

A woman at prayer
AD47144

A Woman At Prayer



873323



Almost everyone tries to keep a diary or notebook during a retreat. Most of us have subsequent difficulty reading our own handwriting - - - and somehow the words we jot down rarely seem to recall the developed thoughts which meant so much to us when we made the notes.

This booklet, "A Woman at Prayer", will solve the problem admirably for many devout retreatants. It brings together in attractive, readable, succinct style points for meditation which follow the pattern of the best retreats. Many of its "suggestions" are substantially the suggestions made in all good retreats; some supplement the usual suggestions. All are of basic importance and will prove stimulating to memory and thought as retreatants strive to recall the lessons of their retreat or to build on these with further, fruitful meditation.

Users of the booklet will be deeply grateful to Father Overman for his notes and to those who have made them available in so convenient a form.

+ John Wright

† John Wright
Episcopal Adviser
Lay Retreat Movement

Deacidified

PERFECTION FOR LAYFOLK

To be upward-reaching is a sign of life.

When Our Divine Saviour said, "Be ye perfect," He was addressing Himself to all. It was a very high perfection that He urged upon His followers. "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." Consequently each Christian is bound to two things: First, to strive for perfection, and, second, to try to scale the heights without ever being content with a second-best sort of holiness.

Since the model of our personal perfection is the infinite perfection of God, the question naturally suggests itself, how is God perfect? God is perfect in His boundless life of knowledge and love. God the Father loves Himself and expresses His love in the Word, His divine Son; God loves Himself and breathes forth this love in the Holy Spirit. This is God's limitless perfect life.

Our perfection, then, consists in knowing and loving God with all the power of our being. Knowledge alone won't sanctify us; we must prefer God above all things and cleave to Him. But an ever increasing knowledge of God is essential if we are to grow in love to the perfection expected of us by Christ.

Two things we must avoid if we would be perfect: One, we must cease to know the world; and two, we must refrain from loving the passing things of time. The life of multitudes today consists in knowing creatures to the exclusion of a knowledge of God. Many people have their minds so filled with creatures of all descriptions—cocktails, cigarettes, TV, movies, food, best-sellers, sex, headlines, gossip, clothing, ads, business, etc., etc.—that there is no room in their heads

for the truths of God. And the same goes for their wills. They have so attached themselves to things, both animate and inanimate, real and imaginary, that their wills are bound down to earth. "Where your treasure is," said Christ with great psychological insight, "there is your heart also."

So, break your bonds! Practice recollection to clear your mind of the mirage of creatures; practice detachment to open your wills to the attraction of Divine goodness.

Are we asking so much? Well, child, you'll have to make these two renunciations ultimately anyhow. The angel of death will forcibly tear you away from your toys and gewgaws; and your will will be purged of its false loves in the searching fire of Purgatory. It is much wiser to set yourself to this painful process of recollection and detachment now.

Know God! Put aside the slop that goes into your mind through the multiple channels of modern communication. Take up your New Testament, your Imitation, one of the good books about the Saints or God's revealed truth. Pull the shades of your bedroom windows, get down on your knees and ponder the great truths of the Faith. Fill your mind with God.

Love God! To love means to prefer, to cleave to. Stop trying to possess all the unnecessary creatures that your eyes see; be content with simple things. Turn to God. Love to be in His presence at Mass. Love to remember his spiritual presence within you: "Know you not that you are the temples of God?"

GOD, OUR SECURITY

It is easy to be secure—if we know how.

There can be no question about the need that each of us has for security. Robert Louis Stevenson once wrote a phrase that shows us why: "We are but older children, dear, who fret to find our bedtime near." Much of adult bravery is merely whistling in the dark.

It is understandable that we should have fears and moments of anxiety. Our little personality is surrounded by the limitless unknown. We have but a brief few minutes of life here on this earth where time has dragged its slow length on for countless centuries. And after life what? Tennyson reflected on the puzzle of eternity: "Twilight and evening bell, and after that the dark . . ." The candle of life is snuffed out and we are alone in the dark.

And thus, standing on the sliding slope of time, we clutch at all sorts of straws to get for ourselves a feeling of security. There are some that grasp material possessions; and all that they actually gain is further anxiety. Others grasp at a partner in marriage; and they, in as much as original sin has made human nature a broken reed that pierces the hand, find further sorrow. And yet others hold fast to reputation which is a mocking scold at best. And all of these, because they look to creatures for their security, build on sand.

And there is yet another desperate expediency to which many yield in their frantic search for security. They look to their own inner resources for security. But in as much as they themselves are creatures they are only trying to draw water from empty wells with broken pitchers.

The greatest secret that we can learn for our peace of mind is the futility of creatures. It took David a lifetime to learn this lesson. But he

learned it and wrote in his old age: "Omnis homo mendax" (every man's a liar). Neither possessions, nor spouse, nor child, nor fame, nor self, provides a firm foundation for our security. It is only by admitting the limitations of creatures—ourselves included—that we begin to have sense. Then we can begin to turn to God.

God is our security. He is eternal and thus unaffected by the mutability of time; He is infinite, and thus limitless; He is changeless, and thus sure and steady; He is all merciful, and thus possessed of unbounded compassion for weakness; He is just, and thus appreciative of every spark of good in us.

God does not love us because we deserve His love; God loves us because He is God. "God hath first loved us," exclaimed St. John. God fell in love with nothingness, with weakness and littleness. It is our very limitation that attracted God. Our darkness called out to God's light, because light shows up best in darkness.

We are told that the Saints gloried in their weakness, in their faults and failings. It is true that they recognized the glimmerings of virtue that were manifested in their lives. But they gave credit for what goodness they possessed to God. They welcomed their limitations because thus they had no desire to steal any glory from God. All that was good in themselves they ascribed to God; their sins they claimed for their own. "Thou dost but crown thy graces, O God," cried out St. Augustine, "when thou dost reward our merits!"

The sincere acceptance of ourselves, and complete dependence on God—this is the way to inner security and peace of mind.

PEACE, IT'S WONDERFUL

We each make our peace or mar it.

We live in a confused, mad world. And if we are not careful we shall all be mad. It will be worth our while, therefore, to try to understand what peace is and how we can acquire it for ourselves.

The opposite of peace is chaos. When contrary forces collide head on, when warring, hostile personalities meet, when pressures are applied from many sides, the result is a state of disorder. Lives are ruined, happiness destroyed, minds are twisted, in an atmosphere of enmity and confusion.

We were made for the enjoyment of peace. Had there been no sin in the world, peace would be our permanent environment. In a better world undisturbed by sin, peace would come naturally to us. But today, given the world as it is, we must use intelligence and determination to acquire for ourselves the peace we need to live in.

St. Thomas has given us the classical definition of peace. "Peace," says this great Doctor of the Church, "is the tranquillity of order." We can transfer his definition into more familiar idiom: Peace is having everything in its place. Once you put things where they belong you begin to enjoy the tranquillity and serenity of mind that we call peace.

Peace is not dead, passive stagnation. St. Thomas' definition of peace allows for a full measure of satisfying activity. It is possible to have the interplay of great forces, of powerful streams of thought and action, as long as they are ordered, properly subordinated, that is, in their proper places.

We all agree that peace is very desirable; we admit, also, that we can live a full life under the reign of peace; the question now is, how can we acquire peace in our day. The answer is not hard to find: Personal peace is the product of the virtue of justice. This is what the Holy Spirit meant in the Psalms by the verse: "Justice and peace have embraced." (Ps. LXXXIV 11)

Justice is the virtue that inclines us to give to everyone what is due to them. Justice gives us a calm view of everything; justice enables us to have the proper perspective, to give the right emphasis. What disturbs us most is that we do not see things clearly. We over-value trifles, we under-value essentials. And the result of such confused thinking is restlessness, confusion, wasted effort, the feeling of failure and frustration.

Most of us get the impression of peacefulness from St. Joseph. In the pages of the New Testament he moves with quietness and sureness. He had great problems and heavy responsibilities; but he was ever in peace. What was the secret of his peace? St. Matthew tells us: "For Joseph . . . was a just man." (I 19) Joseph was unafraid and unconfused because his eyes were firmly fixed on what was right, what was due to God and man.

Once we are persons of peace, then we can begin to weave a pattern of peace around us. We should make our own the prayer of St. Francis of Assisi: "Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace; where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy."

ON SARDINE CANS

Thought given to values can save worlds of grief.

There is a story told of a missionary in the South Sea Islands. The only way that he could win the good will of the natives was by practicing medicine. It so happened that the son of the Island chief fell ill of pneumonia. When the witch doctors seemed unable to break the spell of the disease, the chief called for the missionary. His sound medical treatment saved the child. The chief was immensely pleased and, in his gratitude, determined to give the missionary the tribe's most precious possession. On the day determined amid great pomp and ceremony the object most treasured was presented to the missionary. He could scarce keep from laughing: The treasure of the tribe was a sardine can!

Perhaps this never happened; this story may be only a modern parable. But it carries a pointed lesson. How many of us are like those South Sea Islanders in our over-valuation of the things we possess. Very few of us do not have our "sardine cans."

Values to be Examined

Much confusion is introduced into women's lives by wrong values. To esteem a trifle as a treasure is the way to be unhappy. Why go to a lot of trouble to do what is not worth doing? The poet Lowell pointed out the tragedy of wrong values when he wrote the lines: "In the devil's booth all things are sold; trifles are bought with a whole soul's tasking."

It would do us all a great deal of good if from time to time we would sit ourselves down and examine our values. It may be that we think too much of material possessions. Do we work and

skimp and save so that we can buy more clothes, another appliance, new furniture? The possession of these things is not in itself a virtue. They may not be worth the bother involved. Someone recently spoke of people who are "so busy making a career that they have no time to live." That could be applied to many of us; we are so busy getting things for ourselves that we stop living.

Keeping up with the Joneses, staying abreast of every fad, trying to own each new product as the persistent advertisers cram it down our throats—all of this runs us ragged. Life becomes a merry-go-round, a rat race, as a result of setting up erroneous values.

Christ's Clarification

Our Divine Lord gave us a yard-stick for measuring the true values of everything: "What does it profit a man," He said, "if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul? Or what would a man give in exchange for his soul?"

In a well-ordered life the spiritual is most esteemed. We were put in life to achieve a spiritual destiny. Therefore things of the spirit—prayer, Holy Mass, the Sacraments, love of God and neighbor, doing God's will—are most precious because they directly contribute to our success in life. Material things have their uses it is true, but their value is relative: Only if material things really contribute to our soul's development are they worth bothering about. Once we learn this truth we'll throw out all the "sardine cans" that are cluttering up our life.

TODAY'S "V.C."

A vicious circle can turn life into a tread-mill.

Every age has its own peculiar "V. C." (vicious circle). We have ours. It goes something like this: People have no taste for the spiritual because they are so attracted by material things. They would learn to love the spiritual if they would make a real attempt to live a more spiritual life; but to live a more spiritual life they must cease being so preoccupied with the material.

What can be done to break up this vicious circle? Until people actually "taste and see that the Lord is sweet" they will not be sufficiently motivated to reduce their preoccupation with material things. And the attraction of the senses, of earthly satisfactions, hold them back from giving the spiritual a try. Perhaps education will break the circle; perhaps people will accept the word of authority and make a beginning. If we could dispell the enchantment which material things throw over the human spirit for just a little while so that the individual could turn to God and experience the "joy of the Lord", that would do the trick.

Strange Inversion

Isn't it strange that creatures are allowed to crowd out the Creator? We get so involved with the trinkets that God has made and given us that we forget the loving Father from whom they come. It reminds us of the cuckoo bird. This bird lays its eggs in another bird's nest. The young cuckoos, however, develop much more rapidly than the young of the foster parents. The result is that the baby cuckoos shove the young of their foster parents out of the nest.

Isn't that like us moderns? We have one big purpose in life: to develop spiritually. Food is to keep us alive, houses to shelter us, clothes to protect and adorn us, recreation to keep us in good health—all this while we work out our

destiny of becoming saints. But what happens? We act like children who, when given an all-day sucker, ignore the candy and start chewing the stick.

Inner Attraction

Whatever good there is in creatures to make us want them has been put there by God. God is the source of being, and beauty, and goodness. If creatures, then, have the power of making us happy, their infinite Creator has an infinitely greater power of giving us joy. Thus it was that the Psalmist cried out: "O taste and see that the Lord is sweet; happy is the man that hopeth in him." (PS. 33, 9) The Holy Trinity dwells in the soul of every justified person; when you are in the state of Sanctifying Grace the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, are present to you in a special way. St. Thomas says that through the indwelling the Trinity is with you "to be enjoyed."

And what joy is not the infinite God able to impart to those that love Him!

Why do not more of us enjoy the sweetness of our companionship with the three divine Persons of the Most Blessed Trinity? Because we are so seldom aware of their presence, because we so seldom turn inward to them, because our minds and hearts are fastened on a million trivialities. We are the slaves of creatures, and thus cannot enjoy the leisure of the children of God. Our greatest need, therefore, is **simplicity** in our living, **self-denial** in our pleasures, **recollection** throughout the day, and a spirit of **detachment** from creatures. Only thus is liberty of spirit bought; only thus can we "taste and see that the Lord is sweet."

ON FOOLING YOURSELF

The fool is the enemy principally of himself.

The most dangerous kind of deception is self-deception. At first sight it might seem impossible to fool oneself; but it is actually very easy. That's why the philosophers of Greece taught that the first step toward wisdom is know oneself; that's why the Saints of Christendom teach that humility is the foundation of sanctity.

People are self-deceived because they want to be deceived. It is a bit painful to be stripped of our illusions and to face the truth. It seems more satisfactory to live in a world of haze and unreality. But it only seems more satisfactory; actually self-deception is a very great personal misfortune. Would you say that a person who does not feel the cold because of a slowly creeping paralysis is fortunate because he does not feel the cold?

There are several ways in which self-deception operates. Great quantities of people deceive themselves by making religion a luxury. They pray in order to feel good; they go to church so that they may have the satisfaction of appearing pious; they give to charity so that they may have that "fine inner glow". Instead of being truly religious they are rotten selfish.

Then there are the people who use religion for their own ends. They want to be big fish in their own little pond, so they jump into religious activity. They get to be head of sodalities and organizations. They work like Trojans; Ulysses cleaning the Aegean stables would seem to be resting compared to them; and their activity does more harm than good. They are hypocrites. They are promoting themselves and claiming credit for being servants of God.

Finally, there are those who tacitly adopt the principle that the end justifies the means. These people look so long at the reason that they have for doing something that they overlook the fact that the action is sinful. For instance, a woman who won't talk to her husband because he won't

let her buy a new hat may completely exonerate herself of any fault in her lack of duty to her spouse. "He's mean," she says over and over again until she has convinced herself that what she is doing is all right.

And in every one of these cases of self-deception the individual is hurting himself. The religion-is-a-luxury people grow lukewarm and frequently fall away from their fervor and even from their Faith itself as soon as they feel that spiritual practices are burdensome; the self-promoters by-religious-activity people become uncooperative and even enemies of the organization as soon as they can't have their own little way any longer; the it's-all-right-because-I'm-hurt people bring sorrow into the lives of everybody including their own.

Self-deception doesn't pay. It is much better to be free of illusions. The suffering we do in facing the truth is much less than the pain and anguish that smashes us like the delayed action of a block buster. Therefore, we suggest two things: First, be unselfish; second, purify your intention constantly.

Be unselfish. This is important because self-deception is the product of selfishness. Think of God; love Him and work for Him in all your activities. It doesn't matter who does the work, or who gets the glory as long as the work gets done. You won't lose out ever by being unselfish.

Purify your intention constantly. Unworthy motives have a way of infiltrating our actions if we are not constantly alert. Even works that have been begun with a pure intention of glorifying God can be spoiled by a lowering of aim.

There is no better way of preparing for heaven than in striving not to deceive ourselves on earth. In fact, Purgatory is the process whereby we are undeceived. It is a lot wiser to do the job on earth and save ourselves the pain.

ON PEACE OF MIND

There is a pearl of great price to be had.

Two eminent scholars in a recent book make much of the unhappiness of contemporary women. Never before in the history of the world, say the writers, has there been more unhappiness among women. And this, they go on to state, in an age when women's rights, freedom, the feminine suffrage have won the day.

We shall not quarrel with these eminent scholars, nor question their statistics, nor object to their solution of the problem. We mention the book to point up the fact that there are unhappy women in the world today.

What can be done about unhappiness? Well, first we can understand whence comes unhappiness. In every case we find that the unhappy person is the victim of wrong emphasis. The person assigns too great a value to some one factor of human living; or undervalues some other factor that ought to be highly regarded.

We can say that the unhappy person is out of touch with reality. She lives in a dream world, and the dreams turn out to be all nightmares.

By way of illustration, suppose that a person feels that it is absolutely essential always to have her own way. That is what she lives for. She will not, as she boasts, play second fiddle to anybody. Can you imagine a more unhappy person? To have one's way always is to want to be God; and that is impossible.

We have said that unhappiness is the product of placing the wrong emphasis. We can enumerate several possibilities for this wrong emphasis: Material possessions, power over our fellowmen, unlimited pleasures, worldly success, peace at the expense of principle. Anybody who places too high a value on the items in this list is courting unhappiness.

Our Divine Saviour came into this world to show us the way to happiness, both in this life and in the life to come. And thus at the beginning of his public ministry he gave us His "formula for happiness." This formula is found in the fifth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel. It is commonly known as the Eight Beatitudes.

Instead of the colorless word "blessed," the original Greek text uses "makairos" which means happy. So Christ actually said: "Happy are the poor of spirit . . . Happy are the meek . . . Happy are they that mourn . . . Happy are they who hunger and thirst after justice . . . Happy are the merciful . . . Happy are the clean of heart . . . Happy are the peacemakers . . . Happy are they who suffer persecution for justice' sake . . ."

The Beatitudes are Christian points of emphasis. If we stress in our lives what Christ mentions in the Beatitudes we will enjoy happiness. There will be no confusion of mind for us. We will know with the greater certitude of Faith what is best for us.

WHO MAKES THE RULES?

There is great wisdom in knowing how a thing works best.

There is nothing that gets us into more trouble than our attempt to make our own rules. Eve attempted to make rules for herself and look what happened to her. God had made the rule she was to observe in regard to the fruit of the Tree of Life. But she knew better and thus opened the Pandora Box of Original Sin.

What motivates women to make their own rules is their unwillingness to face reality. It takes humility and great good will to say: "This is what God wants; and this I will do." There is in each of us a fatal attraction to do our own will. Was it not Queen Elizabeth, the illegitimate daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, who said: "Rather to rule in hell than to serve in heaven"?

And trouble, trouble, trouble is the result of making our own rules. The ideas we have in our own heads do not change what is outside us. A person may decide to abolish the law of gravity. But the law of gravity does not thereby cease to exist, **even for that individual**. Behold her climbing out on the ledge of a 20-story window; behold her muttering with determination, "I refuse to be bound by the law of gravity;" and now behold her smashed to jelly on the pavement below. And what happens in the physical order from making our own rules in defiance of God's rules, happens as well in the moral order.

One might say that God's rules for us are the "Directions" that come with the human appliance. Wise housewives are scrupulous in observing the set of directions which come

with the new washing machine. They know from past experience that wrong use of a delicate machine results in repair bills and inconvenience. Now, since God has been good enough to set down the directions we must observe for the use of the human machine, is it not wise to observe them?

The manufacturer is trying to help the purchaser with the directions he includes in the package with the appliance. And God is being kind to us when He makes the rules for us. The human being is so complicated, so delicately adjusted, so intricately related to other beings, that only the wisdom of God Himself is adequate to make rules for us. It is sheer madness to make our own.

Why is it that we grow hostile to God for giving us the rules we must follow? We ought to be eternally grateful that He thought enough of us to set the pattern for us. It is easy to lead a useful, contented, happy life on earth if we tailor ourselves to God's ideas for us. God is our Heavenly Father; God knows what will hurt us, and what is best for us both in time and in eternity. Fortunately for us God has revealed His Will for us and continues to guide us safely in the vital teaching of the Church. How foolish to resist the restraining Hand of God and to jump off the deep end!

Much of our success in being women lies in accepting God's Will for us. Humility to distrust our own will and obedience to do what God wants of us are the two great feminine needs. With all our heart the question in our title must be answered: "God makes the rules!"

WITNESS TO GOD

To be rather than to seem is essential for the apostolate.

Certain men are favored by God with vivid insights into His truth. The late Cardinal Suhard was one of them. In his pastoral letter on the priesthood, issued April 14, 1949 he makes an important contribution to our thinking on Catholic Action by defining for us what a "witness" is.

"It has been truly said," writes the Cardinal, "that to be a witness does not consist in engaging in propaganda, nor even in stirring people up, but in being a living mystery. It means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist." It was in this way that Christ was a witness; it is in this way that we all must become witnesses.

It is safe to say that Christ's words would today be respected had He not died in confirmation of His teaching; but, without His death on the Cross, the Christian message would not have transformed the world. Christ was a witness, a "living mystery". It is impossible to understand Christ, and especially the crowning act of His life on Calvary, unless you think of God.

The historical fact that Jesus Christ died on the cross is a maddening puzzle unless you accept Christ for what He is. The truth of the Creator-creature relationship is involved with the dead Christ. To read aright the Book of Books (thus St. Thomas Aquinas named the Crucifix) you must glimpse God's sovereign rights over the human race, the malice of sin, man's obligation to serve the Almighty, the infinite love of the Creator for His erring creatures. These truths are borne in upon the mind inescapably by the impact of what Christ on the Cross is.

To be a witness "means to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist." The application of that principle to Catholic life would work a revolution. Is it not true that at the first mention of Catholic Action, or the apostolate, people think of what they can do? What they ought to consider is what they can be!

Words are cheap. "What you are shouts so loud," wrote Emerson, "that I can't hear what you say." We have right here the explanation of the failure of so many projects for the honor and glory of God. People talk too much, and spend too little time in making themselves a "living mystery". The trouble with most of us is that we are too easily understood. People see right through us.

They say that every man has his price for which he can be bought. What is our price? Do we practice our religion for what we get out of it? Is self our God? Are the Catholic activities in which we engage merely a form of subtle selfishness? Are we serving God or serving ourselves?

We must answer these questions if we want to be a witness. When all the motivation for what we do is natural and easily understandable by the most worldly of our friends, we are far from being a witness. Only when people say to us: "I can't understand you. You don't act like the rest of us. You are different," only then do we begin to qualify as a witness.

We must become like Christ on His cross—inexplicable to the natural man, but easily understood by those who know God.

ORDER OR CHAOS

A small practice with great potentialities.

Women have an innate liking for orderliness. The reason for this is probably because there is a close relationship between order and beauty. St. Thomas defines beauty as "the clarity of order." When things are in their proper place and blend and harmonize properly we have beauty. And, of course, beauty is the woman's sphere.

Since order is so close to the woman's heart, the absence of order (chaos, that is) is distasteful to her. When nothing matches, when everything is out of place, when people, places and things, are all topsy-turvy the woman feels distressed and unhappy. Therefore, she should be pleased that this leaflet is presenting her with a recipe for order. It is as easy to have orderliness (and therefore beauty) in one's life as it is to make good apple pie simply by following directions. We won't attempt at this time a recipe for apple pie, but we do emphatically recommend our suggestion here set down for achieving life with order.

Now, in order to bring orderliness into your life you've got to start out with an over-all plan. You can't try to have both pea green and pastel pink as the decor of your new parlor at one and the same time and expect to get anything but a mess. You've got to decide right off whether you want to make chicken dumplings or chocolate cake before you start mixing your ingredients. So apply this to your life: What do you want to make of it?

You'll answer immediately: I want to make my life truly Christian and pleasing to God. Good! Now you've got an over-all plan. It won't be too hard to arrange all the components of your life if you just stick to that one idea. But you will not ask: "But what's the secret; what's the recipe of such a good life; how do I make every thing—work and worry, play and pleasure, song and sorrow—mix in proper proportions so that a good life comes out of it all?"

The secret, my dear lady, is THE MASS. Unless you go to daily Mass, I hold out little hope for you. If you go to daily Mass I'll be willing to wager that you'll become a woman after God's own heart, that is, a saint.

You see, the Mass is like a great magnet; and all the details of your life are like scattered iron fragments. When you apply the Mass to them they all gather together and become orderly.

Look what happens when you go to Mass of a morning: You kneel there and through the priest offer to God the gift of Christ Jesus Himself; with Jesus you offer yourself—your body and soul, your dear ones, your home, your hopes and fears, and all that you are. Do you see how that would bring orderliness into your life? You are now turned to God and have but one purpose: to please Him. You have an over-all idea of what you are to do that day. You'll be able to mix the ingredients of your life in the right proportions.

Please, do go to daily Mass, and see how wonderfully it works.

ON BEING GRACE-FUL

It is much better to have Sanctifying Grace in your soul than to win a beauty show

God's greatest gift to mankind is Sanctifying Grace. Here are some of the reasons for this statement: It gives us a share in God's own life and thus is participated Divine Life; It makes us members of God's own family; as members of God's family we are by Grace children of God and heirs of heaven; It makes our souls pleasing to God, beautiful in His sight; It is our means of getting into His wonderful heaven of glory and happiness for all eternity.

In view of all this you can see what ought to be the first and foremost occupation of every individual. We ought to think of nothing else but to retain and increase this marvelous treasure. This Sanctifying Grace is the treasure hidden in the field of our Faith; It is the pearl of great price for love of which we ought to sell all that we have to possess ourselves of It.

The martyrs had this idea about Grace. They endured tortures, they were imprisoned, burnt at the stake, fed to hungry lions, killed. And they could have escaped all this so easily. They merely had to renounce their faith. All they would have lost thereby was their Sanctifying Grace. But they thought that nothing—absolutely nothing in this whole wide world—was as valuable as this precious spiritual quality that made them live by God's own life and be His well-loved children.

Would that all Catholics had the same esteem for their gift of Grace! A new day would dawn in the history of the Church. And so many of the problems that plague people would be solved!

This Sanctifying Grace can be increased by us. Every good deed performed by us while in the state of Grace can be meritorious of more Grace. This participated Divine Life that was given us in our re-birth at Baptism can grow. We can constantly be more and more alive with Divine Life. And for each increase of Sanctifying Grace through the practice of virtue, by our reception of the Sacraments, we are entitled to an added increase of reward and happiness in heaven. This is what Christ meant when He said: "Store up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where moth or rust cannot corrode or thieves break through and steal."

The acquiring of new Grace for ourselves by our good actions is called condign merit. It is a consoling truth to realize how valuable for eternity are our efforts to love and serve God. But there is also another kind of merit. It is called congruous (fitting or extra) merit. This is the effect that our good actions have on others.

An illustration may be better than further explanation. Here is a mother of a wayward son. Her words seem to have no influence over him. But she wants him to save his soul and ultimately get to heaven with her. Now if this good woman acquires great union with God and by the heroicity of her life gains great merit by her prayers, good deeds and sacrifices, God will see to it that this son of hers benefits from the overflow of her merit. As that woman becomes dearer and dearer to God by the sanctity of her life, God's will to give her her dearest wish causes Him to send the boy the efficacious graces that pull him out of the swamp of sin.

That's why we say that no saint ever goes to heaven alone.

GOD'S SHORTCUT

**Efficiency-minded Americans ought to be sold on
the Sacraments**

All the world loves a shortcut. This is proved by the paths that scar otherwise trim lawns, by the laws on city books that prohibit crossing the street in the middle of the block. It seems so silly to people to go around when they can get there faster by going directly across.

Well, the world's love for shortcuts ought to endear the Sacraments to people. That is exactly what a Sacrament is—a spiritual shortcut that gets us to God the quick way. Theologians use ponderous terms to say this. They explain that the sacraments work “*ex opere operato*” (according to the work done). Our other good deeds are “*ex opere operantis*” (according to the work of the worker).

Simply, the explanation means that we get out of receiving the Sacrament much more than we put into the receiving of the Sacrament. Thus, when as an act of private devotion you kneel at the communion rail, you do not get near the grace that you obtain when you receive Holy Communion. You don't put forth any more effort to go up to the rail; you may not have any more love or faith when you open your lips to receive the Sacred Host; but in your act of private devotion you were on your own, while Christ's power worked specially in you when you received the Eucharist.

The Sacraments are often called "channels of grace." They are conduits through which flow the merits of the Saviour; they are sacred signs that "convey what they signify." Let us dwell for a moment on that idea of channel, or conduit.

Suppose you live on a farm and have no running water in your house. To get water you must drop a bucket down into the rain-filled cistern and then draw the bucket up by the power of your good right arm. You have water, it is true, but at the expenditure of hard work. Nor can your water supply be described as abundant.

Then along comes the city to install running water. You now have all the water you desire right at your finger tips. Thus, the hand-drawn water is like the grace you merit by your acts of laborious virtue; the water pouring out of the tap in your kitchen sink is like the grace you receive from the reception of a Sacrament.

Of course, effort on your part is required in the reception of a Sacrament; but it is more of the nature of cooperation with God than hard labor. The water company will keep pressure in the pipes, but they won't send out a man every time you want to fill the tea pot. And just as the flow of water is conditioned on how much you turn the handle of the faucet, so you get more or less grace from a Sacrament as you are more or less perfectly prepared.

But the big point in all this is the inherent power of the Sacraments to sanctify the recipient. The Sacraments contain the grace they signify. It's all there—tremendous sanctifying power, leading across God's own shortcut to rapid union with God.

WOMAN'S SWEETEST VIRTUE

You do not have to spend a lot of money going
to a charm school

What color and fragrance is to a flower, what lilting melody is to the song bird, what the stars are to a glorious June night, that humility is to the woman. She may be a Venus de Milo on the outside, but if she lacks humility she is a gaunt scarecrow on the inside. And, fortunately or unfortunately, the soul has a way of showing itself when we least desire it.

The chief ingredient for a truly lovely person is humility. A woman without humility is somewhat like the Canadian thistle. This flower, growing profusely in the fields of Texas, looks beautiful at a distance, but should you try to pluck the white satiny flower you find that your hands are full of hundreds of sharp painful thorns. Women were never made to be show pieces, set out in the country fields; they were meant to be the joy, the strength and the consolation of man.

Humility is the virtue that makes us honest with ourselves. The proud person is always kidding himself; he won't admit his limitations, and he won't give anybody else credit for knowing more, or being more able, than he. And consequently the proud individual is a bore, a bottleneck in any organization and a torture to himself.

A proud woman is something that God and man abhors. She thinks she knows it all, she feels that she is commissioned to run the whole universe, she bullies others, including her men-folks at home, to such a degree that they avoid her when

they can't let her have her own way. She is a pretty poor specimen of humanity.

We must not confuse humility with an inferiority complex. The woman with a complex is unsure of herself; she is hesitant and afraid. This perplexity and fear is poles away from true humility.

Humility is a serene virtue. St. Teresa used to say that humility is truth. We see things clearly when we have humility. When it is time to take a back seat, the humble person takes a back seat with perfect composure—and enjoys the back seat. But when it is time to step forward, the truly humble steps forward even though she may suffer terribly in doing so.

The truly humble woman is not a prima donna. She is not out for headlines, notoriety, commendation. She is acutely conscious of her many shortcomings; she is deeply aware that whatever talent she might have is given her by God and that He ought to have the credit for it. But when she realizes that she has some ability and that there is an obligation resting upon her to use that ability for the honor and glory of God, she unhesitatingly volunteers for the job.

The woman of humility is not anxious that people listen to her opinions. She may be right, and she may have the feeling that another is talking like a fool, but she knows that God has not commissioned her to correct the ideas of everybody on the face of the earth. She will suggest what she thinks is right, but if there is no reason for her insisting on her way, she is quite contented to see others contend for their opinions.

There is a quiet reality, a genuineness about the humble woman. That is the secret of her charm. She has been wise enough to acquire woman's sweetest virtue.

TESTAMENT OF LOVE

Love is the fulfilling of the Law

There is no evidence in the whole of the New Testament that Christ was betrayed by a woman. All of the unpleasant people in the Gospel Story are men. Pilate and Herod and Caiphas and Judas and other men gave our Divine Saviour some rough times. But the women of the Gospels, from Mary His Mother, to Mary Magdalen who recognized Him in the garden on Easter morning, were solidly on His side. Why was this?

Could it be that the women who met Christ instinctively understood the role He was playing in the history of the race? Christ's mission on earth was to bring men to love. "I am come to cast fire on the earth," He said, "and what will I, but that it be accomplished?" (Luke XII 49). Hatred had congealed the hearts of men; darkness had taken over their minds. The world was a savage jungle as a consequence. To remedy this sad situation the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity took flesh. "To save us He descended from heaven and was made man by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary."

Our salvation is accomplished only through love. This is to be understood in two ways: First, it was God's love for His erring creatures that moved Him to become Incarnate and to redeem us; second, only if we love, do we benefit from the graces won by Christ.

Love is the giving of self out of the inner urging of our own goodness. Thus the devil cannot love, because there is no good in him. Nor can the completely selfish person love, nor the totally depraved. God can love because He is infinite goodness. The philosophers try to express this by saying that good is diffusive of itself. You do not have to buy the services of a person who is genuinely generous and kind.

We can say that there is a curiously illogical quality about the whole of Our Lord's teaching and actions. Since He is infinite wisdom incarnate He might have given us the most cogently reasoned dissertations on virtue that were ever written. He did not do so because He was primarily appealing not to men's intellects but to men's hearts. The poet pointed out the underlying reason for such an appeal: "A man convinced against his will, though vanquished does but argue still." In a certain way love must precede belief.

So God would overwhelm us with love. We would be stripped of our defenses, deprived of arguments, before the tremendous fact of God's infinite love. Creation, the breath of life, the stupendous horizons of the supernatural, all of this is evidence of God's love of His creatures. You do not have to ask what God gets out of His gifts. His love motivates Him to give. God draws beings out of nothing, puts life where before there was death, light where before there was darkness, joy where there was sadness, peace where there was conflict. Love is its own explanation.

The torch of human love is lit at the quenchless fire of God's love. And thus love is the only instrument on earth that elevates and deifies man. Without love the members of the race divide themselves into hostile camps, into haves and have-nots, into mad dogs quarrelling over a bone. There is only one law that can satisfactorily replace the jungle code of tooth and fang, that is the law of love.

THE CHARM OF SILENCE

Silence is golden in more than one way

Many a woman today is weary. Her weariness is more of the soul than of the body. She doesn't work as hard as her grandmother did in the old days, but she is more deeply fatigued. Modern woman is tired from the constant pressure brought to bear upon her. Here we discuss just one phase of this problem and offer a remedy.

Much of feminine fatigue today is caused by the woman's failure to limit her distractions. At one time the woman could retire within the four walls of her home and find seclusion and solitude; there she could find the "inwardness" that her soul needs. But no more. Today the world with all its jangling discords and ugly insistence comes flooding into the home.

What is responsible for this state of affairs? Women have not tried to think this matter through. They have used an over-simplified standard of values. They have acted on the principle that if something is not evil in itself it is therefore all right to welcome it into their homes and their lives. Tobacco, drinking, movies, novels, magazines, newspapers, radio, television, etc., have been accepted in this way. I say that the principle is an over-simplification. It is true that this litany of modern distractions and recreations are not evil in themselves; but that is no reason for taking them unreservedly to our hearts.

It often happens that a thing that is good in itself is not good for an individual. By accepting all new inventions and developments on the basis of this easy standard the woman has lost her freedom of soul. She is chained down, burdened, fettered by the noise, confusion and emotional strains that are brought to bear upon her.

Put it another way: The individual has only so much awareness; the woman can direct her atten-

tion to a limited number of objects. If all of these objects are material, temporal and worldly, she obviously has to eliminate from her life what is spiritual, eternal and heavenly. Her senses and her emotions may be occupied, but her intellect's hunger for truth and her will's hunger for the beautiful and good are dissatisfied.

God is crowded out of the lives of countless American women. From the moment early in the morning when the radio-clock snaps on until late at night when the telephone stops ringing and the last flicker of TV is mercifully extinguished, the woman hasn't a moment she can call her own. Is it any wonder that so many women today are stunted spiritually?

What is needed is silence! It is question of a hard alternative: She can have the fatiguing distractions of the world; or she can have the peace-giving, joyous presence of God. She can't have both. If she wants the awareness of God then she must reduce the noise round-about her and within her to silence. This is not easy. Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity calls it an "ascesis" or a discipline. But it is well worth the effort.

First work for exterior silence. Rigorously limit your distractions: Read the magazines and newspapers at a set time and briefly; keep the radio and TV turned off except for a short period of recreation each day; reduce telephone conversations. The noise the children make won't hurt you; but the noise made by worldliness will.

Then try to increase your interior silence. Keep your imagination under control—no useless day dreams; watch your memory—don't dwell on matters in the past that keep you upset; control your intellect—think of God and His truth rather than spend your time in constant analysis of yourself and neighbor; master your will—seek sincerely to do God's will instead of incessantly plotting how to do your own.

That will take work. But it will reduce your weariness and give you a taste of peace and inner joy that you had not dreamed of.

THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Ponce de Leon did not find it; but we have it.

Never to grow old, never to die—this is a dream that has haunted the human race since the beginning. Ponce de Leon tried to find the fountain of youth and failed.

Amazingly enough the fountain of youth is in the Catholic Church. We call it the Holy Eucharist. If one uses this marvelous source of life, one will never grow old or die. This we know from the divine lips of Jesus Christ Himself. "If any man eat my flesh and drink my blood he shall not taste death forever." It was of the soul that Christ was speaking. It is much better to have the soul live forever, than to prolong this present life indefinitely.

The special effect of the Sacrament of the Eucharist is to confer eternal life upon the recipient. We learn this from the very words used by the priest in conferring the Sacrament. "May the Body of Jesus Christ keep thy soul unto life everlasting. Amen." Thus each reception of Holy Communion is a further guarantee that the recipient will get to heaven to enjoy life without end.

In what way does the reception of Holy Communion give us assurance of eternal happiness?

First, Holy Communion gives us a taste for God and the things of God. When we receive the Body of Christ frequently we are able to withstand the poisonous environment of the world. The world, whose prince is the devil, makes a powerful appeal for our allegiance. "All that is

in the world," says St. John, "is the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life." The appetite for pleasure, profit and power is strong. But we shall never be overcome by the seductive satisfactions of the world as long as we feed our souls on the food that gives us spiritual satisfaction.

Again, Holy Communion acts as an antidote to the seeds of sin within us. Due to Original Sin there are seven downward tendencies in us: Pride, envy, anger, sloth, covetousness, gluttony and lust. These act very much like hostile germs in our blood-stream. If they multiply, illness and finally death will ensue. But the Eucharist reaches within us. The sanctity, the virtue, the grace of Christ is poured into us by Holy Communion. And the fever of death given us by the first Adam, is allayed by the second Adam.

Finally Holy Communion causes a rapid growth in the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity. It takes great faith to receive the little wafer that looks like bread, but is actually the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ. And faith grows by exercise. To receive Holy Communion makes us put our confidence in God and His grace rather than in the goods of this world. This causes an increase of Hope. But most of all does the reception of Holy Communion increase our Charity. This Sacrament is the Sacrament of love. In it two lovers, Christ the Divine Lover, and His faithful follower, the human lover, meet in a life-giving union.

And the virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, will inevitably conduct the Christian to Heaven. Faith and Hope make the Catholic look up to God and strive to love and serve Him; Charity draws him on ever more rapidly until finally the soul is caught in the great, eternal embrace of the Beatific Vision.

THE PEACE-GIVING VIRTUE

There is a way to enjoy peace of mind through the practice of a single virtue.

Each of us loves to have our own way. It is very human to be restless and ill at ease when things are not going as we want them to. So, if we could have our own way all the time and always experience the sweetness of seeing things follow the pattern we wish for them, a great deal of our discontent would disappear.

Believe it or not, the way to accomplish this desirable end is a practice of the virtue of obedience. Christian obedience is not degrading, it is not servility, but it is actually the freedom of the sons of God.

Obedience can be defined as follows: "A supernatural moral virtue which inclines us to submit our wills to that of our legitimate superiors in as much as they are the representatives of God." Now, the possession of a virtue gives facility and even sweetness in doing good actions. That is why the definition says that Obedience "inclines us to submit our wills". This virtue makes us want to do what our legitimate superiors tell us to do.

And right here we see the value of the virtue of obedience. When we harbor in our minds an hostility to authority, when we are always "agin' the government", our lives are always distressed. There is always some law or regulation we don't like, some person telling us what to do, and we keep ourselves in a fighting mood most of the time. That is bad for the nerves.

The acceptance of authority is the solution. St. Paul tells us that legitimate authority is the expression of God's right to tell us what to do. "Let every soul be subject to higher powers," writes the Apostle to the Romans, "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." That is strong language; but it shows clearly that we must accept the fact that we are bound to obey legitimate authority.

The result for us in a spirit of obedience is peace of mind. When we do what our legitimate superiors tell us to do we can be sure that we are doing the Will of God. Superiors are representatives of God and express His will in our regard. We may possibly be fooled when we figure things out for ourselves; but when we obey we do not make a mistake.

Obedience, then, points out to us the sure way of our sanctification. "Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord! shall enter into heaven," says Christ Jesus, "but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter the kingdom of heaven." Doing God's Holy Will is the absolute requirement for achieving our eternal destiny. And obedience puts this absolute requirement in our grasp.

Of course, all this depends on Faith. The person without faith can only see the reasonableness of having someone in charge in order to avoid chaos. But the teaching of our Faith takes us deeper into the matter. The person of living Faith sees each legitimate superior as God's own representative, and obedience as compliance with God's Will. This is the reason why so much tranquility and peace results from this wonderful Christian virtue.

THE "MARY" WAY

The pattern of Mary's life is best for us
after all

"Behold thy mother," said Jesus on the Cross. And ever since then the eyes of Christians have been fixed on Mary. But it is not merely to admire that we look at Mary; her life ought to be the pattern of ours.

Perhaps Mary's simple, unassuming practice of virtue is the most outstanding quality of her years on earth. Theologians tell us that Mary was given more grace than all the other creatures of God combined. Her sanctity started where that of the greatest saints and the highest angels ended. But for all her great graces, for all her amazing privileges, she lived a simple and hidden life.

Mary was a contented woman. She had joy in the wonderful Son that God had given her; and she had sorrow because of the sword that was to pierce her heart. She did not want to have—or to be—anything but what God wanted for her. So many women spend their time in fruitless longing for what they are not.

Mary's life was God-centered. I presume that there was such a thing as advertising in her day. But Mary was not diverted. She lived for God, in the thought of God, for the honor and glory of God. This filled her life with purpose. She had something worth while to do—to love and serve God. This is what filled the little home of Nazareth with happiness.

No doubt, there were larger homes around that little Galilean town. Certainly there were women who had a larger income, a more successful husband, better clothing, more opportunities to mingle with the social set. But that did not cast a cloud over Mary's life. She had something much more satisfying, something more real and enduring.

Mary's life is a clear demonstration of the value for feminine happiness of simplicity, humility, obscurity, industry, prayer, and the overall objective of living for God. There can be no question but that only through the interior life can women find contentment. The more a woman leaves the environment of her home, the more things she finds to do outside the home, the more she tries to impress others by display or masculine achievement, the more miserable she becomes.

We do not advocate locking Christian women up in their houses and keeping them uneducated. Their freedom to come and go, their opportunity to achieve full personality development is as important to them as it is to man. But the woman lives at the heart of the human race. She finds her happiness, her full development and her greatest sphere of influence when she tends inward toward the home circle rather than outward toward the world of social life and business.

The great danger is that a woman will grow stagnant in the little circle of her home. If she wills to live in idleness, in mental torpidity, in spiritual sloth, then she is doomed. The woman closes out the world for one reason alone: so that she can create a new world of her own, a world of unselfishness, of peace, of prayer, of awareness to true spiritual values, a world of deep and tranquil union with God. This is her answer to the chaos of the world outside. This is her "Pool of Bethesda" where all that love her come to bathe to be cured of their diseases and thus to gather strength to clean up the mess outside.

WORK FOR MERIT

Work Need Not Be Unrewarding Drudgery

The necessity to labor comes from the original fall of our first parents. No matter how favored a person may be some work is an inevitable necessity. Work, however, is not an un-mixed curse. It can be a great blessing.

Our viewpoint in regard to labor generally determines whether it is pleasant or not. Some work, however, is so laborious that no amount of thinking will take the suffering out of it. It is well for us, therefore, to have a Christian philosophy of work.

One contribution that labor can make us is the opportunity it affords to do penance. In order that our work have the nature of penance and thus atone for past sin, it must be accepted willingly and performed generously. It need not be liked; we might much prefer to be doing something else. The fact is, however, that scrubbing floors and washing dishes and cleaning venetian blinds can shorten our purgatory.

Secondly, since honest labor is a good action, it enables us to merit. Each day's chores fulfilled to the best of our abilities can increase our sanctifying grace and add to our eternal reward. Here again, a willing spirit is necessary. Work that is done grudgingly and imperfectly is not transformed into merit and reward.

Possibly the greatest attraction that work can have for us is the opportunity it provides for the practice of charity. St. Augustine says love takes the unpleasantness out of hardship and difficulty. "One who loves does not labor or if he labors it is a labor of love." Somebody has to do the work necessary for family living and daily sustenance. If we don't do it, somebody else will have to do it. Our necessary work, therefore, is a service. Again we repeat that in

order for work to be an act of charity, the right spirit must inform it.

Today people at large do not like to work. They try either to avoid it or to turn it into play by means of gadgets and machinery. The "do it yourself" craze seems to be rooted in this modern form of escapism. We do not here make a plea for work that is senselessly done, but a Christian attitude that accepts the hard necessity of labor is much more satisfying than any effort to take the suffering out of work.

Anything that enables us to get our purgatory done with here on earth, that increases our union with God through merit, and adds to our heavenly happiness, anything that gives us a constantly recurring opportunity for the practice of charity, is a blessing. St. Benedict understood this clearly and wrote the famous line "to labor is to pray."

ORDERLY WEEK-ENDS

Take care of the week-end and the week will care for itself.

Recently the Holy Father has been stressing the sanctification of the Sunday. He feels most keenly that a return of the people to God depends on the use they make of the day of rest. If they plunge into distractions and frivolous recreation, giving God just the minimum service to which they are held under pain of serious sin, our Catholic people will grow increasingly worldly. The result will inevitably be that their faith will be weakened, they will succumb to temptation and will adopt the paganism that lies all about them.

Sunday must be given back to God. To be minded so to do, it will be well to reflect on the spiritual significance of Sunday.

The first Pope, St. Peter, change the day of rest from the Sabbath to the first day of the week. The Sunday was to remind the faithful of the Resurrection. Thus each Sunday was to be a "little Easter" for the Church. Our joy in the day was to come principally, not so much from laying aside the burden of the week's work, as from our realization that Christ rose from the dead to give us new life and new hope. Even though we might be greatly borne down by the hard toil and the unrelenting struggle of the other six days, on Sunday our spirit was to be refreshed in the light and peace of the Resurrection.

Sunday had moreover a further significance: It looked to the eternal rest of heaven. This life is our six days of toil; paradise after death is to be our eternal Sunday. Thus the Church says to us on Sunday: "Lift up your hearts! You have not here an abiding city. Live not for time and the world's prizes, but for the life to come."

What to do?

How can we make our Sundays what the Holy Father wants them to be? First of all, consider Saturday as the vigil of Sunday. Do your housework in advance; prepare as much of the Sunday meals as is possible. You and the children ought to feel an air of preparation, of anticipation for Sunday. It is the "big day" of the week, the day of joy, the day to look forward to. The material preparation for the Sunday rest is important, something like a Sacramental.

Secondly, prepare spiritually. Go to Confession on Saturday. Reserve the evening as a time of recollection. Unless forced by necessity do not plan any recreation such as shows or dances for Saturday night. Try to bring into your home an atmosphere of spiritual tranquility. Read through the Mass of the Sunday from your Missal; say the family Rosary; read a few passages from the New Testament, or from the Imitation of Christ, aloud with your husband or/and your family. And go to bed early so that you and the family can go to an early Mass together and all kneel together at the Divine Breakfast-table of the Eucharist.

Of course, we would not deny you the Sunday newspaper and moderate recreation. But what you do on Sunday ought to be as un-worldly as possible. A family outing, if the children are young enough to fall in with such a thing; a visit to like-minded friends who will give you the happiness of good conversation, rather than another dose of TV; a few chapters read together from *The Little World of Don Camillo* or some such book. The possibilities are legion. People, and ideas, and God—that is the Christian formula for a spiritually vitalizing Sunday.

THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL CLASSIC

A Source of Spirituality that has out-lasted
the Centuries

An obscure monk sat pondering and writing in his cell many centuries ago. And what he wrote has been the inspiration of millions of souls.

We don't even know what this monk's name is. Most people have called him Thomas A Kempis. Some today say that he is really a man by the name of De Grout. But it doesn't matter what we call him. He wrote a book that has become a spiritual classic, second only to the Bible.

The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas A Kempis is so valuable because it is a deeply personal appreciation of the spirit of Christianity. This man felt a great attraction for God; his soul hungered for truth and goodness and beauty. But he experienced keenly how grievously his spirit was weighted down by the earthiness of the flesh. The struggle was great. His book makes our heart warm to the man because we also are human.

A Kempis was a great psychologist. He was pitiless in analyzing his hidden motives. There is often a wry humor in his remarks about himself. He seems to regard himself as a wayward child, a child whose small tricks and concealments are quite transparent. He sees his own limitations clearly, but he does not despair. God's grace is sufficient for him.

A lay person may wonder, however, just how pertinent to herself this book is. If the **Imitation of Christ** was written by a monk living a monastic life may it not be unsuitable for the ordinary person? No, the book is not unsuitable. There is a universality about the **Imitation** that stamps it

as great literature. A Kempis was a real person dealing with the problems and complexities of life, anybody's life, anywhere, any time.

Fr. Garrigou Lagrange, the famous Dominican Theologian in Rome, has pointed out that the approach to perfection taken by A Kempis is the traditional one. There are not two ways of acquiring holiness, but one only. And every soul must mount the same path, go through the same experiences, in order to attain high union with God. Self-knowledge, meditation, recollection, resistance to the irregulated passions, an effort to be unworldly and mortified—this is the sum and substance of every program of perfection.

But—and here we repeat again—the **Imitation** is not a collection of precepts and counsels for living a better life. Rather the book is the wise fruit of a life of living the precepts and counsels for a better life. A Kempis seems always to be talking directly about ourself. Listen:

“We frequently judge that things are as we wish them to be . . . If God were the sole object of our desire, we should not be disturbed so easily by opposition to our opinions . . . Many, unawares, seek themselves in the things they do. They seem to enjoy peace of mind when things happen according to their wish and liking, but if otherwise than they desire they are soon disturbed and saddened . . .”

But his knowledge of the science of sanctity is just as thorough as his understanding of human nature: “He does much who loves much. He does much who does a thing well. He does well who serves the common good rather than his own interests . . .”

There is nothing that will do more to quiet the fever of modern life and warm our heart and inspire us to seek spiritual perfection than this wise and vibrant voice from the past.

*The Imitation of Christ, newly translated by Croft and Bolton; Bruce Publishing Company, Milwaukee, 1940.

ON BARGAINS

It is wise to do smart buying
even in spiritual things.

Women are careful shoppers and have a good eye for bargains. Men are apt to buy the first piece of merchandise they see. But not the ladies! They want their money's worth and will hold to the trail until they find a real bargain.

This is why the retreat movement ought to appeal to the women. In no activity does a person get more returns for the effort expended than in the retreat movement.

With so many demands being made upon us today, with so many needs—more schools, more churches, recreational centers and other things—there is a real necessity to conserve our energy, to put effort in what will have the most lasting and wide-spread effect. Let us first consider what a retreat is, and then try to discover how it is so influential in the life of the Church.

What a Retreat is

A retreat is a period of time spent by an individual in relative solitude during which he has time to think, time to pray, time to do a bit of study about his religion, and time to listen to some sermons delivered by an experienced retreat master. A retreat brings souls into contact with Christ, the source of all wisdom and happiness. A retreat is an opportunity to start living a more intelligent, a more fervent Christian life.

A retreat starts with Holy Mass, proceeds with the Rosary, sermons, the Stations of the Cross, and ends with the Papal Blessing and Benediction of the Eucharistic Savior. In between times, the retreatant has the chance to read about God, and to plan for the future.

What Retreats do

1. Retreats help the individual to live a more Christian life. Thus the person's union with God is perfected and he experiences the joy, the peace and strength that God gives.

2. Retreats provide laborers for the Lord's vineyard. Today every project for the honor of God is hamstrung because of lack of willing hands. The awareness of spiritual values, the greater love of God and fellowman, which is the product of retreat, moves the retreatant to step forward. The parish, the diocese and the Church in general experiences a general awakening of zeal through retreats.

3. Retreats bring Christ into the home, into the economic and social sphere. This is so because retreats produce alert, intelligent Catholics. The most perfect form of adult education today is, probably, the retreat. It is silly to spend millions on children and to neglect the grown-ups.

Conclusion

All this leads us to one conclusion: Retreats are mighty important. Pope Pius XII said they were necessary. "These kinds of spiritual exercises," he said on November 20, 1947, "are truly useful, nay even necessary for instilling in souls a sincere piety."

ON BEAUTY AIDS

Why not plan on a beauty inside
as well as out?

The cosmetic industry is the second largest business in the United States. The production and sale of "beauty aids" is outranked only by steel, according to the statistician. It would seem, therefore, that the women of our land have a high esteem for personal loveliness.

We wouldn't want it otherwise. Only a man bereft of his senses would wish that the ladies go around with snaggle teeth, stringey hair and rings in their noses. And if hair-does and preparations in bottles help to supply what nature was remiss in, God bless the inventors of such preparations!

But—and this is a very important restriction—we would like to see women realize that beauty is more than skin deep. Christ had some very harsh words to say for the Pharisees of His day who put all the emphasis on the external. "Woe to you," He said, "because you are like whited sepulchres which outwardly appear to men beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones and all rottenness."

One of our finest modern thinkers has coined the expression "S.O." The advertisers have popularized the letters "B.O." and have, through insinuation, gotten people to fear it. But "S.O." (soul odor) is much worse. Not even your most intimate friends will tell you that your soul is unpleasant.

Beauty comes from within, from the virtuous soul, and shines out through a person's features, through his words and deeds. And, marvellous to relate, this sort of beauty, **the only real beauty**, can be ours if we want it. We can't change the set of our eyes, or the shape of our chin, but we can make our souls perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect.

The retreat movement ought to have great appeal to the women. A retreat is much like a spiritual beauty parlor. A person sees the faults and blemishes that make her unacceptable to God and unpleasing to men. (Examination of conscience). Direction is given that will enable the retreatant to avoid sin and lead to the practice of virtue. (Sermons and conferences). Help is given from God to plan for the future and to hold to resolutions that will result in soul beauty. (Prayer and reception of the Sacraments).

This little talk on beauty aids would not impress the majority of our Catholic women, if we did not stress the fact that soul beauty is a power for good to others. Sin is ugly and the woman with evil habits destroys the beauty that may exist in the lives of those she lives with. The woman with a lovely soul, however, the woman who has acquired the virtues of Christ, is forever adding to the happiness of her surroundings.

Let it be understood, then, in conclusion, that women have everything to gain by the effort they are making to beautify themselves with a retreat.

THE POWER OF WOMAN

She is the pivot on which history turns.

As a general rule women underestimate their power. And because the modern woman fails to realize her power she frequently apes the men. That means just one thing—failure!

The retreat movement aims to make womanhood the power in human relations that God intended it to be. The poet who said, "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world," was mostly right. There are other fields in which women must exercise their influence, of course, although the home will always remain their chief sphere of action.

Some might question the statement that women possess power. There is still in existence the popular fallacy that women are the weaker sex. But tradition and history are against the popular fallacy. It was a woman who plunged the human race into sorrow in the garden of Eden; it was a woman who brought us the Saviour and all the good that is ours through Him. "Dux femina facti," is how Virgil expressed it; and the French say: "Cherché la femme!" There is always a woman at the bottom of every cause, large and small, noble and dastardly.

There are two reasons why many women never realize the power that could be theirs: First, a failure to understand in what woman's power consists; second, failure to equip themselves for their role in human relations.

In What Woman's Power Consists

The so-called feminists are convinced that women, in order to achieve their full stature, must take direct action in the affairs of the community.

The feminists are wrong. Of course, when opportunity presents itself (as for instance, voting in elections) women must step forward; again when need requires, a woman may have to take up a profession. But direct action would seem to be the exception. The feminists waste woman-power and, according to a recent authoritative study, increase feminine unhappiness.

The woman's power consists primarily in the influence she exercises over men. The woman molds her sons and they mold history. Every tragic and beneficial event in the course of history is traceable to mothers who fulfilled or failed their opportunity beside the cradle. Secondly, the woman raises up, or handicaps, the man who is her husband. There is a saying to the effect that it takes two good women to make one good man—his mother and his wife.

Preparation For Power

The second reason why many women never realize the power that could be theirs is their lack of preparation. When a woman is solely interested in herself she becomes a slave of her own selfishness. Thus bound by personal anxiety, thus limited by narrow horizons, thus turned in upon herself, she has no capacity for action. She is rather a drag upon the cause of truth and goodness, than a power.

Retreats, therefore, are tremendously important for women. There is great power for good locked up within womanhood; the retreat, by developing unselfish Christian character, releases this power for the welfare of the world.

PROGRAM FOR WOMEN

Unless there be order a life may well be wasted.

This program is for those women who will not be content to lead a mediocre Christian life. The Spirit of God is stirring in the souls of countless women today. And consequently, there are many who want something more than the thread-bare existence of minimum attention to the spiritual.

But be not deceived. To adopt a more intense living of the Christian life demands determination. The world is insistent. False values that drive women relentlessly in the quest of "tremendous trifles," distractions that assault the mind and heart from all sides, the restlessness of the senses, the pressures of social position and human respect, all present fierce adversaries to a more spiritualized life. However, if the woman wants to live a life in which the waste of her time and her immortal faculties is largely eliminated, she will find the effort necessary to put this program into effect very much worth while.

The purpose of this program is to knock out of the woman's life wasted, useless activities. As she puts the following into effect, she must thereby give up some of the things that now fill her day. This is a problem of using time for the "one thing necessary."

1. Start the day with the Morning Offering in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

2. Daily attendance at Mass and reception of Holy Communion. Let's face the facts: Nothing is more important than the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Go to bed at a reasonable hour at night so that you can begin your day at the altar of God.

3. Confession weekly, if possible to a regular confessor. Pope Pius XII has inaugurated the "age of frequent Confession" just as Pius X had started the age of frequent Holy Communion.

4. A daily Holy Hour of full sixty minutes. Ideally this is spent before the Blessed Sacrament.

This is the quiet hour of the day and is to be used for mental prayer and spiritual reading. Vocal prayers are to be kept at a minimum. Calm attention to God by means of a spiritual book and simple acts of love, faith and adoration is what is intended here.

5 and 6 are included above: Spiritual reading and mental prayer. If the woman has the time available these two activities can be given special times and the Holy Hour devoted entirely to prayer.

7. The practice of exterior and interior silence. Let's have some quiet in our lives. Turn off the radio and the TV; put down the magazines and the newspaper; answer but don't make calls on the telephone except necessary ones. This is the greatest need of our age. Avoid constant talking. All this is part of exterior silence. Interior silence consists in the frequent turning to God by means of acts of faith, confidence and complete abandonment to His Holy Will. Silence as outlined above will promote recollection and the awareness to God's presence.

8. Model your life in general on that of Our Lady by aiming in all things at a) simplicity, b) humility, c) confidence in God, and d) self-surrender to His Holy Will.

The above 8-point program is not an easy one. But it is of great urgency. We are not going to have among us women of outstanding holiness unless they take a hard-and-fast stand against the noise, ease, worldliness and vulgarity of our mad world. "This is eternal life," said Our Lord, "that they may know Thee and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." We know the world too well; now we must replace this knowledge by learning God and His Incarnate Son by means of self-discipline and a determined program of Christian action.

FORMULA FOR LEADERSHIP

How to become what each of us ought to be.

It is not Christian to exclaim with Cain after the murder of his brother: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Christ in teaching us about the Mystical Body, of our one-ness in Him, has emphatically stated that each of us must edify our neighbor and lead aright those who are stumbling in the dark.

In this matter of leadership we will be wise to take a page from the Old Testament. The Prophet Moses is undoubtedly one of the greatest leaders of all times. His achievements were sensationally successful, as well as lasting. The difficulties that he faced were tremendous; and yet he solved problem after problem brilliantly. He had to deal with cowardice among his own; treachery from his enemies; rebellion and temporary set-backs. But he was always constructive, always idealistic, always determined.

A fact that is probably not sufficiently recognized is the source whence came the power that Moses had. It is true that Moses was well educated; a princess of Egypt had made his rearing one of her royal whims. But the best of educations cannot explain the accomplishments of Moses. Where did Moses find the formula for leadership? The most casual reading of the Book of Exodus proves that Moses' power lay in prayer.

In many ways leadership in public life is the most difficult of achievements. A musician works with sounds; an artist works with lines and colors; an architect works with space and masses; but a leader works with the most difficult of material, human wills. A leader has to conciliate those that are hostile to him; strengthen those that are weak; inspire those that are indifferent.

Moses was a leader, not a demagogue. Time and time again the people grew weary of the high standard that he held up for them. He wanted them to be sane and reasonable, desirous of the better things; not greasy animals digging with both hands in the flesh pots of Egypt. This reclamation of the chosen people was an even greater achievement than their liberation from the tyrant. The grandeur of this achievement dwarfs what the greatest artists and poets have done.

And the method used by Moses to do so much was prayer!

In what way was Moses a man of prayer? Moses talked with God; he was given to understand certain truths by God; he asked specific favors of God. That is prayer. The awareness which Moses had of God was much greater than is normally given to us. As we see in the Book of Exodus Moses talked to God as a man talks to his friend. We can say, then, that the prayer of Moses was of a very special kind. But the main qualities of Moses' prayer ought to be duplicated in ours.

First of all, Moses was deeply convinced of God's reality. Secondly, Moses believed wholeheartedly in God's willingness to help His people. And thirdly, Moses believed in God's power to help His people. And thus Moses turned to God incessantly. What wisdom this great leader had to utter for the people, what displays of power he had to make, were the direct result of his prayer.

Our day is fraught with danger. The hour of crisis has struck. But we must not despair. Each of us must step forward to lead the people up from the abyss. And we shall do that if we are ceaselessly in contact with God through prayer.

HOW TO BE WORTH MORE

Happiness begins with a well-ordered love of self.

It has been pointed out, not without some truth, that what makes marriage fail is woman. Marriage is, of course, a fifty-fifty deal; but the above statement does make sense. If a woman is so shallow that her depths have all been fathomed during the honeymoon, the marriage is beginning to split before the first anniversary. The couple may stay together because of social or religious pressures, but they can hardly make a success of their union.

What the woman must bring to marriage in order to guarantee its success is not physical beauty alone, or a chest full of linens, or a bank full of legal tender, but a well developed soul. The woman is chiefly responsible for keeping marriage interesting. And that she does with her soul. Her physical charms can be duplicated a hundred times over by many Eves found in every walk of life; but her soul is hers and no one else's. If she has a soul that possesses charm, and beauty, and radiant vitality, and a deep wisdom, she enriches the lives of her husband her children with treasures that are found in no shop anywhere.

Why women spend so much time improving their looks and let the blackheads and hangnails accumulate on their souls is mystery number one of the twentieth century.

Well, you say, what do you suggest as a soul beauty treatment? Mental prayer, is our suggestion. There is absolutely nothing that will do more to improve the soul's complexion, add curves to the spirit, than mental prayer. Try it for thirty days, and see if it does not work wonders.

Women need inwardness. A man can be fairly happy by having achievements to rest on; but a woman's happiness comes from being a fully developed personality. Men make their mark on history by manipulating events; but women achieve their temporal destiny by influencing people. Therefore it is supremely important that a woman be not a cipher. That is why women ought to make mental prayer.

The easiest way of making mental prayer is to read a book slowly. This is the method recommended by St. Paul of the Cross; and it is especially useful for busy people whose minds are filled with a million and one distractions. Such a book as *Mary Coakley's Fitting God Into the Picture*, or *Fr. Plus' Radiating Christ*, or *The Imitation of Christ*, or, best of all, the *New Testament*—any one of these is ideal for such mental prayer.

Mind you now, the purpose of such reading is not to say that you read the book, but to obtain spiritual enlightenment. You are to read slowly, with pauses when you are inspired to address yourself to God. The success of this type of exercise is not the number of pages you read at a sitting, but the amount of prayer that you have managed to do.

If you are interested in this suggestion, if you want to be worth more, why not try it for a month. Set aside fifteen minutes or a half hour during the less disturbed portion of each day. You'll be surprised at the peace and inner satisfaction that it yields. Don't tell your husband—if you're married—and see if after a month of this he doesn't remark on the change he notices in you. Or are you the perfect woman already, the kind that no man could possibly ask for more?

A GREAT NECESSITY

Something that people can't get along without.

One of the greatest necessities for the living of a Christian life is prayer. "Pray," said our Saviour, "lest you enter into temptation."

In our day it would seem to be specially important to perform what is known as mental prayer. Vocal prayer is made by using our lips to pray; mental prayer is the action of our minds whereby we ponder divine truth and address ourselves to God without forming words on our lips. Mental prayer is so necessary today because of the distractions which flood in upon us from all sides.

It is not easy to be a Christian in our day. The condition of the world is very much like that which existed before the flood. People had surrendered to worldliness and had forgotten God. "They were marrying and giving in marriage, until the flood came and destroyed them all."

It is necessary, therefore, for those women who wish to develop a real Christian life to learn the art of prayer. To do that one must assign a fixed period of fifteen or twenty minutes each day for prayer. Furthermore, it is also necessary to adopt a "method" of prayer. Fr. Tanquerey states the case thus: "If one has not a fixed time and a determined method for reflecting on the great truths of Faith, one allows himself to be pulled backward by dissipation and the examples of worldlings and so slips insensibly into sin."

Methods of Prayer

Fr. Tanquerey thinks that a fixed method of prayer is a requirement for people today. He was an experienced director of souls. It does seem that a person ought to have some plan for

his thoughts when he kneels himself down to spend fifteen minutes in prayer. Otherwise he wool gathers and wastes his time. So we here suggest a method that has been widely used and which might be called "The method of the senses and the powers." Don't let the name scare you; the plan is simple enough.

You have five senses and two spiritual powers, namely, intellect and will. This enables you to take seven steps in prayer. By applying each of your senses to the scene from Christ's life; and by using your intellect and will to reap the full fruit of the mystery, you can make a very easy and profitable prayer.

For example, let us suppose that you are meditating on the Crucifixion of Christ. First apply your sense of hearing: You hear the voices of the Jews, the ring of the hammer, the words of Christ. Then apply your sight to regard in detail the events and persons in the sorrowful drama; your taste to sample the gall; your feeling to experience the pain; your sense of smell to catch the stench of sin, and the sweet odor of the charity of Christ.

The scene is very vivid before you now. So apply your intellect and try to understand what is happening: Who, why, what? And finally your will: What must you resolve in view of the great love of your Saviour?

St. Teresa was aware of the importance of constant mental prayer. "Give me fifteen minutes of prayer a day," she said, "and I'll give you heaven."

THE ART OF PRAYER

There is no achievement greater than perfection of soul.

Today many women are setting themselves to make progress in the spiritual life. An increasing number is discontented with the worldliness of their surroundings and the emptiness of the monotonous round of small pleasures and social duties. These women want something more vital, something deeper and more lasting. And in their hunger for the worth-while they are turning to prayer.

Mental prayer is a must for steady growth in union with God. To put it negatively for emphasis: It is impossible to develop in Faith and Charity and thus practice high virtue within the framework of one's state of life unless you give time daily to mental prayer. The 15 to 30 minutes which you devote to this exercise is the coin you must pay for consistent progress in holiness.

The simplest form of mental prayer is slow reading of some spiritual book—the New Testament, for instance, or the Imitation of Christ, or something of Bishop Sheen or Fr. Edward Leen, etc. St. Paul of the Cross recommends this. And it is especially useful for those who are starting out on the path of a more spiritual life. Don't try to read much; but read for understanding. Pause frequently and focus your attention on what you have read so that you will grasp the idea presented by the author. Instruction and inspiration will be the result.

The serious soul ought, however, to try to push out into the depths of mental prayer—occasionally, at least—without the help of a book. Here is a simple method:

Introduction: Make an act of Faith, Hope and Charity. Bring to mind the subject of your prayer. (A Mystery of the Rosary; one of the Stations of the Cross; an article of the Creed; a phrase from the Our Father)

1. Use your imagination: Try to picture the scene which is to serve as your subject of prayer.
2. Use your memory: Try to recall all the things that you know about the subject. You'll find that you gradually remember more and more.
3. Use your understanding: Ask yourself, what's it all about? What goes on? Why is this happening? Who are these people in the scene I am considering? Why? What? Who? For what reason?
4. Use your will: The will is the faculty of love. Make acts of love, of gratitude, of praise and worship. Ask yourself, what ought this truth of faith to do for me practically? What can I do? Be more humble, less distracted, more resigned, less given to anger, more detached?

Conclusion: Thank God for His grace during the prayer. And beg Him for the help to put your good resolutions into practice.

Remember now, prayer is an art. To acquire an art practice is necessary. If you practice mental prayer daily for 15 or 30 minutes you will be thrilled by the spiritual change in yourself. It's much like coming to the top of a hill and having the fresh breeze blow in your face while you look down on the dusty road and fog-choked valley beneath.

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD

Meditation on the first mystery of the Rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this first mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: We find ourselves in the peaceful home of Mary at Nazareth. It's a spring day and the bright sunshine floods through the open window. The birds have just awakened and are greeting the new day with their best songs. The Virgin of Nazareth is at prayer. She opens her eyes to see before her the radiant form of the Angel Gabriel. She is not surprised since the Queen of Angels is perfectly at ease with her subjects.

"Hail full of grace," the Angel says. The new Testament records fully the conversation between Mary and the Angel. Mary was given to understand that she was to be God's mother. She was to give birth to the promised Messiah, the Saviour of the world. As soon as she understood how it was to be accomplished, she accepted the holy will of God without reservations. She said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word."

Reflections: 1. Mary had prepared herself for this moment by life-long fulfilling of God's will in all things. Unlike most people, Mary was not self-willed. Although she had her own tastes and preferences, she nevertheless looked always to what God wanted. Once she knew God's will, she followed it simply and patiently. Thus, when the big moment came and the Angel stood before her with the greatest news ever heard by human ears, she was ready for it.

2. Mary very clearly understood God's right to her complete obedience. Mary recognized God as her Creator. She realized clearly that as God's creature, she was obligated to do what God wanted of her. This was the thing that made Mary the perfect and docile instrument of His will. This was what sanctified her so quickly and so completely.

Colloquies: We first ask our Heavenly Father for the great gift of docility, such as Mary had. We beg the Divine Word to enlighten us on the subject of our compliance with God's will. We ask the Holy Spirit to give us the love necessary to always do what pleases Him. We go, then, to our Blessed Lady. She was so perfectly willing at all times to do what God wanted of her that we are encouraged to beg her to give us a like readiness. We turn, then, to St. Joseph whose obedience to God's will was his outstanding characteristic. We ask him to give us the grace to have this family trait.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to imitate our Blessed Lady more closely. To the best of our ability we shall say whenever God's will is revealed to us, "Behold this handmaid of the Lord."

APOSTOLIC VIRGIN

Meditation on the second mystery of the rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this second mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: We picture to ourselves our Lady traveling from her home into the hill country to visit her cousin, Saint Elizabeth. Mary's bright subject, the Angel Gabriel, had given to his Queen an extra bit of news. He told her that her cousin, a woman advanced in years, was to have a child. So Mary knowing that her cousin would wish her help hastened to her home

The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth was affectionate. This was the occasion for a special revelation given to Elizabeth. God allowed her to know that Mary was carrying in her womb the Incarnate Son of God. At the moment of Mary's sweet embrace, Elizabeth's child was justified. Thus it was that John the Baptist was born without original sin. "Whence is it to me," said the humble Elizabeth, "that the mother of my God should come to me?"

Reflections: 1. Mary gives the true formula for apostolic action. The apostolate does not mean to do something Catholic. A true apostolic action is bringing Christ into the lives of others. This means that we must first bring Christ, through our knowledge and love of Him and through the imitation of His virtues, into our own souls. Then, when we have conceived Christ in ourselves, so to speak, we are ready to do good to others.

2. It was a great thing that happened at the visitation. St. Elizabeth was given special enlightenment by the Holy Ghost, and her unborn son was sanctified. These effects were accomplished because Mary was so closely united with her Divine Son. As St. Thomas tells us the true apostolic action is the over-flowing of contemplation. The loving knowledge of God which is ours through diligent practice of virtue, through recollection, and through persistent meditation on divine things, is the only sure preparation for the apostolate. We build on sands unless we bring Christ into ourselves by intensive practice of the interior life.

Colloquies: We first ask our Heavenly Father for the gift of zeal, such as Mary had. We beg the Divine Word to help us to see the primacy of spiritual activity. We ask the Holy Spirit to burn out of our souls all the deadening selfishness that stands in our way. We go, then, to our Blessed Lady. She is the Queen of Apostles, Queen of those who attempt to bring God into the lives of their neighbors. We beg her to prepare us for our own little apostolate by deepening our interior life. We turn, then, to St. Joseph who spent his whole life in his unselfish service of his neighbor. We ask him who was so constantly prayerful to give us a love for meditation.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to imitate our Blessed Lady more closely. To the best of our ability we shall place first emphasis on our own spiritual exercises, thus to prepare ourselves to be apostolic as was our Lady.

POWER OF LITTLENESS

Meditation on the Third mystery of the rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this third mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: We take ourselves to the stable of Bethlehem. It is the midnight hour and the angels have just appeared to the shepherds in the hills. Mary kneels in adoration before her new born babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying on the straw of the manger. Joseph stands in the shadows, his face grave with awe and adoration. A light seems to radiate from the Incarnate Word. It touches the face of His mother, it shows the poor interior of the stable, it reveals the gentle, dumb beasts that stand silently.

Reflections: The Baby lying in that Bethelam stable is not an ordinary child. Although He has an earthly mother in Mary, He has no earthly Father. God, the Eternal Father, is the one from whom He took His being. Before the Christmas night Christ, our Lord, had a previous generation in the bosom of the Trinity. From all eternity He was begotten by the Father. His is a divine nature taken from the Eternal Father as well as a human nature taken through the instrumentality of Mary. This is the first great fact that we must be impressed with in regard to the Infant Saviour. He is God. In spite of His littleness, His helplessness, He is the infinite, eternal and all holy God.

2. In the birth of Christ, we see the value of littleness. It was pride that destroyed the human race in the Garden of Eden. Our chief enemy, therefore, is our desire to be

big, to be important, to have standing in the eyes of our neighbors. God knew this and wanted to give us a powerful medicine for the illness in our fallen nature: So the great God worthy of all adoration and praise came down to earth as a tiny, helpless baby. The inflated human ego must be cut down to size in the stable of Bethlehem. If the great God dared to be little, cannot we love obscurity, indifference, neglect, and ill repute?

Colloquies: We first ask our Heavenly Father for the gift of humility. We beg the Divine Word to enlighten us on the subject the value of littleness. We ask the Holy Spirit to give a ready will to take the last place, as Christ advises us. We now go to our Blessed Lady. Mary understood the value of humility perfectly. She realized that only by the recognition of our own poorness in God's sight can we fit ourselves to serve God and win heaven. We turn, then, to St. Joseph who was a completely humble man. We beg him to obtain for us the grace never to seek a higher esteem than we deserve.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to imitate the littleness of our Saviour. We shall live our life simply. We shall do our work sincerely. We shall think always of God's gifts to us, never of any assumed importance that we may have.

JOY OF GIVING

Meditation on the fourth mystery of the rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this fourth mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: The poor surroundings of the stable of Bethlehem yield to the gilded glory of the Jerusalem temple. In obedience to the Mosaic law, Mary comes to be purified and to present her Son to the Lord. We see Mary walking slowly, her baby in her arms, into the temple. Joy fills her heart as she hands the Infant to the ministering priest. She rejoices that she has something worthy of God to give to God. The First Born of the nations, born in eternity and now born again in time, is being presented to the Heavenly Father. The sun shines brightly, the birds sing. There is an atmosphere of festivity in the air.

Reflections: Mary realizes keenly that Jesus was God's gift to her. God had regarded her fondly and had picked her out from among all the daughters of Eve to be the mother of His Son. Mary's mother-love as well as her deep spirit of adoration makes her deeply grateful to God for the Son that He had given her. These were her thoughts as she gave back to God what He had given to her.

2. We double the value of the gifts that God gives when we give them back to God. We give God's gifts back to Him in various ways. The mother who gives her son permission to go to the seminary is giving him back to God. The invalid who accepts chronic illness cheerfully is giving health back to God. Persons

possessed of outstanding talents in music or art or science who use their talents for God's honor are giving them back to God. Those who thank God for the benefits and graces they possess are giving them to God. Thus to direct God's gifts back to God is doubling the enjoyment we have in them and making them meritorious for eternity.

Colloquies: We first ask our Heavenly Father for an understanding of His goodness to us. We beg the Divine Word to help us understand that we are always in the protecting hands of God. We ask the Holy Spirit to give us a grateful will, the ready desire to give thanks for all our gifts and graces. We now go to Mary. We ask her help always to give God's gifts back to God. The enjoyment she had in her Son was doubled when she presented Him in the temple. We beg of her to have the same joy. We turn, then, to St. Joseph who shared the happiness of the Presentation. He turned everything, his work, his obscurity, his anxiety back to God by acceptance and gratitude. We ask him to intercede for us.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to live in the spirit of the Presentation. All that we are, all that we have, all that we do, our joys as well as our sufferings, shall be joined to Mary's offering of Jesus. Along with our Lord through the hands of Mary, we shall give all back to God.

CHRIST AND HAPPINESS

Meditation on the fifth mystery of the rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this fifth mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: We see our Blessed Lady at the moment of her joyous reunion with her Son in the temple. He had been lost to her for three days. Mary had gone with the women and Joseph had gone with the men. Each had thought Jesus was with the other. When they found that He was not with either party, Mary and Joseph went seeking Him along the way. Finally after three days separation, Mary found her divine Son in the temple of Jerusalem. We are told that Jesus, then, went back with them to Nazareth and was subject to them.

Reflections: 1. The light and joy of Mary's life was Jesus. She rejoiced more in Him than she might have in all the riches and pleasures of earth. His goodness, His spirit of kindness and consideration fill her days with great peace and contentment. Furthermore, Jesus was not only the best Son a woman ever had, He also was Mary's God. All the adoration of her heart could be centered upon Him. As He grew to maturity He was able to help her in her prayer life. As He would be the doorway for countless millions in the ages to come, so He was the Way, the Truth, the Light to His mother.

2. There is no real joy or contentment of heart possible on earth without Jesus. As Thomas à Kempis says, "Without Jesus,

life is a relentless hell and with Jesus life is a sweet paradise." This essential truth is forgotten by many people. They are attracted by the false goods of earth and turn from God, the only source of true happiness.

Colloquies: Heavenly Father, give us the grace to realize where true happiness can be found. Divine Word, enlighten our understanding that we may never seek our joy in what is displeasing to God. Holy Spirit enable us to desire what is pleasing to God. Dear mother, Mary, you understood perfectly when you found Jesus that only in Him could your heart taste happiness. Send us the grace we need to place our happiness in your Son. Take from us our attractions to sin; give us a firm resolve to practice virtue always. Humble St. Joseph, since your life was lived so close to our Lord, intercede with Him for us. Beg for us the grace to seek God in everything.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to live in closer union with God. We shall put aside the occupations of earth from time to time and shall deny ourselves legitimate pleasure in order to have time for prayer and spiritual reading.

CUP OF SUFFERING

Meditation on the first Sorrowful Mystery of the rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us understand this first sorrowful mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: In imagination we go into the Garden of Olives with our Divine Saviour. It is close to midnight and the full paschal moon casts black shadows on the rocky soil. Christ has left His apostles behind, some at the gate of the garden and three of them a stone's throw away. He is all alone. In His terrible loneliness He faces the cup of suffering that is presented to His lips by His Heavenly Father. He drops to His knees and then falls flat on His face in the intensity of the mental suffering He endures. His heart labors so painfully that it forces His blood through the pores of His body. He prays to be released, but nevertheless accepts His Father's will. He seizes the cup of the passion and drains the suffering to its bitter dregs.

Reflections: 1. Three elements went into the Agony of our Lord in the garden. The first was loneliness. In assuming the sins of mankind He became, as it were, an outcast from God. He had the feeling of being isolated and alone. The second cause of Christ's suffering was fear. It was revealed to Him how terrible would be the sufferings He would have to endure to atone for the sins of mankind. His human nature revolted at the thought. The third reason for His agony was bitter discouragement. In spite of all that He would do out of love for men, men would reject Him and scorn His grace. He was tempted to exclaim, what's the use?

2. The significant fact in Christ's agony in the garden is His acceptance of the cup. He had the courage of His convictions. He knew that only in God's will was there hope or pardon or peace. Thus, bitter as the cup of suffering was to Him, He said "Not My will, O God, but Thine be done."

Colloquies: Heavenly Father, give us the grace always to do Your will. Divine Word, send us the light to understand that only in the will of God can we find true peace of soul. Holy Spirit, inflame us with divine charity so that we may always be true to our convictions. Dear Mother, Mary, you understand our weakness. You know how filled with fear of pain we are, how loneliness repels us and how discouragement bears us down. Give us a measure of your Son's strength that we may say when the cup of suffering is put to our lips, Thy will be done! St. Joseph, intercede for us.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to live constantly in the will of God. We shall put aside our own will, we shall be brave in the face of suffering to accept always God's will for us.

TORTURE BY THE LASH

Meditation on the second Sorrowful Mystery of the rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this second sorrowful mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: This mystery can hold our imagination securely. It is a terrible scene that is presented to us. We betake ourselves to the courtyard of the Praetorian palace. It is a noisy, untidy place. The square is filled with jostling, swearing, uncouth soldiers. Our Lord is led into their midst like a lamb thrown among wolves. His back is bared, and He is made to stoop while they tie His hands to a ring in a low stone pillar. Two brawny executioners, one tall and the other short, stand to either side of Him with leather whips tipped with bits of bone in their hands. At the signal of their officer, they begin a rhythmic brutal whipping of their prisoner. Not a moan escapes His lips although His blood begins to flow, and He finally sinks exhausted at the feet of His torturers.

Reflections: 1. Our heart would be moved with pity were we to see the most hardened criminal so beaten, but the man being scourged is no criminal but the All-holy Son of God. Because He is divine as well as human, He has the right to the worship, reverence, and adoration of all men. The angels bend low in acknowledgment of His divine prerogatives. Why does He suffer? Not for Himself, but for us.

2. In the scourging of Christ at the pillar, we realize more clearly than possibly in any other way the evil of sensuality. God in His wisdom prescribed this suffering of Christ

so that we would know the malice of sins of the flesh. At no time in history was the lesson of the scourging so necessary as today. We live in a cloying atmosphere of comfort, luxury, and worship of the flesh. Even high-minded Catholics are insidiously assaulted by appeals to unholy pleasures. We need the strengthening that comes from the scourging.

Colloquies: Heavenly Father, give us the grace to look steadily on the pain-filled face of Christ. Dear Incarnate Word, we worship You in the bitter suffering you are enduring under the Roman lash. Help us, we beseech You, whenever temptation assails us to remember the terrible punishment that You took to atone for sins of the flesh. Make us strong to punish our bodies by necessary mortification and self denial. Dear mother, Mary, shield us under the mantle of your purity. Give us the grace to have always a delicate conscience in matters touching on the angelic virtues. Teach us your own modesty. St. Joseph, you whose self control was so heroic, help us in these difficult times to live sinless lives

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to live in the world as one not a part of the world. We shall not succumb to the bad example given by the godless. We resolve to live a life of simplicity, of industry, of frugality and self restraint.

CROWN OF SORROW

Meditation on the third Sorrowful Mystery of the rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this third sorrowful mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: After the soldiers had scourged our Lord, they threw a purple cloak around His shoulders, gave Him a box to sit on for a throne and proceeded to a mock coronation. The crown they put upon Him was made of thorns. The ceremony consisted in roughly pushing the sharp points into His sacred head. All the soldiers then came up before Him one by one, ostentatiously bent their knee and straightening themselves spat into His face. The rest stood around and joined the fun. Their harsh laughter, ribald comments echoed throughout the palace. It was great fun.

Reflections: 1. Our mind reels when we reflect that this man so ridiculed and mocked was the Incarnate Word of God. He was worthy of all honor, reverence, and praise. Yet, here He is submitting Himself to the most inhuman, humiliating behavior. Why should He accept such suffering? Nobody likes to be made a fool of. Christ could have terminated the abuses by one act of His will, hurling His tormentors into hell. He did not do so. He accepted the blows, the taunts, the insulting spittle that defiled His Sacred Face. Here is a mystery indeed.

2. The answer to this mystery is Christ's love for us. Christ submitted Himself to the indignities of the crowning with thorns in order to help us. Our principal weakness lies

in our pride. We are too prone to stand on our own dignity. We are tempted at times to question God's authority when His precepts conflict with our own ideas. We have within us the baleful tendency to echo the words of Lucifer, "I, will not serve." It was to give us "medicine" to cure our pride that Christ endured this mockery. Certainly God must think that our pride is terribly strong to move to prescribe so frightening an antidote.

Colloquies: Heavenly Father, make us humble. Give us the courage to recognize our limitations. Dear Saviour, so humiliated in the crowning, give us a little of your own sweet humility. You were God and yet You suffered indignity patiently out of love for me. Help me to put up with forgetfulness, neglect and loss of good name out of love for You. Too often in the past I have become discouraged and have refused to do good because of my pride. Let this not happen again. Dear mother, Mary, you were always humble. Your beauty of soul came from your acceptance of your creatureship. You gave to God all the glory for the virtues and graces that you possessed. Help me to be a true child of yours by practicing the virtue of humility. St. Joseph, intercede with God that I may never hurt others or myself by assuming a superior attitude.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to forgive those who neglect us and think ill of us. We shall not ever seek recognition and glory merely because we want to feed our ego. We are determined to do good and serve others for God's sake and not for any recognition we may desire.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS

Meditation on the Fourth Sorrowful Mystery of the Rosary

Introduction: The introduction or prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the **Eternal Word** to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, Our Mother, and ask her to help us to understand this Fourth Sorrowful Mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: Pilate has condemned Our Lord. He has yielded to the pressure exerted upon him by the leaders of the Jews. He has taken water and washed his hands before them all, saying "I am innocent of the blood of this just man. Look you to it." Jesus is led out of the Praetorium and is made to shoulder His Cross. He takes it lovingly upon His shoulder and carries it along the road and up the hill to Calvary. Three times He falls under it. But each time He struggles again to his feet and continues His painful way to Calvary. Only when He has reached the height of the Mount does He relinquish His hold upon it. And then, He is nailed to it.

Reflections: 1. Jesus felt the Cross. The Cross was heavy—the Cross was a symbol of shame and dejection. Since our divine Saviour had human feelings and sensibilities, the Cross was unwelcome to Him. Our Divine Saviour hated its weight—He hated the unfairness and injustice that it represented. He hated the death that lay at the end of the Way of the Cross. It is no shame to feel the cross—in fact, only when we feel the cross can it become an instrument of salvation.

2. Two things gave Christ the courage and determination to bear the Cross: the first was His willingness to accept God's Will. The Cross for Christ was His Father's Will. God wanted Christ to redeem the world. The redemption of

the world was to be accomplished only through the Cross. Consequently since Christ loved the Will of His Heavenly Father. He carried the Cross in spite of the fact that He didn't like it. The second consideration that motivated Christ in carrying His Cross was His love for mankind. Christ loved His neighbor and wanted to benefit him. The greatest good that Christ could do was not by preaching, not by working miracles, not by being sympathetic and understanding, but by suffering and dying on the Cross. And thus it was—Love gave Christ the courage to carry the Cross.

Colloquies: Dear Heavenly Father, give us the courage to carry our cross. Help us to have faith so that we might see Your Divine Will in the trials and troubles that come our way. O Christ Jesus, so heavily burdened by the Cross, give us a share in your own great-hearted courage. Help me to be interested in the spiritual affair of my neighbor. This old world of ours is so much in need of Your Grace, so much in need of reparation and atonement, that I ought to be glad to be asked to suffer a little bit in order to achieve these great purposes. O Mother Mary, whose heart was torn by the sight of Jesus burdened with the great Cross, help me to have a fellowship with Him in this painful mystery. You stood there along the Way and gave Christ the moral support that He needed to carry on. I beg you, Mary, to stand along the way of my life to give me the courage to go on. I realize my weakness, my helplessness, and I know how much I need your grace.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to be courageous in the carrying of our cross. We shall take the supernatural viewpoint at all times and see in the trials and difficulties that come our way, a symbol of God's Holy Will.

THE DAY GOD—MAN DIED

Meditation on the Fifth Sorrowful Mystery of the Rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this fifth sorrowful mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: When Jesus arrives on Calvary, the soldiers tear from Him His garments, throw Him rudely upon the Cross, and spike Him there with great nails through hands and feet. Each blow of the hammer seems to Mary to strike her heart. The blood flows from the wounds of Our Lord down to the ground. The soldiers raise the Cross with Jesus upon it and allow it to drop with a thud into the hole prepared for it in the rocks. Jesus is suspended between Heaven and earth—His whole body is on fire with pain—His muscles knotted under the tension exerted on them—His throat is parched with thirst, His Head throbbing with pain. He hangs there for three hours, and then drops His Head, and dies,

Reflections: 1. The true measure of the malice of sin is what it did to Christ on Calvary. To the sinner, sin seems mostly like a bagatelle, a triviality, something unimportant. But to Christ on the Cross, sin was a terrible evil. In order to atone for the sins of mankind, Christ had to endure three terrible hours of agony. A sinner studying the Cross can never say that sin is a small thing.

2. The death of Christ on Calvary is the measure of God's love for each of us. We might have doubted God's love for us if there were not a Calvary. Can it be that the great God who has the care of the universe on his mind can be interested in the little molecule of being that is

myself? But now we need not question or doubt. Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, died on the Cross for love of me. It is true He died for all men, but our faith assures us that if I were the only individual in existence, He would have died for me.

Colloquies: O Heavenly Father, who sent Jesus into the world to redeem us, help me to return love for love. I am so thoughtless, so self-centered, so given to self-pity. Dear Heavenly Father, give me the grace to love you as you love me. O Christ Jesus, I beg your pardon for all my sins. I want very much to live for you and to die for you. Give me your grace to be strong, to overcome temptations, and always to practice virtue. Dear Mother Mary, you stood beside the Cross and saw your Son die. Help me, Mary, to love your Son with just a little of the love that you had for Him. Give me just a little of your horror of sin. Make me a child of the Cross.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for this opportunity to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to have a horror for sin and to avoid all proximate occasions of sin. We shall live in the love of Christ, willingly serving Him to show our appreciation for what He did for us on Calvary.

THE DAY OF TRIUMPH

Meditation on the First Glorious Mystery of the Rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this first glorious mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: It is the dawn of a new day. Early, as the east is brightening, and dawn begins to break, Our Divine Saviour rises from the dead. There is an earthquake and the great stone that covers the opening of the tomb is rolled away. The soldiers, who have been guarding the tomb, are thrown to the ground.

A second later they are amazed to see a brilliant, white-clad figure emerge from the tomb. It is the third day and Christ is risen from the dead, as He said He would. All that day, Christ appeared to His friends and disciples. Tradition has it that He appeared to His Mother first of all so that she might share His great joy. Then He appeared to Mary Magdalen and to others. That evening when He appeared to the apostles, he greeted them with "Peace be to you." He then gave them the mighty power of forgiving sins—"Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them."

Reflections: 1. It is important that we connect the resurrection of our Saviour from the dead to His Sacrifice on Calvary. The death of Christ does not make sense unless we see that it ended in His glorious resurrection. Jesus was obedient to His Heavenly Father and died out of love for mankind. His action, then, was a good deed done from the highest possible motives. It was done for God, to honor Him, to give Him glory. God is not outdone in generosity. Nobody ever raised a finger for God, nobody had a good wish, nobody said one good word or did the simplest little good deed for God, but God saw—and rewarded.

2. It is important that we keep before us

always the reward of our Christian living. Christian life is not an exercise in stoicism. We keep the commands of God, we are obedient to regulations of the Church, we practice self-denial and mortification, not because we like these things but because we like God more. And consequently God will recognize and remember and reward. The thought of sharing Christ's resurrection will give us enthusiasm to live our Christian life to the full. We may fail in the work that we try to do for God—we may meet with unconquerable obstacles in working out some great project for the welfare of our neighbor—we may fail miserably in the eyes of men. But that is not the whole story. There is an epilogue that will be written only after our death. That epilogue will show the true value of what we try to accomplish, what we suffer for the love of God.

Colloquies: Heavenly Father, give us the virtue of Hope. We know that this life is not the end. We realize that our sufferings, disappointments, discouragements, are thus the first few chapters of a story that will be concluded in Heaven. As Christ rose from the dead, so we shall rise glorious from our failures and sufferings of earth. O Christ Jesus who rose glorious from the tomb, give us the saving grace of optimism. Let us never be so discouraged that we want to lie down and quit. Give us grace to hope against hope. Dear Mother Mary, who was made so happy by the resurrection of your Son, help us to have the courage to live our Christian life to the full. We shall have a resurrection in God's good time. Dear Mary, help us to live in the joy of the resurrection.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to dismiss all discouraging thoughts from our minds. We shall try to have enthusiasm for God and for the things of God. We resolve not to let our discouragements, sufferings and failures make us despondent. We know that out of the defeat of Good Friday came the triumph of Easter Sunday it is in that belief that we shall continue to work for God and souls.

CHRIST'S HOMECOMING

Meditation on the Second Glorious Mystery of the Rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our Mother, and ask her to help us to understand this second glorious mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: For forty days Our Divine Saviour appeared to His apostles, strengthening them and instructing them in His Kingdom. Then He led them out of the City of Jerusalem, as far as the town of Bethania. He lifted His hands, then, and blessed them. And even as He blessed them, He departed from them and was carried up to Heaven. His apostles and dear ones watched Him until a cloud concealed Him from their sight. Jesus—who had won the victory through His death and resurrection—went to Heaven to be seated at the Right Hand of His Heavenly Father in glory for all eternity.

Reflections: 1. Our true home is Heaven. Through Baptism, we are members of Christ. Our Head, Christ Jesus, the Lord, is in Heaven. Where the Head is, there also must the members be. We must therefore not attempt to make this earth our home. It is impossible for us to have everything as we should wish on earth. It would be a great mistake to spend too much time, to give too much attention, and to care too much for the things of earth. It is good to be comfortable. It is good to have friends. It is good to have our innocent pleasures here on earth. But we must remember that Heaven is our true home.

2. Jesus went to Heaven to prepare a place for us. That does not mean that he will do it all. We very definitely must work at getting our

place in Heaven ready for ourselves. Jesus expressed this in another way. He said: "Store up your treasure in Heaven where rust does not consume, nor thief break through and steal." Our chief concern here on earth should be to send before us good deeds, acts of virtue, the merits of a life unselfishly for love of God and love of neighbor. Our chief effort therefore should be not to make a habitation for ourselves here on earth, but to prepare a place in Heaven that is destined to receive us for all eternity.

Colloquies: Heavenly Father, give me the spirit of detachment from this world. Let not my heart cleave to the things of earth. I am very conscious of the attractions of this life. But I realize that it would be a mistake to put my trust in them. O Christ Jesus who has gone before me to prepare a place for me in Paradise, help me to love the things that are above. My poor human heart is ever tending downwards. Grant me the grace to love Thee, dear Jesus, so that my heart will tend to Heaven. As Jesus said, "where your treasure is, there is your heart also." Let me make Thee, O Christ, my chief treasure so that my heart will always have wings for Heaven. O Holy Mother Mary, help me to love Heavenly things and to be indifferent to the things of this earth.

Conclusion: I resolve to have a holy indifference to the pleasures and prizes of earth. Although I cannot stop caring, I shall try not to let my affections be too completely centered on the things of earth.

OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT

Meditation on the Third Glorious Mystery of the Rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our Mother, and ask her to help us to understand this third glorious mystery of the rosary.

The scene: After Our Divine Saviour ascended into Heaven, the apostles with Mary, secluded themselves in an upper chamber in Jerusalem to await the coming of the Holy Spirit. Our Divine Saviour had told His apostles that it was of extreme importance that He send them the Paraclete, who would instruct them, and bring to their minds all the things that He had taught them. And so they waited to make the first Novena and the first Closed Retreat. On Pentecost Sunday, their prayers and their patience were rewarded with the outpouring of the Spirit. The Holy Ghost with a noise as of a roaring wind, came down upon them. His presence was made visible by symbolic tongues of fire that rested on the heads of each of them. And immediately they were filled with the Holy Spirit. They were transformed men now, no longer fearful, no longer confused, no longer indecisive. They threw open the doors of the cenacle and went forth to convert the world.

Reflections: 1. The Holy Spirit is as necessary for us today so that we might live the Christian life as it was necessary for the apostles that they might plant the faith and start the Church. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. If we have Christ's Spirit, we will think as He did, act as he did. Without the Paraclete sent by Christ, it will be impossible for us to live up to the ideal of our faith.

2. The Holy Spirit is called the Gift of God. The Holy Spirit is also called the Sanctifier. Therefore, if we would be holy, if we would overcome our faults and practice virtue, if we would be able to accept the challenge of Christian living, then we must have the Holy Spirit. Since He is a gift God gives Him to those that appreciate Him. Since He is the Sanctifier, we cannot do without Him. It is necessary for us, therefore, to appeal to Our Divine Saviour constantly, beseeching Him to send us the Spirit. This is the greatest gift that can be given—the Spirit of Jesus.

Colloquies: Heavenly Father, give us the understanding necessary to appreciate your great gift, the Holy Spirit. Dear Jesus, you went to Heaven and you promised that you would send us a Sanctifier. We beg you, then, in virtue of that promise, to send us your Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, we are weak and poor and cold and indifferent. Dear Jesus, send us the Holy Spirit, to set our hearts on fire that we may love you and live for you alone. Dear Mother Mary, spouse of the Holy Spirit, intercede with the Blessed Trinity so that the Holy Spirit may be poured out on me abundantly and I may be worthy of the trust that God has put in me.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for this opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to look to the Holy Spirit for our Santification. We shall not put our trust in ourselves, in our resolutions, in our determinations and natural goodness, but we shall trust in the Holy Spirit. We beg for this great gift every day of our lives.

MARY GOES HOME

Meditation of the Fourth Glorious Mystery of the Rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this fourth glorious mystery of the Rosary.

The Scene: Mary, so tradition tells us, died from an excess of love of God. However, she did not remain under the spell of death for long. Jesus saw to it that her immaculate soul was rejoined to her body, and then, He took her to Heaven with Himself. It was indeed a glorious day for her, a day of reunion with her Son, a day on which she went home. The next day the apostles came to pay a last tribute of honor and love to their mother. The tomb was opened and her body was found to be gone.

Reflections: 1. The Assumption of Our Blessed Lady into Heaven is a witness to the great truth that God never forgets a good deed performed. Mary was the beautiful instrument through which the Incarnate Word came into the world. It was from her body that the human nature of Christ was drawn. It was her love that nurtured Him, her holiness that formed the setting for His outstanding sanctity. And thus, because Mary had been a dedicated person and had lived body and soul for God, God would not allow her to see corruption. Although she died by having her soul separated from her body, God would not wait for the day of the general resurrection from the dead, but would bring her back to glorious immortal life quickly. God never forgets the good that is done.

2. We see in Mary's assumption into Heaven a

foreshadowing of the happiness that will be ours on our resurrection day. Our poor bodies of flesh and blood are insistent in their demands. St. Paul says that the law of his members fought against the law of his mind. This is the history of each member of a fallen race. It is a struggle to direct our senses, our emotions, to God. It demands sacrifice to put our bodies under the rule of law. But it is worthwhile. These bodies will ultimately disintegrate, no matter what we do. And consequently, it is wise to use them for the honor and glory of God so that we may lay up to ourselves a glorious resurrection on the last day.

Colloquies: Dear Heavenly Father, give us the grace to love you sincerely. O Christ Jesus, Our Lord, by the love that you bear your own sweet Mother, forgive us our sins and help us to follow you. You have said, unless a man take up his cross daily, he cannot be your disciple. Dear Christ, help us to gain the virtue of self sacrifice. Enable us to serve you perfectly, directing all that is ours, our senses, our emotions, our hearts, our bodies and our souls, to you. Dear Mother Mary, you enjoyed the glorious experience of resurrecting from the dead and being united with your Son in the light and joy of Paradise. Make us, Dear Mary, children of the resurrection, so that we, too, may have our assumption and be reunited to your Son.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve to live a heavenly life on earth. We will always do God's Will and keep his Law no matter what the cost to us. In that way we will have peace and joy on earth and we will be winning for ourselves a glorious resurrection in the life to come.

THE QUEEN OF HEARTS

Meditation on the Fifth Glorious Mystery of the Rosary

Introduction: Our prayer must be in the presence of God. We call on God, the Father, to help us. We beg the Eternal Word to enlighten us. We beg the Holy Spirit to inflame us with His love. We turn to Mary, our mother, and ask her to help us to understand this fifth glorious mystery of the rosary.

The Scene: It was a glorious day in Heaven when Mary was crowned Queen of Angels and Saints. Although it is impossible for us to imagine what took place, we know that it was something glorious and triumphant. Mary was coming to Heaven as a Queen. She had given birth to Christ, the King. She had merited so much grace during her lifetime that now she had more holiness in her soul than all the Angels and Saints put together. And so, God gave her the honor of being the Queen of Heaven and earth. The Angels pay their respect to her and honor her as their sweet and gracious sovereign. On that day when Mary was crowned Queen of Angels and Saints, the Heavens re-echoed with the music, the song and the triumphant voices of the innumerable multitudes of heavenly spirits.

Reflections: 1. Mary is our Queen. What is an objective fact ought also to be a personal conviction. We should make Mary the Queen of our hearts. Mary ought to rule over us. Since she is so sweet and gracious, her rule will not be one of force. Rather, she will rule us with her influence and with the graces she obtains for us. We will be able to have a firm hope in our ultimate salvation if we surrender ourselves to the loving rule of Mary.

2. The fact that Mary, our Queen, is the Mother of God, must give us great confidence. She is next to the Throne of Mercy. We are not

901 276 6165

901 (930) 755-3 CACSHILL (Peter)

afar off from our Heavenly Queen, however, because she is also our Mother. What she wants most is for us to love her Son and to give God honor. She knows that in this lies our peace and happiness both in time and in eternity. There need be no fear, no anxiety, in our hearts because we have Mary, our Mother and our Queen.

Colloquies: Heavenly Father, we thank you for giving us Mary to be our Queen. Help us to honor her and to love her as good subjects ought to love their sovereign. Dear Jesus, Mary was the woman that you loved best in the whole world. We beg you, therefore, to help us to love her sincerely. Give us great confidence in her so that the example of her life will be a dominant influence in our thoughts and actions. O Mother Mary, this day we accept you as our Queen. Rule over us. To you we give our minds and hearts, our bodies and our souls, our emotions and our senses. Dear Mary, rule over us so that we may serve God sincerely and some day take our place in the number of your devoted subjects in Paradise.

Conclusion: We thank the Blessed Trinity for the opportunity we have had to spend some minutes in meditation. We resolve frequently to consider Mary as our Queen and to beg her to rule over us. We shall try to realize that we do not belong to ourselves, but rather, to Mary, Our Queen. Therefore, we shall use our time, our gifts, our talents, all the opportunities that are afforded us, to honor her and to glorify God.

n. Aurora

892 - 9081

prof

Bellaxana
Mr. Powell

shuts 7 88

rdmery

