but a filial respect, mingled with love, which inspires us with confidence, which gives us the privilege of calling Him by tender names, and which encourages us to appeal to His kind Heart in all our needs.

There is a touch of Jansenism in that other objection one hears sometimes from

Catholics, that they are not worthy enough to receive Communion often. The reply to this is that no one is ever really worthy to perform so great an act, for there is an infinite gap between the Creator and the creature. All we can do is to try to be a little less unworthy. But we may ask, Will abstaining from Communion make us more worthy? If we are shivering with the cold can we hope ever to get warm by staying away from the fire? While fully conscious of our unworthiness, there is more solid virtue shown in receiving Holy Communion than in keeping away under the flimsy pretext of unworthiness.

We hear other Catholics saying sometimes that they abstain from Holy Communion because it produces no effect on them. But there is an adequate answer to this objection. Holy Communion may produce two effects in the soul. The first is an augmentation of sanctifying grace; the second, interior peace and sweetness. If we are without mortal sin, the first effect is always produced essentially and infallibly, and quite independently of our merit. The

second effect is not necessary, for interior peace and sweetness may very often depend on our temperament or our nerves. Undoubtedly, greater preparation will augment in our soul the graces that come to us from this Sacrament; but even if we do not experience the consolation that our want of instruction makes us look for as one of the necessary effects, we should know once for all that as long as we are not in mortal sin, Holy Communion will augment sanctifying grace in our souls; and this should be sufficient.

"How can I go to Communion daily?" asks another; "I commit so many faults!" As long as we are in this life we may not expect to be without faults. No one better than God knows that we are not angels. St. Peter received Holy Communion from the hands of Christ Himself, and yet through human weakness he denied Him an hour or so later. But St. Peter grew in grace; so shall we. We go to Communion to acquire strength to overcome our faults.

"But I am so distracted; I feel so little devotion!" When not wilful, distractions are

not sins; and even when wilful, they are rarely, if ever, mortal sins. Attention, which is the occasion of distraction, is an act of the intellect, and does not of itself affect the value of our devotions. It is the intention, an act of the will, which gives merit to our works. If the distractions that we complain of are not wilful we may deplore them as a result of human frailty, but not as sins. The remedy for distractions is a vivid recalling of the presence of God; and how can we live in God's presence more efficaciously than by receiving Him frequently in Holy Communion?

There are many other objections that even pious Catholics put up against the practice of daily Communion, but they are all as devoid of foundation as the few we have just refuted. A little study of ourselves or a little reading in spiritual books, will teach us how to answer them. One thing we may be sure of is, that, barring the presence of mortal sin which may be removed by sacramental confession, there is no obstacle except our want of good will that can keep us from sharing often in the Heavenly Banquet.

How necessary frequent Communion is in this age of lukewarmness! The world has really grown cold. What is needed is a renewal of primitive fervor by the frequentation of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist. But it is consoling to know that this renewal is taking place among Catholics. Devotion to the Sacred Heart, more than any other agency, is bringing people to the holy table. Millions have come to learn how sweet and consoling it is to communicate frequently, and undoubtedly the world is the better for it. It only remained for Pope Pius X to complete the work that the marvellous spread of the devotion to the Sacred Heart had begun. In his Decree of 1905, he gave the final blow to the unloveable heresy of Jansenism, and he set the seal of his authority on the work the League of the Sacred Heart is doing throughout the world, that of urging the faithful to nourish their souls daily with the Manna that strengthens, the Food that makes the angels envy men.

XLIX

MESSENGERS OF GOD

Behold I will send My angel who shall go before thee in thy journey, and bring thee into the place that I have prepared. If thou wilt hear his voice, and do all that I speak, I will be an enemy to thy enemies, and will afflict them that afflict thee.
—Exod. xxiii, 20, 22.

Go thou and lead this people whither I have told thee; My angel shall go before thee.—Exod. xxxii, 34.

THE creation of the angels is one of the wonderful works of God; they were the first masterpieces of His wisdom. His image is reflected brightly in them; His power and His goodness is shown in the perfection and the moral beauty with which He endowed them, qualities He has not deigned to confer on men. When we wish to ennoble in man that proportion of form which human language calls beauty, we compare it to the beauty of an angel. Artists try to paint for us those light-winged friends of God, but the language of their brush is at best merely figurative; and only

helps our finite mental vision to see things as they must be in the heavenly country. Again the knowledge and power of the angels surpass anything that our minds can conceive; they live so near God that they reflect in a certain way the attributes that emanate from His Divine Essence. As the first-born of Creation they are called to cooperate in the Divine government of the world. There is nothing, then, to hinder them from directing nature in her various evolutions, or guiding the stars through space and the earth in its yearly path, or keeping the oceans within bounds, or turning raging storms into zephyrs.

We may well conceive the Creator employing the angels in the ordering and development of this Universe and in its subsequent maintenance, for every creature has its utilities proportioned to its nature and activity. If man, notwithstanding his finite faculties and his other limitations, can discover so many of nature's secrets and apply them to his own uses, how much easier it is to imagine what can be done by those higher intellectual beings who live so near

the Source of all power and wisdom! So that it is not too much to assert that the angels control the forces of the Universe and its solar systems, just as puny man controls the forces of this planet whereon he lives and moves. This manner of considering the angels and their functions lends itself to innumerable conceptions which, after all, if reasonable, are merely speculative. Some day all will be revealed to us.

The practical aspect of the ministry of the angels should have a special interest for us. Through the angels, as though secondary causes, the Supreme Master works for our welfare. Just as He uses men as intermediaries in His dealings with other men, whereby He enlightens their minds and moves their wills to well-doing, so does He use those "separated intelligences" whom we call angels, to carry out the spiritual and material functions of His Providence for the benefit of our race. How consoling are these words: "He hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands shall they bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." ¹

¹ Psalm xc, 11, 12.

The evident meaning of these words is that God's angels are continually watching over us and protecting us from the visible and invisible powers of evil. The instinct of the Christian people has always adhered to the idea of tutelary angels who are appointed by God to watch over the children of Adam, to protect them, to intercede for them, to move them to good, and finally to promote their salvation.

In many places, Holy Scripture speaks of this angelical mediation. In Genesis angels are mentioned as ascending and descending a mysterious ladder which stood upon the earth, with the top thereof touching Heaven, to carry to God the prayers of men, and in return to spread amongst them His precious graces. Angels closed the mouths of the lions which were about to devour the Prophet Daniel; they turned into dew-laden wind the fiery flames in Nabuchodonsor's furnace and thus saved the children of Babylon. Throughout the Old Testament they stood in Heaven before the God of Hosts, not merely to adore His Supreme Majesty, but also to uphold the

interests of mankind, to carry messages to the Prophets, to console the Just in their afflictions, to assure the faithful that their prayers to God had been heard. "When thou didst pray with tears," said the Angel Raphael to Tobias, "and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner and hide the dead by day in thy house and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord. And because thou wast acceptable to God it was necessary that temptation should prove thee; and now the Lord hath sent me to heal thee and to deliver Sara thy son's wife from the devil. For I am the Angel Raphael, one of the seven who stand before the throne of God."

The activity of the angelic hosts was manifested in a special manner during Our Lord's life on earth. It was an angel who appeared to Zachary when St. John the Baptist was born. It was another, Gabriel, who revealed to the Blessed Maiden of Israel the privilege of her Divine motherhood. Angels, shining in the brightness of God, sang songs to the shepherds tending their flocks on the Judean hill-side on the night

of the Nativity. They appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to retire with the Infant Saviour, in order to evade the massacre of the Innocents. They stood at the tomb of the Saviour on that first Easter morning, to tell the Apostles and the holy women that He had really risen. They broke the chains that bound St. Peter and delivered him from his prison cell. All these incidents prove that the action of the angels in our regard is beneficent and consolatory. "Are they not all ministering spirits," asks St. Paul, "sent to minister for those who shall receive the inheritance of Heaven?" They are protectors sent by God, so that we should take to heart the words of St. Ambrose, "We should pray to the angels who are given to us as guardians." The Catholic Church has not been unmindful of this wish of the great Milanese Doctor; devotion to the holy angels has always been popular within her fold. She has consecrated the month of October to them, and has thereby given her children an opportunity to study this higher form of creation, to pray to the angels, and to

ask their powerful intercession before the throne of God.

There is one angel in particular to whom our hearts should go out spontaneously—our guardian angel—the one who, we confidently believe, has been specially appointed to walk beside us, to watch our every movement, to inspire us with good thoughts, to ward off the assaults of Satan, to record our victories in the service of God, and to act generally as one whose only object is to promote our spiritual welfare here on earth.

For this signal favor we should thank God, and should resolve never to do anything that might repel our guardian angel from us, or give him cause to regret his mission near us. "See that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say to you that their angels in Heaven always see the face of My Father who is in Heaven."¹

A day will come when we shall know all that God's angels have done for us, and it is only then that we shall be fully able to appreciate the value of their mediation.

¹ Matt, xviii, 10.

Meanwhile, as devoted servants of the King of the angels, as the lovers of Him who has legions at His command, we may show them "reverence for their presence," as St. Bernard says, "devotedness for their kindness, confidence for their watchfulness, that is to say, a triple cultus of respect, love and confidence. Respect them, love them, confide in their protection, and our passage is assured amid the obstacles and obscurities of this life."

L

FRIENDS AT COURT

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you help me in your prayers for me to God."—ROM. xv, 30.

Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners: but you are fellow-citizens with the saints and the domestics of God.—EPHES. II, 19.

THE Apostles' Creed teaches us that there is a Communion of Saints, that is to say, a mutual intercourse existing among the three great groups of the children of God, the Church Militant, the Church Suffering and the Church Triumphant, and that all share in the mutual benefits arising from this communion. The Catholic Profession of Faith asserts that the saints are to be honored and invoked, and that the they in their turn offer prayers for us.

In the language of the Scriptures sainthood has a wide scope. The saints are all the members of the family of Christ who are called to perfection, not merely those who have arrived thereat. To use familiar ter-

minology, the Church Militant comprises all who are still living on earth and who are struggling with their triple enemy, the world, the flesh and the demon. They have the pledge, however, that if they persevere in the struggle, God's grace will aid them to the end; relying on His promises they have a firm and well-founded hope of reaching the goal. The Church Suffering is made up of those souls who have ended their earthly careers with the seal of God's friendship on their brow. They are now passing through a temporary stage of purification, expiating minor faults prior to their entry into eternal glory. The Church Triumphant comprises all those who from the beginning of the world have entered into their final state of bliss. They are the countless millions who stand before the throne of the Most High, and join with the angels in chanting forever the praises of the One, Eternal, Omnipotent God. And yet these three categories of souls, distinct on account of their divers situations, form only one living body, whose head is Jesus Christ, and whose life and movements are under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

This common union of souls is beautifully typified by St. Paul in the passage where he compares the Church to the human body, whose parts have no separate existence or separate aims, and are useful only when united together for the good of the whole. The doctrine that whether we be in Heaven, or in Purgatory, or on earth, we are all interdependent members of the Mystical Body of Christ, is one of the most consoling doctrines of our Faith. It teaches us that in the matter of the heritage of our adoption, there is neither Jew nor Gentile, bond nor free; we are all one in Christ.

However, while this bond of union affecting the three states remains intact, the language of mankind usually gives the title of sainthood to the Elect who enjoy the vision of God; and when there is question of honoring the saints specifically, it is the members of the Church Triumphant who receive this honor. They are our predecessors who have successfully trodden the narrow way; and we have the firm faith founded on revelation and reason that,

even in their present bliss, they are not unmindful of the ties which unite them with us members of the Church Militant who are still struggling upward toward the same country. We honor the saints triumphant for their past careers, even to the veneration of their relics; we study their lives; we try to imitate their virtues; we rejoice with them in their present glory, and long to share in it. That they cannot be unmindful of these attentions the doctrine of the Communion of Saints sufficiently assures us, and we may confidently look to them for the kindest interest in our behalf.

Why should it be otherwise? We belong to the same body and are trending towards the same goal. They have been over the road before us; they know what we need for the arduous journey, and how they can be of use to us. Besides the prestige of victory, which gives them influence in the court of Heaven, they have a greater knowledge of God and of His ways of dealing with us. With their superior vision they see and know what is conducive to our spiritual welfare, while we, during our term

of probation, must be content with believing. Their motives and ours may differ in many things, but our ends are the same, the extension of God's glory and a mutual desire of pleasing Him.

The members of the Church Triumphant undoubtedly seek our interests, and they do this by interceding as God's special friends, by joining their merits to those of Christ for us, and by having for us a more enlightened charity than they could have had on earth. What a precious thing to have such friends in the court of Heaven, and how frequently we should invoke their intercession! How generously we should use our privilege of addressing ourselves to them in our earthly trials, convinced as we are that they hear our sighs and measure the intensity of our longing!

Another reason why we should make friends with the members of the Church Triumphant is that, when we honor the saints, we glorify God in the masterpieces of His power, His mercy and His goodness. God Himself cooperated in their spiritual formation. It was His grace that led them

up the rugged road to sanctity and made them what they are. Nothing reflects so well the infinite perfections of God as the sanctity of His creatures; when we honor the saints and try to secure their friendship, we proclaim this truth, thereby recognizing the greatness of Him who alone could accomplish such work in them.

Again, when we honor the saints we pay them the tribute of our gratitude. It is by following their examples and reproducing in ourselves some phase of their career, that abundance of heavenly grace is infused into us. How often, unknown to ourselves, the ideals of Christian perfection enter into our lives through the study of the lives of the saints! We hear a great deal nowadays about the influence of atavism and heredity. It is indeed true that men are not scattered through the world like particles of dust, independent one of the other, or like the grains of sand that the turmoil of waters bring together, without cohesion and without sympathy; we must admit a human solidarity. Each generation of men is influenced by the generation that preceeds it,

and it in turn will leave its impress on the one that is to follow it tomorrow. We spring from men, we are raised by men, formed by them, and our worth may be gauged by the worth of our forebears. The teaching and example of other men influence our lives. Who are our best teachers if not the saints? Their words and their works should mold our careers. The Church Triumphant should teach the Church Militant how to live and how to die.

The Catholic Church, of which we profess to be devoted children, gives us the example we should follow in honoring those heroes of heaven. She allots the saints a royal place in her liturgy; their praises are daily sung by her throughout the world. The festivals she has instituted in their honor, the shrines raised under her protecting wing to form resting-places for their precious relics, attest the large part the honor and veneration of the saints have in her history. Her artists, moved by ideals that only a true and living faith could inspire, have produced masterpieces of human skill on canvas and in marble, to raise our minds

above material things and to inspire us with the desire of sharing in the glory of the saints, surpassing them if possible. Why should we not endeavor to accomplish more than they did? We are living in an age when the lessons of the past and reverence for things sacred, are losing their hold on the minds and hearts of men. Worldliness, honors, pleasures, the blind adoration of wealth, are capturing human energies and leading our race to a forgetfulness of its only real interests, which are those of the life beyond the grave. Should we who have such a precious legacy left us as that of the example of our sanctified brethren in the Faith, allow it to go by default?

Let us make a study of the lives and methods of the saints of God, not indeed to gratify a mere craving for speculative knowledge, but for its practical worth. A study of the lives of those heroes and heroines will convince us that they were the only true philosophers. No sophist can ever pick a flaw in the inexorable logic of those who bent all their energies to reach the end for which they were created. If our cou-

rage fails us at the sight of the lofty pinnacles reached by them in the sublime folly of the Cross, let us not ignore the efficacy of the ever-present grace of God. The saints were men and women like ourselves, formed of the same dust of the earth as we, subject to the same weaknesses and prone to the same falls; but, unlike us, they never allowed themselves to become discouraged. Perseverance in the struggle, aided by God's grace, was the secret of their success; it was the key that unlocked for them the gates of the Church Triumphant. What they have done so also can we. Study their lives, follow their examples, ask their intercession, make friends of them, and the end is assured.

LI

THE PASSING YEARS

The number of the days of men at the most are a hundred years: as a drop of water of the sea are they esteemed: and as a pebble of the sand, so are a few years compared to eternity.—
—ECCLUS. XVIII, 8.

Surely man passeth as an image; yea, and he is disquieted in vain. He storeth up; and he knoweth not for whom he shall gather these things.
—PSALM XXXVIII, 7, 8.

TIME is flitting; the mile-stones in our lives are disappearing one by one; the months and the years, with their joys and sorrows, are rapidly hiding themselves behind the receding hills; even the centuries are moving onward towards that

Unfathomable sea whose waves are years,
Ocean of time whose waters of deep woe
Are brackish with the salt of human tears,

leaving their souvenirs, those at least that are worth troubling about, consigned to the pages of history.

The twentieth century is with us, pregnant with its untold possibilities; it is already on its onward march calling us to

action, and no cycle in the life of the world ever started under such favorable auspices. The experiences as well as the successes and the failures of the preceding nineteen are behind it, to teach it wisdom and guide it on. What marvellous advancement in physical research and discovery has been made in the past few years! The patient genius of man is revolutionizing the world; every science, every art, every handicraft, has felt the influence of his inventive mind. So deeply, in fact, have material modifications and improvements affected us, even in the minor details of life, that were our forebears of a generation back to return to this earth, they would feel that they had dropped into Fairyland. For these conquests of mind over matter we thank God, for they have been beneficial to our race; we thank Him, too, that He has given such power to man, and we glorify Him in the mysteries of nature that have been so generously revealed to us; the heavens and earth and the products thereof should proclaim His glory through man.

But this is only one side of the medal.

Is advancement in the moral world keeping pace with advancement in the physical? Is the tremendous moral strength of the Church of God wielded as it should be for the betterment of the human race? Do the uncounted millions of her children pause to think that taming electricity, or binding continents with steel, or furrowing the oceans with huge floating castles, or cleaving the air like birds, noble works though they be and worthy of the efforts that are made to achieve them, are, after all, not man's ultimate object in life? Man was born for higher destinies; there is another and vaster world, the world of his soul, the world of his intellectual and moral interests, the world wherein he struggles in his search after truth and higher ideals, the world that is overlooked by our modern philosophers as unworthy of consideration. And yet the receding years may teach us that even in this spiritual world the present age may learn from the past; for the past was not so dark or so unenlightened as some authors would have us believe. The modern seers who would ignore the work of their

predecessors and try to burden us with new moral standards, act either through ignorance or bad faith. They may brazenly proclaim their shibboleths to all comers, that the Catholic Church is the antagonist of spiritual progress, that the Church and moral codes are irreconcilable enemies, that she has no longer any influence on society, and so on; but their hollow sounds will never belie the Church's record in the past or weaken her power for good in the future. Fortunately for us Catholics, the study of the things of the soul was undertaken many centuries ago; the operations of the intellect and the influences that made the heart responsive, were as well known centuries ago as they are today; and men had not to grope in darkness in quest of methods or motives for their actions. The Church on earth, which is the mouthpiece of her Divine Founder, has been teaching for nearly two thousand years that "the soul's the thing," and that the virtue must be cultivated for the sake of the soul.

And yet how little the human race is profiting by her teaching! It will suffice to

glance around us today to see the degradation that is rampant in human society. Irreligion and vice have such a hold on it that there is little to be hoped for in present conditions without the all-powerful grace of God. The late Cardinal Vaughan gave a sad picture of society when he told us that the new century—our twentieth—would dawn upon a world sadly out of joint and sick unto death. His words are enough to make one pause to ask whether Catholics, as members of a Church which is the greatest existing moral power on earth, are doing their duty to their fellow-men.

"The sense of uncertainty and unrest is universal," he wrote; "races are exasperated against races. Rival nations have provoked each other to strife by gibes and insults, and men are asking whose influence is to dominate mankind... What may not this century have in store wherewith to scourge those who have sinned against the light? Envy, jealousy, hatred, desire for revenge, avarice, greed of power and influence, have broken out among the nations like a plague of vices that threaten to destroy

them. Remedies have been applied, but remedies are worthless... Nations have forged weapons of destruction, established compulsory education without religion, preached the gospel of commerce, of the open door and sphere of influence, and then despatched armies to fight the people. They have dug passionately into the bowels of the earth for more and more of the precious metals, yet taxation is increased and wants multiplied, and there is a chaos of conflicting cries, but no common agreement."

This is the heartrending picture that civilization presents after nearly two thousand years of Christian teaching and example. Our penal institutions are filled with individuals who are expiating their crimes, and there are undoubtedly many others who should be in their company if justice had its due. It may be seriously questioned whether the European revolution, whose horrors ushered in the nineteenth century was so disastrous in its after-effects as the slow, studied revolution that is going on in the minds and hearts of countless numbers at the present time, when Godless education,

divorce laws, secret societies, desire for wealth, scoffing at religion, ambition in its various forms, are gnawing at men's vitals and leading them away from their one true end.

Pessimists argue that notwithstanding churches and doctrines and moral teaching, we are rapidly trending towards paganism in thought and practice, and there would appear to be some reason for their views. A thoughtful writer tells us that "there is no longer any social disgrace connected with the profession of non-Christianity. Public opinion of the modern world has ceased to be Christian. The once all-denominating Catholic religion, which blocked out the serious consideration of any other claimant, bids fair to be speedily reduced to its primitive helplessness and insignificance. Not that there is anything better to take the place of Catholicism. Scepticism is too little organized and embodied, too chaotic in its infinite variety of contradictory positions, to create an influential consensus of any positive kind against faith. Its effect, as far as the unthinking masses are concerned, is simply to destroy the chief extrinsic sup-

port of their faith and to throw them back on the less regular, less reliable causes of belief. If, in addition, it teaches them a few catch-words of free-thought, a few smart blasphemies and syllogistic impertinences, this is of less consequence than at first sight appears, since these are merely attempted after-justifications and not real causes of unbelief."

There are, certainly, dark clouds hovering over the intellectual and moral world; there are vast forces at work undermining not merely the Catholic religion but even Christianity; and Catholics who have the interests of human society at heart should not fail to appreciate the seriousness of the situation, nor fear to face the consequences of applying an antidote,

What is this antidote? In the first place, we should make use of prayer. There is no instrument more powerful than prayer, none that is so constantly at our disposal; nor is there any agent in this world able to deprive us of it. Consecrate our lives to the service of our Sovereign King, Jesus Christ, and ask Him prayerfully and in all

confidence to lend His powerful aid to men and empires to extirpate error and vice, to sweetly draw all minds to truth and hearts to virtue.

Secondly, as the best means of rendering our prayer fruitful, let us not neglect our own sanctification. If our millions of Catholics in every land would practise virtue in their daily lives, the world would soon feel the effects of their example, and history would have to record the fact, just as it has recorded the noble and untiring zeal of their ancestors in the Faith.

"And what else can we do?" asks the Cardinal, quoted a moment ago. "We can strive to become more like unto Jesus Christ in our daily life, to have compassion on the multitude, to love the poor and the humble, to work—and to live, maybe—among them, in order to lift them up, to instruct the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted, to feed the hungry, and to visit Christ Himself in the person of His suffering members. In this way, by personal example, we shall be more likely to bring a knowledge of the reign of Jesus Christ

to a corrupt and heartless world than by conforming to its false ideals and living upon its smiles and its pleasures."

As members of the great army of God's true Church we cannot too strongly convince ourselves that the years that are passing rapidly should belong to Our Lord and Redeemer, and that we should second the efforts of the Catholic Church to reform the world. When this intellectual conviction is complete, we should act upon it and not be satisfied with platonic wishes or dreamy aspirations.

Happily the future is in our own hands. The coming years are what we shall make them by our activity, our virtues and our prayers. If we Catholics allow sensuality and pride to influence our lives, or if we will live in a sort of supineness, the outcome of indifference or discouragement, whatever good there is in us will be crushed out, and our evil example will influence those around us. If on the contrary we start out to pray and work, and to help ourselves and others, God will second our efforts, and the world will be the better for it.

The passing of the years should make us ponder on the fleetness of life, on the utter vanity of human wishes, and on our responsibilities as Catholics. It will not do to rest after a few sighs over the errors and shortcomings of the age or of society; that would be sterile work. It is not probable that we Catholics shall convert the world just yet. What other generations could not do, you and I may not hope to do; and besides, God has His own impenetrable designs. But we can do our share in the mighty work. Let us go down into the depth of our own conscience and see how we ourselves stand; see what our virtues or our vices are; strengthen our own hearts, the most practical of works. For, in the end, all is vanity except only revere, love and serve God.

LII

THE FINAL SUMMONS

Seeing that all these things are to be dissolved, what manner of people ought you to be in holy conversations and godliness?—II PETER III, 11.

Our time is as the passing of a shadow, and there is no going back of our end: for it is fast sealed, and no man returneth.—WISDOM II, 5.

OUR Sovereign Master has promised eternal life to those who, during their short career here below, submit their minds and wills to Him, persevere in the faith, and remain to the end firm in the observance of His Commandments. On the other hand, to those who refuse to listen to His words or obey His laws, to those who die in His disfavor, He reserves a punishment which shall last throughout eternity.

How dreadful is the thought of the loss of God forever, and at the same time how consoling is the prospect of seeing Him some day face to face! And yet one or the other destiny is awaiting us. The patience and charity of God last as long as

life lasts, but His justice begins its action the moment after death. In the twinkling of an eye the soul is judged by Him into whose presence it is hurried, and there and then it begins its bliss eternal or its sorrow.

As the tree falls so shall it lie. If we die in God's friendship, all is gained; if we die in His hatred, all is lost. This terrifying alternative faces every child of Adam. At the solemn moment of death what a sorry burden are the riches, honors, pleasures of this world! It is then that they proclaim their own emptiness; it is then that they are even eloquent in asserting their own powerlessness. After the precious years spent in acquiring them, and possibly in enjoying them, it is sad to reflect how little they avail us if we have not used them as stepping-stones to climb up to the only goal worth reaching. On the contrary, what a satisfaction to the disembodied soul to be able to give testimony to a life spent with God and for God! The long life is over at last, and how quickly it fled. There was a time—that is, in the long past—when fifty or sixty years seemed an interminable career

to live; the future seemed too distant to be worth consideration. But now that the years are gone, how rapidly they went by; and what consolation there is in the conviction that they were not uselessly spent! The trials and sorrows may have been abundant; many a tear shed, many a bitter sigh heaved, during that long career. False friends, ungrateful children, dishonest neighbors caused many a pang, but these crosses were borne willingly and resignedly in view of the day that has come at last. O the intensity of the happiness of knowing for certain that the goal has been won and that we need no longer worry! Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy eternity!

Seeing that our eternity depends on the state of our soul at the moment we leave this life, a happy death is the one great grace that we should continually crave of God. All other graces are subordinate to this one, and, as it were, preparatory to its reception. Prayers, almsgiving, sacrifices, devotions, the Sacraments—what are they if not merely means to prepare us for that

crowning event of our lives, the meeting face to face with God?

The distractions of the world dim the vividness of this solemn truth. We do not reflect deeply enough on the vanity of things earthly, nor on the nearness of the hour when the Master cometh. We are young and full of life and vigor, and the thought of death does not interest us; we are busy mortals, and the things of time absorb us; we have no leisure to think of death; or if we do think of death sometimes, we do it in a listless manner and hastily. Death has a far-away sound about it that we feel we can afford to ignore. And yet death comes like a thief in the night, stealthily, and when we are off our guard. Ordinary prudence should teach us to be watchful; for it is a fearful thing, St. Paul tells us, to fall unprepared into the hands of the Living God. What does it mean? Simply this, that life has been a failure, and that there is no further chance to change our destiny. A dreadful revelation this will be when it is too late to profit by it!

When the vital spark goes out from

our earthly clay, worldly schemes and ambitions vanish with it. This dread separation blots out fortune, glory, well-being, pleasure, and leaves the soul in overpowering isolation. There are no good works written down in the Book of Life to give it a ray of hope; and while awaiting the sentence of the inexorable Judge, nudity and despoilment in the desert of eternity is the lot of the unprepared soul. The tears of friends are wasted; their prayers are unavailing; the age of mercy is ended; that of justice is begun. While there is yet time, let us give a few moments now and then to reflection. The grace of a happy passage from time to eternity is the one great grace that we should constantly crave from God.

There is a pious organization in the Catholic Church which has for its formal object the procuring of a happy death for its members. It is known to the faithful under the title of "Association of Our Lord Jesus Christ Dying on the Cross, and of His Sorrowful Mother," or more familiarly, as the "Bona Mors." It was founded in

Rome, in 1648, by Vincent Caraffa, seventh General of the Society of Jesus, and ratified by the Sovereign Pontiff, Alexander VII, in a brief dated August 21st, 1655. This Sodality spread rapidly, and in 1729, Benedict XIII, in his Bull *Redemptoris Nostri*, raised it to the dignity of an Archconfraternity, and enriched it with many indulgences, favors that were confirmed by Pius VII, in 1821. Five years later, Leo XII granted the privilege of affiliating new Associations of the "Bona Mors" to the Primary Sodality in Rome.

These favors have been extended by the Sovereign Pontiffs solely with the view of advancing the spiritual interests of the faithful, and of helping them to reflect on the supreme moment of their lives. As its name indicates, the end of the Sodality of the "Bona Mors" is to prepare its members for a holy death, by a frequent remembrance of Our Lord's Passion and Death, and by the little practices of a fervent life. In places where it is established, the members meet once or twice a month, to hear an instruction on the sufferings of Our Lord,

on the sorrows of His Blessed Mother, or some other subject equally edifying. Prayers are recited in common; the sick and dying are recommended to God in a special manner. If the opportunity presents itself, we should enroll ourselves in this Association of the "Bona Mors," or into Associations of a similar nature, such as the "Sodality of the Agonizing Heart of Jesus," and we should urge others to do likewise. Working to secure the grace of a happy death not merely for ourselves but also for those around us, or to put them in the way to obtain this great favor, is assuredly a something that has its place well defined among the works of zeal for souls. A tactful word sent home in its own time and place, has made many a wayward soul pause to think, for death has its terrors that even the most unheeding cannot withstand. And yet when all is said and done, we must recognize that we are but atoms in the hands of God, who comes and goes when He pleases, who gives life and takes it away just as it suits Him. Our fervent prayer every night and morning, should be,

From a sudden and unprovided death, Lord Jesus, deliver us!

And when the Lord Jesus who has listened to this prayer of ours, uttered so fervently and so often during long and anxious years, shall at last call us to Himself, what a joy it will be to feel that our lives have not been lived in vain! For there before us, with its portals widely opened, shall be Heaven, with its splendors so often the subject of our meditations, and its joys so long the object of our desires. There at last is the term of life's journey, the crowning of our career. Before us is the eternal home where there shall be no hunger, nor thirst, nor cold, nor heat, nor fatigue, nor temptations, nor sin. O the consolation of it all! There we shall meet once more, never to be parted again. those whom the ties of blood and friendship had joined to us in this life. There we shall see and know the saints whose examples encouraged us so often in the struggle for the crown. There we shall see the angels whose kindly offices guided our tottering footsteps and whose inspirations so often strengthened us.

There we shall see Mary, our heavenly Queen, whose kindly intercession we never invoked in vain. There we shall see, beckoning us to Him, the Saviour of mankind in the splendor of His glory. There, dazzled by the majesty of His Presence, we shall kneel before God Himself, whose praises we shall sing for eternity.

