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SIX

Social Relations

A Private Three-Day Retreat
for Girls

By

Thomas Trese, S. J.



A GRAIL PUBLICATION

St. Meinrad

Indiana

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Price fifteen cents

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B E F O R E Y O U B E G I N

This pamphlet is designed to give you social glamor, provided you give yourself a brisk mental massage morning, noon, and night the next three days.

PERSONALITY

Yes, this retreat is a kind of beauty treatment, because it proposes to develop some beautiful curves in a hidden part of your personality.

Every human being, male or female, has personality—a combination of individual and social gifts, natural and supernatural, compacted into one unique person.

The distinctiveness of personality does not hinge on details as trifling as one's hairdo or style of clothes. Personality cultivated according to such accidental items degenerates often into a perversion of personality, eccentricity. A girl who imitates a film star's walk, for example, makes a freak of herself, or at best a carbon copy, and in so doing

loses that precise amount of her own distinctiveness.

Personality has two sides, individual and social, because human nature itself is both individual and social. This pamphlet is designed to beautify the social side of your personality. How?—Chiefly by centering your attention on six rudimentary social relations.

In the not-too-distant past you awoke to the fact that there is a world outside of you. After a few spills in the nursery, for example, you became aware of an external factor called "floor," and eventually adjusted yourself to it. As time went on you encountered other environmental factors, and learned to desport yourself with a minimum of maladjustments. Suddenly you found that you were not alone, but one of several interrelated realities. In a word, you were part of a group, a community, a society. Integration into this milieu resulted in smoother living.

In the same way you gradually discovered for yourself the ethical laws governing human nature as a whole. Observance of those laws, you learned, produced the most universally satisfying relationships with other human beings; whereas violation of those laws initiated a state of quasi-warfare with

reality. Every day in the papers and newscasts one reads or hears about such "wars" or conflicts. Maybe you have a few private conflicts of your own which never make the news? Then I have news for you.

LET'S GET PERSONAL

This retreat is designed to help you eliminate whatever conflicts may exist between yourself and others, or within your own personality. If you are not altogether satisfied with your ability to get along with others, use this retreat to find steps toward improvement.

Even though every other week of the year is hysteria week, during these three days try to govern your thinking process, and curtail whatever pastimes are superfluous to your customary work. For nothing is accomplished in turmoil. There once was a song (your parents know it no doubt) called, "Let the Rest of the World Go By." Let that be your mental attitude for the duration of this retreat. Show God you mean business.

The one thing required of you now at the outset is that you don't underestimate your ability. Adopt for a motto those words of Ella Lynch: "I am only someone, but I AM

SOMEONE. I can't do everything, but I CAN DO SOMETHING. The fact that I can't do everything is no reason for my not doing what I can."

The following considerations are to be read on three consecutive days, as indicated: one in the morning, one around noon, and one at the end of the day. Now you are on your own, in a sense, but rest assured that God's blessing and my prayers go with you, all the way.

I love Thee Jesus, my Love. I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always. And then do with me what Thou wilt.

FIRST DAY, MORNING

Religion is the technical term for man's most basic social relation, his relation to God. There is the creature-Creator relationship, redeemed-Redeemer relationship, beloved-Lover relationship, and many other subdivisions of the one paramount relation called "religion." Of these, the relation between creature and Creator is the most elementary, because it is a relation of total dependence.

You Belong to Me

Our century tries to ignore the fact of man's utter dependence on God, although God's creation of man is simply a matter of history. You are familiar with the Biblical account. Granted that it was written in a style different from our Graeco-Ro-

man style of history, nevertheless all the crucial facts are clearly recorded: 1) There is *only one God*, 2) Who is the *Creator*, 3) *supreme* above the whole universe. 4) By a simple free act He created *man*, 5) and *all the rest* of the universe. 6) None of these creatures is divine, 7) but God made man the *Lord of Creation*, superior to the rest. There is the reason why man depends on God for all he is and has.

But what about you? You're not mentioned in the Biblical account. Did God create *you*? Follow the lines of your family tree back far enough and you will find the answer is yes. Your original ancestors, the very first man and woman, were endowed by God with a power to beget other creatures like themselves. They transmitted the same power to their children, who in turn used the power and passed it on, till finally it came to your parents. That is how your body has come from the Creator — indirectly, through the instrumentality of your forebears.

Your soul, on the contrary, was direct-

ly created by God. Your parents' soul did not beget your soul, much less did their bodies beget it. God created it at the precise moment when He infused it into the matter ready to become your body. At that first instant of your conception, too, began your creature-Creator relationship.

Tell Me Why

But why did God bring you into existence? And what is to be your contribution to the c-C relationship now that God has done His part by creating you? To both these questions, the catechism answers: God made you to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this life, and to be happy with Him forever in the next. There is your purpose for existence, there is your part in the c-C relationship.

First, then, you must get to know God. A widower in the past century secluded himself and his infant son on his country estate. He cut the growing child off from all contact with others, and carefully concealed from him any idea of God. After

ten years of that, the boy unconsciously began looking for what had been denied him. To him, the sun seemed to be the all powerful benefactor of whom he felt the need. Soon he formed the habit of going at dawn to the garden to pay homage to that god he had made for himself. There one day his father caught him in the act, and laughingly showed him his error, by teaching him that the sun is merely one of countless fixed stars. The lad's disappointment and grief were so overwhelming that—to save his son's sanity—the father was forced to admit to him that there is indeed a God, the One Who created heaven and earth.

Fortunately you and I have come to a knowledge of God with less trouble. We have had not only the universe to tell us about God, but also God's direct revelation of Himself in Holy Scripture, and in the traditional teachings of the Church.

Now that you know God, loving Him should be easy, for He has given you so much. Sometime this morning make a flashback over your life, starting with your

earliest memory. Note all the creatures God has sent your way. He has, so to say, gift-wrapped each of them and tagged them, "For *You*." Why?—to teach you about Himself, to stir your love of Him, to motivate your service, to lead you to Himself. Don't be like that newlywed in a coma who continually fondled her wedding ring, but failed to recognize him who had given it to her, though he stood night and day by her bed. Summarize all your desires to know and love God as you repeat the following words of St. Francis of Assisi:

I love Thee Jesus, my Love. I repent with my whole heart of ever having offended Thee. Never permit me to offend Thee again. Grant that I may love Thee always. And then do with me what Thou wilt.

FIRST DAY, NOON

It's too bad that our first parents turned out to be lawbreakers. In the original garden spot of the world where they lived (You know the episode.) there lurked

the enemy of human nature, Satan. His one jealous aim was to ruin these beautiful human creatures as he had once ruined himself. So when God forbade our first parents to do a certain thing, Satan seduced them into doing it.

That first sin brought colossal losses. Gone were our first parents' infused knowledge, immunity to suffering, and perfect control over creation. Their sin deprived them of sanctifying grace, darkened their minds, weakened their wills, and made them prone to evil. By their outrageous defiance of God's will, they condemned themselves to a span of tearful years.

What made the situation worse was the fact that their descendants must share the same fate. For Adam was actually the physical head of his race, and, therefore, had acted for his whole race. So it is that you and I come into existence with a human nature deprived of the original grace which Adam had, and which we too would possess had Adam remained faithful.

Everyone admits that whoever makes something has rights over what he has made. God the Creator is no exception. He too has rights in the universe He has made. As man's Maker, *God* has the most basic claim on man. What He says goes. What He says, man must do. To obey God is holiness, to disobey Him is sin—a denial of man's relation to the divine Lawgiver.

Everybody Gets into the Act

As if Adam's sin weren't disastrous enough, all the rest of us have pitched in our rusty nickles too. The history of mankind has been, in great part, a history of personal sins. At no time since his first successful temptation has Satan given up trying to ruin man. He is still the enemy of our human nature. His aim today is the same as it was in Adam's day:

- 1) Get man to ignore God.
- 2) Get man to live as though there were no Lawgiver.
- 3) Get man to do what he (and the Devil) pleases.
- 4) Get man.

Once man's innate humility has been lulled into inactivity by serious sin, pride (which St. Augustine dubs "the root of all evil") will easily pilot him into hell.

Satan's pet strategy in getting man to ignore God's law is to get man to misuse God's creatures. That is why it is so crucial for us to be careful to use creatures only as God wants. God's will is your manual on "How to Use Creatures." God's will is the criterion according to which all human actions are either right or wrong. Actions which correspond to His will are right and good; actions which deviate from His will are wrong and bad. God's will is to be the deciding factor, therefore, in your choice and use of creatures. If you obey His law, all your actions are pleasing to Him, no matter how trifling or private they may be. In fact (as St. John of the Cross tells us), if you consider what God wills and do it, "you will satisfy your heart better than by doing what you yourself are inclined to do."

Use creatures to supply the necessities of life, to help you work and enjoy your-

self, to exercise your bodily and mental faculties. But do not use creatures in a way, or for a purpose, which God did not intend. There was once a man who had fallen into a deep well. He shouted frantically for someone to lower him a rope, and someone finally did. The man in the well tied it snugly about his neck and told his friends above to haul him up. They did—quite limp. Notice this: The rope was good, his friends were cooperative, and the man himself was wise in his request. The only thing amiss was his *mis-use* of the rope, and that fatally spoiled the whole incident.

This morning you made a flashback over your life, counting out — for your own amazement—the creatures God has lavished upon you. Make another flashback now over the same years, noting the misuse you may sometimes have made of creatures He sent your way. Too often in the lives of most of us it happens that, at the very time God is giving us something special, we set about using His gift in a way displeasing to Him. We sin by

doing that, and—in sinning—we ignore our relation to Him as Lawgiver. During these days of retreat, try to deepen your sorrow for sins like that. You really don't want to offend Him. Then why let yourself be Satan's stooge? Flatly declare yourself to be wholly obedient to God's will by repeating now that prayer on page 4.

FIRST DAY, NIGHT

Dark though the future was for our first parents after their sin, not exactly all was lost. For God promised that some day Someone would come to repair the damage. God warned Satan, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, between your seed and her Seed. She shall crush your head, and you shall lie in wait for her heel" (Gen. 3:15). That (i.e. "her Seed") is the first recorded reference to the Savior of mankind.

The Old Agreement

Time and again God repeated His promise of a redeemer: To Abraham, when He

designated his offspring as "The Chosen People" from whom the Chosen One would arise (Gen. 12, 17, 18:16). God repeated His promise to Abraham's son, Isaac (Gen. 26), who transmitted it to his son, Jacob, to whom God repeated it again, and whose name He changed to Israel (Gen. 35:9). It was repeated to the Tribe of Juda, one of the twelve tribes into which Abraham's descendants had split, from which the Great One actually would come (Gen. 49:8). Through all those ages, the time of His arrival, His *advent*, drew ever closer. Amid all that vast chosen people, the choice was becoming ever more definite.

God alone, of course, could restore the human race to His friendship, for the human race was powerless to restore itself. The original sin had been infinite (insofar as it was committed against the infinite God), yet finite (since it had been committed by humans). Thus perfect reparation required that whoever do the repairing be both infinite and human. The Second Person of the Blessed Trinity,

therefore, volunteered to become human and earn all the graces necessary to restore the human race to God's friendship. It was as though an older brother volunteered to earn enough money to put younger brothers and sisters through school. A God-Man, the Redeemer would possess the entire sweep of created and Uncreated perfections.

The New Agreement

That was the meaning of Gabriel's announcement to Mary:

"... Behold, you shall conceive in your womb; and shall bring forth a son; and you shall call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of David His father, and He shall be king over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:30-33).

Mary, well versed in the holy writings on this subject, clearly grasped what Gabriel was talking about. The angel's words

merely repeated the prophecies of the lineal descent and eternal kingship of the Savior.

Gabriel explained how this extraordinary conception would take place: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow you; and therefore the Holy One to be born of you shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Love had found a way after all! God's promise made to our first parents was now to be fulfilled, through the consent of the Virgin Mary, that "glorious Mayde and Mooder" (as Chaucer calls her).

Thus it came about that mankind has a social relation not only to God as God, but also to God as Man, to God incarnate, to Jesus Christ. If that relationship is all it should be for you, it makes you a friend of God, His adopted child, an heir to heaven (provided only that you fulfill the condition prerequisite to this salutary relationship, remain in—or recover—the state of grace). To be awed by this marvel is commendable, but it is good, too, to re-

member that God desires not so much that we understand this mystery of our redemption, as that we love Him for it. The divine side of the mystery remains always partially obscure, but the human side (e.g., Bethlehem, the shepherds, Nazareth, the Magi) is luminous and just waiting for your contemplation.

Name in the Flames

Tonight is a good a time as any to ask yourself frankly, "How much do I contemplate, how much do I appreciate, God-the-Redeemer, Jesus Christ (*my* God, *my* Redeemer, *my* Jesus)?" One way to improve this specific social relation to Him is to ask, when you pray, for an interior knowledge of Him. Ask for what the psalmist did: "Plant me, O Lord, and do not pluck me out; build me, and do not tear me down; and *give me a heart to know Thee.*"

Spread desires like that between the slices of your prayers. Nourish your love of that very name which specifically designates Him as Redeemer, the name Jesus.

St. Joan of Arc's love of it, for example, was so much a part of her that, even as the flames crackled and climbed up her sides, she called loudly and repeatedly, "Jesus." It was the last word she was heard to say as her head fell in final unconsciousness. Desiring a somewhat similar devotedness, round off the day now with that prayer of St. Francis of Assisi, who is said to have been the saint most like Jesus, on page 4.

S E C O N D D A Y , M O R N I N G

Instead of rushing on to another social relation, let us continue to focus attention this morning on Christ the Redeemer. After all, He did more than just bob in and out of this world. Actually He went the limit to show where we stand with Him. "He loved me and delivered Himself up for me," we, as well as St. Paul, can say. Not for a minute only, or a year, but for a whole lifetime Our Lord lived with us. And not content with doing that, He even died for us. He underwent the most ignominious death His contemporaries could devise. Your relationship to the Redeemer, then, you see, is to a *crucified* Redeemer.

Passion Unlimited

The thorn crown, reed-scepter, and rag-mantle had been the bright ideas of other-

wise perfunctory mercenaries winded from the exertion of whipping Him. They bowed in mock homage, spat in his blindfolded face, and slapped Him with a stick as they played Twenty Questions. But Our Lord, though scoffed at as a visionary and taunted as a fraud, did not retract one syllable of His claims. He did not give up the ship, as we say, although this noisome crew were a good sample of the creatures He had come to save.

The Man of Sorrows puts no limits to His readiness to redeem. Even after the verdict He could have sought privileges from Pilate, and got them. He contented Himself with being led away like the lowest social outcast. There was the usual placard stating His name and crime: Jesus, of Nazareth, King of the Jews. There was the heavy timber of the cross crushing down on His own shoulders. There was the flanking platoon of soldiers, decked out as for a military expedition. There was the mounted centurion leading the pitiable parade.

Man tells best what he really is when

he is most beaten, or when his purpose is most misconstrued. That is why Christ's magnanimity beams most handsomely on Good Friday. "Our Lord was performing the greatest work of His whole life of miracles and wonders," notes St. John of the Cross, "at the very moment He was most annihilated and brought lowest in man's estimation."

At the place of execution they shoved Him to the ground, stretched His arms taut to predetermined points, located nail in bare flesh, and hammered. Mob leaders, taking their cue, ranted, "He saved others, why doesn't He save Himself if He is God's Anointed?" But Christ had come precisely to earn forgiveness for man; so He said, "Father, forgive them. . . ."

Portrait Completed

Toward three o'clock, Christ's husky voice thrashed the dull silence. "My God, My God, what hast Thou forsaken Me?" It was the plaintive opening line of Psalm 21, running through His mind no doubt, and most appropriately. Centuries before, its composer had described this scene:

“I am a worm of the earth and not a man, the derision of men, and the outcast of the people. All that see me laugh me to scorn. They whisper and shake their heads: ‘He hoped in the Lord, let Him deliver him, let Him save him since He has complacency in him.’ . . . They have dug my hands and feet. I can count all my bones. They have divided my garments among them, and for my tunic they have cast lots. . . . My throat is dried up like a clay potsherd, my tongue cleaves to my palate.”

Is not this lowly condition of Jesus like the humility of hillsides? For they too look their worst the moment before their renaissance in spring.

Reviewing that psalm, Our Lord bowed His head as if in sleep. He Who had been described centuries before as “the star to rise out of Jacob” had now all but set. He Who had been called “the flower from the root of Jesse” was now withering and about to droop. He Who had been likened to “the lion of the tribe of

Juda" was now more like a sheep at the slaughtering block, making no sound.

An instant before dying He raised His head again, and defiantly quoted another psalm: "Thou wilt bring me out of this snare which they have set for me, for Thou art my protector. [*Father,*] *into Thy hands I commend my spirit*" (Ps. 30:6). The earth quaked and split as, with that loud prayer of filial abandonment, His human soul took leave of His body. Now all men, though still under the penalty of death, would be able to come at last to His Father. That had been His reason for coming into the world and assuming human nature.

Divine Pinch Hitter

"Greater love no man has," He Himself had said, "than that he lay down his life for his friend." Our Lord's death on the cross is not for mere speculation. It is an historical truth eminently pertinent to you and to me. In it we should perceive a love ardently seeking out each of us personally. As Isaias had foretold centuries before:

“It was our pains He bore, and our sorrows that He carried . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we were healed. Like sheep we had all gone astray . . . but the Lord laid upon Him the punishment of us all” (Ch. 53, translated by M. J. Gruenthaner, S.J.).

The question is (and you alone can answer it!), have you reacted apathetically to the Man of Sorrows? Or is your attraction to Him stronger because He went to death for you? Reflect at times on this great effort of His to persuade you of His love, and say to Him, “I love you, Jesus, my love, etc.” as on page 4.

SECOND DAY, NOON

More obvious than other social relations is the relation to one's family. (I am not forgetting the other obvious group, your boy-friends, but let us first consider you and your family.) Your relation with

Mom, Dad, Sis, and Bro is ordinarily as smooth as is your compliance with God's natural and positive laws.

Triple Threat

"Teenomania" is a current hazard which tends to disrupt family life. By teenomania I mean the enormous attention given teenagers. It is a trend born of nationwide publicity, nursed on specially styled clothes and exotic vocabulary, replete with prescribed antics and problems. At the risk of sounding unsympathetic, let me dub teenomania a triple threat, and get on with this frontal attack. Teenomania is a threat to teens themselves, to their parents and to society.

Proud that some of my best friends are teenagers, I nevertheless make bold to say that unlimited attention is a threat to teenagers themselves, because of the psychological handicap it puts them under. If Miss Frosh were going to be a teen forever, the colossal fanfare given her might be beneficial. But actually some not-so-fine morning she is going to wake up in a world where very few will be

inclined to make her the center of attention. Suddenly she will be expected to be adult, responsible, cooperative. But a seven-year binge of privilege and publicity (as one columnist describes the teen years) prepares no one for the rigors of adult life. Extravagant pampering equips no one for the role of sweetheart, business woman, nun, or mother.

Teenomania is a threat to parents, too, because it cheats them of much that is their due. Miss Soph's parents should not have to remodel the family residence for teens' exclusive use. They should not be expected to roll out the red carpet for the younger set so often that they give up rolling it for their own friends. Parents' pursuit of happiness should not be geared to a teenage motor. After all, parents are people too, with their own needs to fill, their own romance and enthusiasms to foster.

Thirdly (If you are still reading, much of this indictment does not apply to you.), the current focus on teenagers is a threat to society itself. Why?—because it de-

moralizes too many families, which are the foundation of society. Teenagers must learn to adjust to life without a priority on family earnings, possessions, time, or attention. Each member of a family has his or her own function necessary to the total functioning of the family as a social unit. No one denies that teenagers do have adjustments to make to imbalances crowding the entrance into adult life. But those adjustments can be made without maladjusting the rest of the family. You need not be like those people Francis Bacon speaks of, who "set a house on fire . . . but to roast their eggs" (*Essay* 23).

Treat instead of Threat

No one who has ever been young begrudges you the gaiety of these April years. So do not mistake my insistence on the shortcomings of people your age. I insist only that you don't shortchange your family. God-given creatures they are, don't mis-use them. Don't go on hurting the ones you shouldn't hurt at all. Don't use them as stooges. "Honor thy father

and thy mother,” is the traditional way of putting it. Don't pride yourself, then, on clever back-talk. Give them respect, obedience, gratitude. After God, there is no one who has done as much for you as your parents. You shall never again see their like. So don't postpone gratitude till you have to voice it with a tombstone. Love them today rather than tomorrow, tomorrow rather than later.

Brother and sister are your other selves. Champion, applaud, help them as you would yourself. Correct in yourself what in them annoys you. Provoked by an indiscreet remark, be silent. Controlling your tongue thus, you ward off anger, abusive language, quarreling, violence, revenge. Patience is still a virtue, which enables you to endure with a quiet mind whatever happens contrary to your wish. Be a good radiator, not the kind that knocks whenever the heat is turned on.

Try now to realize how much you have to be thankful for. Improve this precious social relation to your family by appreciating them. That is gratitude—showing

appreciation for every kindness, great and small. "Whatever you do," St. Paul says, "do it from the heart—as to the Lord, and not to man." Savoring that sweet thought, recite again the prayer on page 4.

SECOND DAY, NIGHT

Boy-friends are people too. Although not members of your family, they are part of society, and thus party to your social relations. At this period of your life they may be masterfully occupying center stage. How can you fill *your* role opposite them?

Any drama-coach will tell you that careful training is the surest way to command performance. The same goes for boy-girl relations also: Careful training (in what your conduct with boy-friends should be) is the surest way to command performance (of that conduct when in their presence). Perfect training and performance in the boy-girl relation are technically known by a single term: chastity.

Dates and Eternity

"Young people nowadays [Dr. Good-

rich C. Schauffler, an Oregon obstetrician, told the American Medical Association last July] are stimulated and maintained by the sex hysteria which is a calculated instrument of modern journalism and so-called entertainment. . . . They are exposed to teachings such as those of Freud and Jung, and to research such as that of Kinsey, without the cooperation of a mature intelligence. The result is an emotional shambles.”

Yet God demands that we keep our chastity uninfected by that commercial or Kinsey fever. Two of God’s Ten Commandments forbid anything less than chastity. Further emphasis was given by Our Lord’s warning that anyone who leads another into sin, “it were better for him that a millstone be hanged about his neck, and that he was drowned in the depths of the sea” Mt. 18:6). Never did Our Lord speak more threateningly than in defense of innocence against seducers. Whoever leads another into sin incurs God’s anger and a vengeance so great that, in com-

parison with it, being drowned would be a minor injury.

Some misinformed individuals have the idea that the Church is opposed to sex. Actually she merely distinguishes between use and abuse. She condemns the *mis-*use of sex, so her critics say she condemns sex. In this matter the Church (like all good mothers) adheres to that old adage: A place for everything, and everything in its place. She knows what place sex occupies in the present economy of divine providence. She strives to keep sex in its place, not all over the place.

Every Catholic should do the same. Doesn't this whole matter boil down to a proper use of creatures? Use this creature, sex, only in the way and for the purpose God intended when He gave it to man. You know from Genesis (1:27) that "God created man to His own image . . . male and female He created them. And God blessed them saying, 'Increase and multiply.'" So according to Sacred Scripture, the reason for the difference in sex is the begetting of children. That

same purpose is demonstrable likewise from an analysis of the intrinsic nature of the sexual power.

Pioneer Woman

Miss Latter Twentieth Century, you must be a rugged individualist in this matter. Don't fall for the line that, since there is a lot of impurity going on these days, you must follow suit. What kind of reasoning is that! Did the American pioneer woman, when savages came to scalp her, say, "All pioneer women are being scalped these days, so I would be singular were I to resist"? By no means! She resisted with all her ingenuity. The more vulnerable her situation, the more was she on her guard.

Why not be a pioneer woman yourself? Show the world that there is more in life than sex. Don't be caught in the riptide of a pagan fixed idea. Don't be duped by commercial identification of sex with popularity. None of those advertisers is interested in you or your popularity. For them, you are no more than a money-making device. Don't wear your innocence

like a fur stole, to be discarded when things become too hot.

More Than a Girl

Fortunately for Reparata she had a glib tongue as well as good looks. When taken into custody by Emperor Decius for being a Christian, he fell in love with her breathtaking beauty.

“Forget that fellow Christ,” he said politely (for he disliked torturing such a lovely creature), “and offer incense to these immortal gods here.”

“Incense your muck-made gods yourself!” replied Reparata. “I’ll never play false to my Lord Jesus Christ.”

To impress this outspoken pretty, Decius ordered guards to fill a big bathtub with hot oil, and threatened to put her into it if she remained stubborn.

“God can be trusted,” she sang out, “to help a maid through even that.”

So Decius had to put her into the tub. But, as other baths often do, even this bath of oil soon cooled, and left her unharmed. So Decius ordered firebrands to be held against her sides.

“Like icicles,” she commented.

“Light the furnace,” roared Decuis, “and leave her in it till she’s ashes.”

But Reparata improvised words to a little tune she knew, and crooned as she was shoved into the fire:

“As cedar high on Lebanon, so am I.

As cypress high on Sion, so am I.

As perfume sweet and lasting, so am I.”

Still warbling these sentiments, she stepped out again quite all right.

Pacing up and down, and pulling perfectly good hairs from his pagan pate, Decius moaned, “What kind of girl is this? Her mouth is going even amid flames. I can’t win her over. Bring the sword and cut her up.”

But no sooner had the executioners finished their job than Reparata’s many and beautiful parts at once reassembled themselves. “That the best you can do?” she asked. “Don’t you know, you can’t *really* harm me.”

Decius bade guards sharpen a razor, shave the little shrew’s scalp, and parade her down Main Street. But Reparata con-

fessed, she could think of nothing more to her liking, for then she would be more beautiful in the eyes of her Lord. "How much longer will you detain me," she asked, "with your torments and small talk?"

"Small talk!"—Decius purpled even to the roots of what was left of his hair. "Take this good-for-nothing chatterbox and slice her head off."

So dutiful swords cut off her head. Later, some brave Christian boys stole her body and buried it. This was on October 8, in the year 250.

The Closer You Keep

So goes the legend of St. Reparata, true in its substantial features; namely that she didn't sell out to bids for her faith, her chastity, or anything else. So may you, too, be firm against all temptations. For direction on specific problems, consult your parents or confessor. The closer you keep to Christ, the closer you keep to chastity. And the closer you keep to chastity, the better will be your social relation to *all*

your boy-friends. With this desire, beg His help as you recite that all-purpose prayer on page 4.

LAST DAY, MORNING

Under the appearances of bread and wine Christ is actually present in our churches. Is your relationship to Him there all it should be? Are you fully adjusted to the fact of His sacramental presence? Does it mean anything to you? Or have you slipped into the behavior of the non-Catholic millions who do not have Christ in the Eucharist?

The Old Refrain

Our Lord instituted this method of remaining with us in His humanity at the very moment when men were plotting to erase Him, and the memory of Him, from the face of the earth. It happened at the end of the traditional paschal supper. The

apostles' attention was riveted on Our Lord as He extended to each of them a morsel of what looked like bread. "Take and eat," He said, "for this is My Body. . . . Do this in *remembrance* of Me." For the first time in history those words, like a harp intoning the motif of a tremendous symphony, began to vibrate.

"Drink some of this," He added shortly afterwards, passing them a chalice, "for this is My Blood. . . . As often as you do this, do it in *remembrance* of Me."

Silently each of them took a portion. No one questioned, no one was amazed. Questions and amazement had had their innings months before when He had first promised He would do this. Then the Jews had "argued with one another, saying, 'How can this man give us His flesh to eat?' Jesus had therefore said to them, 'Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood you shall not have life in you. . . . My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me

and I in him. . . .’ Many of His disciples therefore, when they had heard this, said, ‘This is a hard saying. Who can listen to it?’ From that time on, many of His disciples had turned back and no longer went about with Him.”

Far from watering down His statement, or explaining it away, Jesus had said to the Twelve, “Do you also wish to go away?” Peter had answered for them all: “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life, and we have come to believe and to know that Thou art the Christ, the Son of God” (J. 6:53-70). So now at this last supper with Him, when that promise was fulfilled, the apostles simply took and ate as He told them to.

From that night to this, the refrain of “remembrance . . . remembrance” has vibrated down the corridors of time. Remembrance? Yes, He said “in remembrance of *Me*.” Remember I loved you and delivered Myself up for you. Remember (as St. John Chrysostom puts it) that for you, mankind, I was covered with spit-

tle and was buffeted. I stripped Myself of Glory, I left My Father and came to you, to you who hated Me, who did not wish even to hear My name, and who sometimes ran away from Me. But I followed you, I ran after you. I caught hold of you and embraced you. "Eat Me," I said. "I am not content merely to mingle *with* you (by sharing your human nature). I want to mingle Myself *in* you (in Holy Communion). I want to be eaten, I want to be received as your food, so that this fusion, this union of you and Me, may be more intimate. I want nothing to come between us. I want the two of us to become one."

"Remembrance . . . remembrance." Down the ages many have never heard that plaintive theme. Others heard it, but have forgotten it, or try to forget it. Many today live as though Christ had never given His flesh and blood to be their food, as a pledge of personal resurrection, as a keepsake until the end of time. They ignore Him on the altar, there for them,

to care for them, through laughter and through tears.

Divine Forget-Me-Not

No wonder Our Lord, in the revelations of His Sacred Heart, complains that, "It is their forgetfulness which cuts Me, more than anything I suffered in My passion. Forgetfulness is all they give Me, in return for all My eagerness to do them good."

Do you who are making this retreat, at least you, give Him the consolation of beholding you supplying (as far as you reasonably can) for others' forgetfulness. How?—There are ways. It is not impossible. At Mass, for example. Did you know that in every Mass the priest repeats, not only Our Lord's words of consecration, but also, "As often as you do this, do it in *remembrance* of Me." The priest repeats that ancient refrain as he genuflects immediately before elevating the chalice. At that moment cannot you too *remember* Him as He has asked us to?

Another way to make up for others' forgetfulness is, during the moments of Holy Communion, to forget everything else but the fact of His presence. "Close the eyes of your body, open the eyes of your soul," suggests St. Teresa of Avila, "and look into your heart. For I tell you that, if you adopt this custom, He will discover Himself wholly to you." After returning from the Communion rail, pre-occupy yourself with the simple yet overpowering fact of His presence within your body and within your soul. Unexcited contemplation is perhaps the most fitting form of adoration of God in this mystery. Is not wordless wonder a normal reaction to any tremendous experience? An average sunset, for example, makes most of us silent for at least a minute or two. Surely the Beauty so ancient, so new, is capable of effecting breathless surrender in the heart of the beholder.

Then for the rest of the day, be careful that your lips remember Him Who passed through them in the morning.

"Remembrance . . . remembrance." Re-

peat that melody over and over again, until it seeps deep into your consciousness; so you can never forget it. Only then will you begin to remember Our Lord as He deserves—and as He desires—to be remembered. With this implicit petition, say to Him again the prayer on page 4.

LAST DAY, NOON

The last word has not yet been said about your relation to Christ. For your relation to Him is not only to The Crucified, nor to the Eucharist, but to the *risen* Christ as well. This is an aspect of your relationship not to be slighted. After all, His resurrection is a guarantee of what He promised—that you and I will someday rise with our own bodies, too, glorified (imagine!) and immortal.

Good Morning, Glory

On this final day of retreat, join those loyal ladies going to complete the burial rites interrupted on Good Friday.

“Who’ll roll back the stone for us?”

they ask as they rustle through the pre-dawn Easter streets. Day breaks as they come in sight of the tomb, so they see its gaping doorway. Mary Magdalene turns on her heel to go back to notify the apostles, but the other women enter the vestibule of the tomb. There an angel is waiting for them. "Don't be frightened," he says. "You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth Who was crucified. He is risen, not here. Look at the place in there where they laid Him. Go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee, where you shall see Him as He told you."

Magdalene meanwhile is telling Peter and John of the open tomb. Running to verify her story, they miss the returning women, and find the garden, vestibule, and vault all desolate. The kerchief that had covered the head of Christ's corpse is lying neatly folded at one side of the vault. Mystified, but hopeful, they too leave the premises.

So by the time Mary Magdalene returns to the garden, it is again deserted. At

least so she thinks. She loiters in the tomb antechamber, foggy as to what to do next. Finally she stoops to get through the low opening into the burial vault, but freezes in the act. Two white-clad figures are inside there, one sitting at the head of the slab where she had helped lay Christ's dead body, and another at the foot.

"Why are you crying?" they ask.

"Because they have carried off my Master's body I don't know where." As she is speaking, she espies out of the corner of her teary eye someone behind her in the garden outside. Gardener, starting his day's work? "Sir," she says, "if you have taken Him out of here, tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away."

"Mary!" says the Man outside. Pronounced by that familiar voice, one little word routs her perplexities.

"The voice of my Beloved! Behold He comes leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills" (*Canticle of Canticles*, 2:8). Inside her a bird awakes and begins warbling fit to split. She spins around as in a dance, crying, "Rabboni!"

Night of Love

Late that night in the old upper room, without knocking or budging the door, Our Lord suddenly stands smiling. "Peace be to you," He says to the assembled apostles. They double-take, then stare. "Why are you frightened?" He asks. "Look at My hands and feet, it is really I." Although incredulous from excessive joy and surprise, they cannot deny those outstretched arms or gored palms. Some spring from the couches now to kneel at His feet. There, too, wounds tell their livid story.

"Feel Me and see for yourselves," He invites. "A ghost doesn't have flesh and bones as I do." His warm flesh gives at their touch. It is His body all right. Still the fact seems too good to be true. "Have you anything here to eat?" He asks. Peter hands Him a leftover piece of broiled fish and honeycomb. As He puts it into His mouth, startled eyes follow every motion of His jaws. As though they had never seen Him eat before!

"Lord, Master," they sigh, believing at

last. It is really He—solid body, inviting voice, and eyes. So joy, stripped of its lingering shyness, hurls itself into His arms.

Here was their risen Jesus, yours too, a forecast of what lies in store for your own body on the last day. Many hard heads and hearts today hold back from Christ, as they did at first in that upper room. Many think they believe in Him, but their affection is stagnant. Don't ask them to fall on their knees or weep for joy that He is risen. Oh a honeycomb and cold fish they'll give Him readily enough, but don't ask for anything more. Don't ask them to give Him familiarity—that faith full of love—which He wants today as He did on that signal night of love. No, don't ask *them*. But what about *you*, Miss Retreatant? With the best desires you can muster, say to Him now the prayer on page 4.

LAST DAY, NIGHT

Perhaps you did not know, you have a relation to the Mystical Body of Christ.

It is the last of your social relations to be reviewed here. You do know, of course, that the term "Mystical Body of Christ" is simply another name for the Church. Since you are already a member of the Church, through baptism, you are therefore also a member of Christ's Mystical Body.

Where You Come In

Every member should periodically check up on her part in the work of Christ's Mystical Body. For, as Newman says, "God has committed some work to you which He has not committed to another. You have a part in a great work; you are a link in the chain, a bond of connection between persons." What is the work committed to *you*? How are *you* carrying on the work of Christ?

"Youth is not made for pleasure but for heroism," says Paul Claudel. Even if you do not agree with him, there is no denying that today's youth must be heroic if values inherent in Christian civilization are to be salvaged. You may be one of the first twenty-first century Christians.

The vigor of Christ's Mystical Body in the twenty-first century, then, may depend on the energy you expend now for that Body.

"The number of girls entering religious life must grow ever larger if the needs of God's work are to be met." That is Cardinal Stritch's way of putting the matter concretely. Have you ever considered the possibility that God may want *you* to be of that number? Should *you* signalize yourself in Christ's work, or are you just another pleasure-seeker? "No good is done," says Newman, "except at the expense of those who do it." So if good is to be done, maybe you are the one who will do it.

A religious vocation is not a matter of work, period. It is a special kind of love affair, a lifelong tryst with Christ, Whose attractions are relished in more than words. For religious women, says Cardinal Stritch, "certainly are making of their whole lives an act of the love of God."

Granted that not every "call" is spectacular, as was St. Joan of Arc's. Still, every

vocation is as real and heroic as hers. For in each vocation answered, there is extraordinary correspondence to God's will. The "call" consists essentially, as Archbishop Cushing says, in discovering what special work God made you to do. "God made each . . . to do a particular work; to glorify Him in a particular way; to make a particular contribution to the attainment of His purpose." By opening your arms to that "particular work" (whatever it may be), you will banish from your life what the Archbishop calls "unbearable aimlessness."

What Are Your Measurements?

Who qualifies for a religious vocation? Every Catholic who is free of impediment, inspired by a right intention, and fit (mentally and physically) to bear the burdens of religious life (Canon Law, #538). As soon as any red-blooded American girl discovers she has those three dimensions, she should begin to ponder. How long?—the time differs with different individuals. Consultation with a confessor, and prayer

for guidance, will tell you how long to ponder.

Don't let anything deter you once you know God's will. Joan of Arc's dispatch in answering God's call is what girls with their minds made up should imitate. To her escort's query about the time of departure on her mission, she said, "Better today than tomorrow, better tomorrow than later" (*Proces*, II:436).

Religious vocation has been cited here only as an illustration of how one can improve one's relation to the Mystical Body, and to remind you of the *possibility* that you may have a religious vocation. On the other hand, your part in the work of Christ may be within the married state. No less an authority than St. Paul insists on the diversity of vocations in Christ's Mystical Body. God's will is what one must do. Pray to know His will during the current year.

Adieu

"God asks from you everything and nothing," Bl. Claude de la Columbiere counseled St. Margaret Mary. "He asks

everything, because He wishes to reign over you as one who entirely belongs to Him; in such a manner than He can dispose of everything, that nothing in you may resist Him, but that all may bend to Him and obey the least sign of His will. He seeks nothing of you, because He wishes Himself to do everything in you; without your interfering in anything, contenting yourself with being the object on which and in which He acts, so that all glory may be His, and that He alone may be known, loved, and praised forever.”

For the present, my dear retreatant, be content to repeat (as a final plea for guidance) that prayer on page 4.

TO BE READ ON DAY AFTER RETREAT

Nothing can substitute for love, no other virtue, no other attitude of mind or slant of will. Both God and man know that. So, to maintain whatever improvements you intend to make in your social relations toward God and man, maintain your love.

To maintain your love, prayer is the way. Don't be disappointed if this advice sounds trite. I do not mean anything trite or anything tedious. By prayer I mean only what the catechism means: "... the raising of your mind and heart to God."

Actually we *owe* God that kind of prayer, simply because we are totally dependent on Him. Fortunately it is also an apt reaction to His constant song, "Everything I Have Is Yours."

Furthermore we *need* prayer: to invite blessings (for prayer is the ordinary prelude to grace, in the present economy of salvation), to learn His will (for in prayer God tells us what He wants), to tell Him our desires, to prolong the ideas from this reterat, to survive here and hereafter (for anyone who prays well lives well, and anyone who lives well dies well, and anyone who dies well *lives* in bliss eternally).

For your convenience, here are the ordinary methods of raising one's mind and heart to God: morning prayers (like

“Angel of God, etc.,” the Sign of the Cross, the Morning Offering, Grace at Meals), daily Mass, short aspirations to be said anywhere and anytime (like “Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,” or “Begone, Satan”), impromptu meditations (whenever thoughts drift toward Him, or you notice His “footprints” as you go through the day).

Go! Go!

That last fact, the nearness of God is what can buoy you in your efforts to maintain social relations. For, as St. John of the Cross says, “To set one’s affections *regularly* upon God, quickly sets the soul on fire in a divine way.”

Perhaps now you see less dimly what before was all out of focus. Perhaps now you have courage (ever so precious, though ever so little). Perhaps now you face a challenge, to do what before seemed only for the birds. You have given God a chance to speak. Maybe you have opened your heart to Him. Unafraid you have heard Him out. Take as addressed to

yourself, then, what Joan of Arc heard when she complained to her Angel that obstacles in her path were too great: "Go, Daughter of God! Go, go, go! I will be with you, at your side."

GO, DAUGHTER OF GOD! GO,
GO, GO! GOD WILL BE WITH YOU,
AT YOUR SIDE.

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