

~~Saint Paul Seminary~~
The purgative...
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The Saint Paul Seminary Meditation Series

SERIES II

.. *The* ..
Purgative Way



A series of meditations on the purgative way—correlated with the Life of Christ and the prayers of the Pontifical—together with suggestions for the particular examen and spiritual reading.



THE SAINT PAUL SEMINARY
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IMPRIMATUR

✠ **Joannes Gregorius Murray, D. D.**

Archiepiscopus Sancti Pauli,

die 15 Februarli, 1955

*If any man will come after me,
let him deny himself (Lk. 9:23).*

Omnem immunditiam et nequitiam ejiciatis.

—Exorcistate.

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Joseph Glynn

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MISERERE

(From New Latin Psalter)

Hymn of those in the Purgative Way

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Thy mercy; according to the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my iniquity.

Wash me completely from my fault and cleanse me from my sin.

For I acknowledge my iniquity, and my sin is always before me.

To Thee only have I sinned, and before Thee have I done what is evil: that Thou mayest be proved just in Thy decree and correct in Thy judgment.

Behold I was born in sin and in iniquity did my mother conceive me.

Behold Thou dost delight in sincerity of hearts; and in the depths of my soul Thou dost teach me wisdom.

Sprinkle me with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed. Wash me and

I shall be made whiter than snow. Make me hear joy and gladness: let the bones that Thou hast crushed rejoice.

Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my faults.

Create a clean heart in me, O God; and renew a resolute spirit within

me.

Cast me not away from Thy face and take not Thy holy spirit from me.

Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a generous spirit.

I will teach the unjust Thy ways; and sinners shall be converted to Thee.

Deliver me from the penalty of blood, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall extol Thy justice.

O Lord, Thou wilt open my lips: and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.

For Thou has no delight in sacrificial offerings, and burnt offerings Thou wouldst not accept if I should give them.

My sacrifice, O God, is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.

In Thy goodness, O Lord, deal graciously with Sion: that the walls of Jerusalem may be rebuilt.

Then Thou wilt accept lawful sacrifices, oblations and whole burnt offerings; then shall they offer calves upon Thy altar.

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Psalm 50.

Preface to the series on The Purgative Way.

Spiritual readings from the "Imitation of Christ."

Introductory — The Three Ways Based on Gifts in the Soul.

- I The Three Ways.
- II The "Wound" of Original Sin.
- III Temptations.
- IV Sin and Penance.
- V The Example of Christ Crucified.
- VI Mortal Sin.
- VII Venial Sin.
- VIII Victim Souls.
- IX Indulgences.
- X Mortification and Self-Denial.
- XI Mortification of the Body.
- XII Mortification of the Senses and Imagination.
- XIII The Passions.
- XIV Mortification of the Mind.
- XV Mortification of the Will.
- XVI Faults of Character.
- XVII Mortification of Pride.
- XVIII Mortification of Anger.
- XIX Mortification of Envy.
- XX Mortification of Gluttony.
- XXI Mortification of Sloth.
- XXII Mortification of Avarice.
- XXIII Mortification of Lust.
- XXIV Sensible Spiritual Consolations.
- XXV Spiritual Dryness.
- XXVI Scruples.
- XXVII Steady Progress in Spiritual Growth.

PREFACE TO THE SERIES ON THE PURGATIVE WAY

This series of meditations follows the same plan as series I. One and the same topic is carried through the morning meditation, the particular examination of conscience and spiritual reading. In this way the spiritual method of the student constitutes an organic unit.

The practice of mental prayer continues as in the preceding unit. The aim of the meditations at this stage is the formation of firm religious persuasions. The practices of the Purgative Way require strong convictions concerning the holiness of God, malice of sin, the last things of man. Especially recommended to the student at this stage of spiritual development are the "Meditations for the Use of Seminarians and Priests," Vol. I, by L. Branchereau, and meditations IX and XVIII in the "Introduction to a Devout Life" by St. Francis de Sales.

The Preludes of the meditations stress the life and example of St. John the Baptist and the initial actions of Christ's public life. These events as well as the portions of the Liturgical Year embodying them are intimately connected with the Purgative Way.

The meditations are also correlated with the ordination ritual of the Ostiarate, Lectorate, and the Exorcistate. The Ostiarate inculcates the necessity of mortification and of combatting the capital sins—especially sloth and pride. The Lectorate is a moving commentary on the ultimate objectives of mental prayer. The Exorcistate stresses the need of hatred of sin, the spirit of penance, mortification, etc. In this way the ordination prayers of the Pontifical for the first three Minor Orders can be admirably correlated with the Purgative Way.

Permission of P. J. Kenedy and Sons to reproduce certain prayers from the "Manual of Prayers" is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

SPIRITUAL READING FROM THE "IMITATION OF CHRIST"

Concerning the Purgative Way:

I. Hatred and Expiation of Sin

Book I, chapters 21, 22, 23, 24

Book III, chapters 20, 47, 48, 49

II. Temptations

Book I, chapters 8, 10, 13

Book III, chapters 12, 35

III. Venial Sin

Book I, chapters 1, 6, 25

IV. Mortification and Self-Denial

Book II, chapters 11, 12

Book III, chapters 10, 27, 31, 32, 41, 42, 43, 44, 56

Book IV, chapter 15

V. Bad Habits

Book I, chapter 14

Book III, chapters 24, 43, 45, 58

VI. Passions

Book I, chapters 6, 7

Book III, chapters 54, 55

Recommended for spiritual reading are the following: T. Plassmann, "The Priest's Way to God"; L. Branchereau, "Meditations for the Use of Seminarians and Priests," vol. II cc. 26 to 32; St. Francis de Sales, "Introduction to a Devout Life"; and the "Imitation of Christ."

INTRODUCTORY

THE THREE WAYS BASED ON GIFTS IN THE SOUL

When the Blessed Trinity comes to dwell in the soul (Baptism, Sacrament of Penance, perfect Act of Contrition) It brings with It sanctifying grace, the three theological virtues — or at least charity — the four infused moral virtues and the seven gifts of the Holy Ghost. All these gifts and actual grace are present in each of the three ways. But in each way we use certain gifts in a special manner. The virtue of *penance* is the foundation of the *purgative way*; the *four moral virtues* and *three theological virtues*, of the *illuminative way*; *charity* and the *seven gifts*, of the *unitive way*. We shall now enumerate these gifts and virtues and show also how they are correlated with one another.

FOUR INFUSED MORAL VIRTUES

1. PRUDENCE (gift of counsel)
2. JUSTICE (gift of piety)
 - Religion**
 - Penance**
 - Obedience**
3. FORTITUDE (gift of fortitude)
 - Patience**
 - Constancy**
4. TEMPERANCE (gift of fear)
 - Chastity**
 - Humility**
 - Meekness**

THREE THEOLOGICAL VIRTUES

1. FAITH (gifts of knowledge, understanding)
 - Mental prayer**
2. HOPE (gift of fear)
 - Contempt of earthly goods**
 - Poverty**
3. CHARITY (gift of wisdom)
 - Love of God**
 - Zeal for the glory of God**
 - Love of neighbor**
 - Silence**
 - Affective Prayer**
 - Prayer of simplicity**

MEDITATION I

(For the Ignatian Method of Meditation, see p. 74)

THE THREE WAYS

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us listen reverently to the great apostle of the Gentiles bidding us to “strip ourselves of the old man with his deeds and to put on the new man” (Col. 3:9), for “the old things are passed away, behold all things are made new” (2 Cor. 5:17).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us the grace to understand the laws of genuine spiritual growth and to exemplify them in our priestly life.

CONSIDERATIONS: Spiritual writers speak of the following three ways of spiritual perfection — not three different and parallel ways, but rather three successive stages or degrees.

1. *The purgative way* (“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself” — Luke 9:23). In this stage the *soul cleanses itself* from its former faults by a sincere expiation, roots out its evil habits and tendencies, and strengthens its will by prayer, meditation, and other spiritual exercises. In other words, the *soul empties itself* of sin and of its sinful tendencies in order to make room for the life of Christ.

2. *The illuminative way* (“He that followeth me walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life” — John 8:12). After having been purified from sin, the soul, imitating the example of the Supreme Model, reproduces in itself the virtues of Christ and gradually becomes more like unto Him. Christ, Who is the Light of the world, illuminates and guides the soul in its way.

3. *The unitive way* (“I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me” — Gal. 2:20). After it has purified itself from sin and reproduced in itself the dispositions of Christ, the soul lives in habitual union with God. The Triune God becomes the center of its thoughts, affections, and actions. This intimate union with God becomes a foretaste of the Beatific Vision.

“The husbandman,” say Fr. Plassmann (p. 73), “shows the analogy between the three stages of the natural life and the spiritual life when he first purges, plows and harrows the field; then plants or sows the seed; and finally reaps the ripe harvest. Purging, plowing and harrowing

are actions which characterize our task on the Purgative Way. It is the way of beginners—beginners on the road to holiness. There are sins to be atoned for, temptations to be overcome, vices and evil tendencies to be crushed, or at least put under control.”

There are not well-defined boundary lines between these three ways. The fundamental virtues (love, sacrifice, prayer) belong to each of the three ways, varying only in degree. The soul's progress is not a steady advance but has its ebb and flow. The soul passes gradually from one way to another. Then in each way there are different degrees because of each individual's temperament, earnestness, constancy, generosity, and cooperation with the grace of the Holy Spirit.

APPLICATIONS: Oh, my God, how marvelous, how logical, how orderly is the growth of the spiritual life in the soul. St. John of the Cross once said that a vessel cannot be filled unless it is first emptied of its contents. And so it is with the soul. The soul cannot be filled with the virtues and life of Christ in the Illuminative Way unless it has first emptied itself of its sinful tendencies and creaturely attachments in the Purgative Way. And it cannot be habitually united to Christ unless it has perfect control over its lower tendencies and has developed in a high degree the virtues of Christ, especially the virtue of charity. These three great Ways of spiritual growth are inculcated in the teaching of Christ, reflected in the Liturgical year of the Church, exemplified in the conferring of Tonsure, of minor and major orders. Yet I have been ignorant of these great laws of spiritual growth, neglected them and even rejected them. That is why my spiritual life is confused and topsy-turvy, while I grasp at every novelty in the vain hope of stabilizing my interior life.

Examination of Conscience

1. Is the desire of sanctity a fixed idea of my whole life?
2. Do I strive, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to attain that state of perfection which in the designs of God I as a diocesan priest am to possess?
3. In this great work of spiritual transformation, have I deliberately stopped at a minimum of perfection, being content merely to avoid mortal sin?
4. Am I of the opinion that spiritual perfection is to be attained by clinging tenaciously to one special devotion, or to a particular form of self-denial and mortification?

5. Have I insisted on taking a short-cut to sanctity? Do I feel that I can dispense with the practices of the Purgative Way? Do I not find here, perhaps, the reason for my present discouragement and abandonment of all spiritual endeavour?

6. Do I aim at the singular, odd, unusual, in my spiritual life?

7. Do I strive to perform each ordinary daily task extraordinarily well?

8. Do I realize that the saints reached the summits of perfection only by unflinching perseverance, exquisite prudence, constant sacrifice and denial of self?

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY: "Justorum semita quasi lux splendens procedit et crescit usque ad perfectum diem" (Proverbs 4).

Spiritual Reading: T. Plassmann, "The Priest's Way to God," p. 73.

Meditation II

THE "WOUND" OF ORIGINAL SIN

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us listen to the words of St. Paul who in his Epistle to the Galatians describes the effects of the Fall on our human nature in the following words: "For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, for these are contrary one to another" (Gal. 5:17).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask the Holy Spirit to impress deeply upon our minds the consciousness of our fallen state and of our need of divine grace.

CONSIDERATIONS: Before the Fall the souls of Adam and Eve were the abode of the Blessed Trinity and were adorned by sanctifying grace. In addition, a perfect harmony reigned in their whole being; their body, senses and imagination were wholly subject to the mind and will, and the latter through grace were perfectly subordinated to the will of God. No inordinate bodily tendencies, no sensual impulses assailed them in this blissful state.

But the fall, alas, changed all that: Human nature was "wounded"; the harmony, the coordination, the subordination of man's faculties and powers were disrupted. The body is now no longer perfectly subject to the soul nor the lower faculties to the higher. Since the body, senses and imagination are no longer perfectly subject to the will, our intellect

in its quest for truth (meditations) is retarded by distractions and wanderings, and inclines to temporal curiosities more than to eternal verities; it no longer enjoys that sharpness and promptitude which belonged to it before the Fall. The lower faculties, no longer perfectly subordinated to the will, tend immoderately to earthly and sensible things; they continually strive to emancipate themselves from the control of the will.

With the help of God's grace the will can restore order and overcome these temptations, this "concupiscence" as St. Paul calls these solicitations of the world, the flesh and the devil. But at other times the will succumbs to these temptations, and then there is sin—not only venial but also mortal. And every time we give in to our inordinate tendencies, these tendencies become stronger, they gradually develop into habits which eventually exercise a veritable slavery over us. This self-indulgence, if unchecked, develops in the soul seven enslaving vices known as the capital sins which in turn become the prolific source of actual sins.

APPLICATIONS: How well, O Lord, do these few brief doctrinal considerations describe the state of human nature as by bitter experience I have come to know it. How faithfully does St. Paul reflect my own experiences when he so poignantly writes: "For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I work I understand not. For I do not do that good which I will; but the evil which I hate, that I do. . . . For I am delighted with the law of God, according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God, by Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . There is now, therefore, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not according to the flesh. For the law of the spirit of life, in Christ Jesus, hath delivered me from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 7:14-8:2).

Examination of Conscience

1. Am I sufficiently convinced of the fact that because of original sin I was born with inordinate tendencies in my nature and that I easily incline to sin?

2. Do I realize that this disorder in my nature will continue until death and that consequently I must never relax my vigilance over myself?

3. Do I realize that I must never expose myself to situations where

the world, the flesh and the devil could easily ally themselves with the concupiscence raging within my members and drag me down into sin?

4. Am I laboring under the mistaken notion that some day I shall attain such a degree of perfection that I shall no longer need to be on guard against any inordinate inclination within me?

5. Do I understand that in reconstructing my spiritual life I must first expiate my past sins by penitential and indulgenced works?

6. That, secondly, I must by meditation conceive a great horror for both mortal and venial sin?

7. That, thirdly, I must remove the possibility of further falls by mortifying the body with its vices and concupiscences?

8. That, finally, I must come to know the technique of the tempter and the means of vanquishing his insidious onslaughts?

9. That only after I have cleared the soul of all these obstacles can I hope to construct a lasting spiritual edifice in which justice and the Triune God will dwell?

Spiritual Reading: B. W. Maturin, "Self-Knowledge and Self-Discipline," p. 79; "Imitation of Christ," Bk. III, c. 55.

Meditation III

TEMPTATIONS

Ne illis succumbatis, quos ab aliis, vestro ministerio, effugatis.

May you not be overcome by those evil spirits whom, in virtue of your office, you cast out of others.

— Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us represent to ourselves Our Lord being led by the Spirit into the desert and there being subjected to a threefold temptation from Satan.

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask Our Lord to teach us how to overcome temptations and how to convert them into meritorious acts of love of God.

CONSIDERATIONS: A temptation is a prompting, an inducement, a solicitation by our soul's enemies — the world, the flesh, and the devil — to make us commit sin.

God does not directly tempt us. But God permits us to be tempted, at the same time giving us sufficient grace to overcome the temptation. And why does God permit us to be tempted? The reward of heaven is destined for those who have fought and struggled; now it is by overcoming our many temptations that we merit our heavenly reward; and the harder we have fought, the greater will be our joy. Every temptation is, in fact, a test of our love of God; when we overcome a temptation, we equivalently proclaim that we prefer God to any created thing. Temptation thus becomes a source of merit. Temptation also makes us realize our weakness, and hence makes us more humble, more vigilant, more distrustful of our own powers, more reliant on God's grace. Temptations also acquaint us with the technique of the devil and thus prepare us for his onslaughts in the future.

There are three stages in a temptation:

2. *Suggestion*: At this first stage the mind or the imagination represent to us the forbidden fruit in a vivid and sometimes attractive manner. Occasionally the representation becomes almost an obsession and will not leave despite our efforts and protests. At this stage there is no sin unless we have deliberately provoked the image.

b. *Pleasure*: Our soul is substantially united to the body. It is a law of nature that every idea and image react upon the body. Hence the evil suggestion immediately and spontaneously produces a certain pleasure in our fleshy nature. There is still no sin as long as we do not consent. Yet this pleasure constitutes a danger.

c. *Consent*: Now comes the critical moment. If we repel and reject the temptation, we have not only not sinned but we have performed a meritorious act. If on the other hand we enjoy and delight in the pleasure and consent to it we commit a sin.

Sometimes one finds it difficult to decide whether he has consented or not. In that case he will be helped to make a decision with the aid of the following rules:

a. If he experienced disgust and annoyance at being tempted in this way, if he struggled not to give in, if he prayed to God for help, then — despite the instinctive pleasure that he might have experienced — he can conclude that he has not consented.

b. If one freely performs an action from which a temptation arises, he is guilty in the measure in which he *foresaw that the temptations would arise*.

c. If he did not repel the temptation at once, if he hesitated a moment, if he resisted in a half-hearted way, he is guilty of venial sin.

d. If despite the protests of conscience he freely embraced a pleasure which he knew to be gravely sinful, he has committed a mortal sin.

APPLICATIONS: My attitude toward temptations:

a. *Do not walk into the lion's den*: Our Lord tells me how I am to anticipate temptations: "Watch ye, and pray that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). In the first place, I must *watch*; I must not rush in where angels fear to tread; I must not be presumptuous like St. Peter; I must not go into the occasions of sin; I must not spend my time in idleness, laziness, and day-dreaming. I must constantly mortify my sensual tendencies and devote myself wholeheartedly to my tasks. I must especially guard against my predominant fault since the devil usually takes me by my weak side. On the other hand, I must not be in a constant dither wondering how soon Satan will strike at me: Confusion on my part is frequently the enemy's best ally. Secondly, I must *pray*. If God is with me, who can be against me or overcome me? "I can do all things in Him Who strengthens me," says St. Paul. I should pray daily, especially when I am calm and recollected, and ask God to come to my assistance when the test comes.

b. *Begone, Satan*: As soon as the temptation comes, I will act promptly. I will not dilly dally; I will not parley or debate with the enemy. I will repel him before he gets a foothold in my soul; for once he has gained entry, I shall have a hard time. I will act vigorously and not regretfully, for this would be inviting the tempter to come back. I will have recourse to prayer. I will humble myself before God, for humility is pleasing to God but repelling to the devil who sinned by pride. I will turn my attention quickly to some other task. I will not go off my guard; the devil may soon return together with seven other spirits worse than himself (Matthew 12:45).

c. *Victory through Christ*: 1. If I came out victorious, I will thank God for His assistance and His graces. I will not attribute the victory to my own powers; otherwise God will soon allow me to experience my own weakness. 2. If I am doubtful whether I consented or not, I will apply the principles mentioned above. If it be question of impure thoughts, I will not start worrying and searching my conscience.

Such a rehearsing of my experiences may bring up new dangers, for we cannot think of impure things without placing ourselves in the danger of consenting to pleasures which such thoughts might produce.

d. *I have sinned before heaven and before Thee.* If I had the misfortune of falling, I will not despair or lose heart. I see now how weak I am and how much I need God's help. Like the prodigal son, I will arise, make a sincere confession, and ask the heavenly Father to receive me back into His house.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I look upon temptations as a test of my loyalty to God?
2. Do temptations, by revealing to me my sinfulness and weakness, make me humble?
3. Do temptations make me rely more on the grace of God?
4. Am I dejected and discouraged because temptations assail me?
5. Do I realize that a temptation frankly exposed to my confessor is already a temptation half overcome?
6. Do I bring temptations upon myself by my curiosity and by my failure to mortify the senses and imagination?
7. Am I diffident of my own strength, mindful of the words of St. Paul: "He that thinks himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12)?
8. Do I put into practice the following admonition of St. Francis de Sales: "Divert your thoughts to some good and pious reflections, for when good thoughts occupy your heart, they will drive away every temptation and evil suggestion" (Introduction to a Devout Life, pt. IV, c. VII)?

Spiritual Reading: St. Francis de Sales, Pt. IV, c. III to X; Branchereau, II p. 294; Imitation, Bk. I, c. 13; Plassmann, p. 128.

Meditation IV

SIN AND PENANCE

*Exorcistam etenim oportet
abjicere daemones.*

The duty of the exorcist is to
cast out devils.

— Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us listen to the admonition of St. John the Baptist to “do penance, because the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2) as well as to the warning of our Lord, “except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:5).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us the grace to see that the very nature of sin demands both internal and external penance.

CONSIDERATIONS: Sin consists of two elements: 1. A revolt and offense against Almighty God, a contempt of His Will, a rejection of His authority. Thus when Adam sinned, he insulted God, rebelled against the sovereign majesty of his Creator, and rejected God as his Last End. 2. Sin is a marring of God’s order, a ruining of His work. Thus it was God’s plan that Adam should live for a time in an earthly paradise, be free from all sufferings and struggles, and then be transferred to the eternal Beatific Vision of God without passing through the portals of death. But by his transgression Adam destroyed this magnificent order of God. He introduced disorder into God’s work, into his own being, into lower creation, and brought eternal death to many and bodily death to all.

APPLICATIONS: What is true of Adam’s sin is true of all my personal sins. When I sin I, like Adam, fling into the face of the Almighty the insulting taunt, “I will not serve!” And yet I belong wholly and entirely to God. He is my Creator, Conserver, and Master. All that I have and am comes from Him. God, then, has full rights over me. He has a right to my obedience, love and service. By sin I violate God’s right over me. I commit an injustice. I deprive God of a part of that glory which I owe to Him. Hence I must make reparation. And since sin has an infinite malice, while my satisfactions are only finite, I must make reparation during my whole lifetime.

I, too, disturb the order of God’s creation, for who can tell the extent to which I by my sin interfere with God’s designs, give scandal to Christ’s little ones, injure myself and my neighbor, and bring moral ruin into the universe? Although the guilt of my sins is blotted out in the sacrament of Penance, the temporal penalties due to my sin remain. These temporal penalties must be expiated either in this life or in purgatory. It is most beneficial for me to expiate them now. In purgatory there will be no meriting but only passive expiation. While I am on earth my penances not only expiate my sins but they increase grace, and win for me a greater degree of celestial glory.

As I have yielded my faculties unto iniquity so now I must yield them unto justice. The twofold element of sin calls for a twofold

penance. First of all, I will elicit a heartfelt act of contrition, grief, sorrow, and a firm purpose of amendment. I will retract and detest the sins by which I have insulted the divine majesty. I will afflict my soul. I will sue for pardon. Secondly, I will punish and chastise myself for the wrong which I have voluntarily done by committing sin. I will not merely subject my body to austerities but I will embrace penitential practices in which the whole man — bodily faculties, senses, mind and will — will have a share. I will subdue my passions, check my natural inclinations, moderate my affections.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I foster in my soul a constant and sorrowful remembrance of my sins — *Peccatum meum contra me est semper*?

2. Do I entertain an abiding sense of shame for my sins? Do I look upon myself as a criminal in the company of saints? With the prodigal son do I often exclaim: *Pater, peccavi in coelum et coram te* (Lk. 15:18)?

3. Have I a great horror for occasions of sin which in the past have led me to spiritual disaster?

4. Is the avowal of my sins in the sacred tribunal of penance endowed with the humility and humiliation desired by God?

5. Have my purpose of amendment, sacramental penance, and correction of my faults a penitential character?

6. Do I curb now and punish the faculties which had part in my sins?

7. Do I accept patiently and even joyfully the various crosses which God may permit to come upon me — sickness, humiliations, contradictions, injuries — in expiation of my sins?

8. Do I fulfill the duties of my state as perfectly as possible in reparation for my sins?

9. Do I fast — to some extent at least — on the prescribed days and during the prescribed seasons?

10. Do I strive to atone for my sins by acts of charity toward Christ in the person of His Mystic members?

Spiritual Reading: St. Francis de Sales: Pt. I, c. V-VIII; Pt. III, c. XXIII; Branchereau, II, p. 239.

Meditation V

THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST CRUCIFIED

*Tunc etenim recte in aliis
daemonibus imperabitis cum
prius in vobis eorum multimo-
dam nequitiam superatis.*

For then you will rightly com-
mand the evil spirits in others
when you first overcome their
manifold wickedness in your-
selves.

— Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us adore our Lord Jesus Christ Who
“fasted forty days and forty nights in the desert” (Mtt. 4:2).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to imbue us with the
spirit of a true and genuine penance.

CONSIDERATIONS: Our Lord declares that those who through
a spirit of penance are in sadness and tears and deprived of all worldly
pleasures, are truly blessed: “Blessed are they that mourn” (Mtt. 5:5);
“Blessed are ye that weep now” (Lk. 6:21). Our Lord Himself often
prayed and wept. He unceasingly declared that He came upon earth
not to do His own will but that of His Father Who sent Him. He was
born in a stable, without any of those comforts which even the poorest
were able to procure. What sufferings, too, He must have endured in
the flight into Egypt! What life could be more laborious and painful
than that which He led in the workshop of St. Joseph? He fasted in
the desert for forty days. In His public life He endured all the labors
and fatigues of the ministry. He lived on alms and frequently lacked
the necessities of life. In the Garden of Gethsemane His most holy con-
science revolted so strongly against the vision of human sin and in-
gratitude that He was bathed in a sweat of blood. He died on the
Cross, deprived of all comforts, His tongue parched with thirst, and His
whole body racked with pain.

APPLICATIONS: Christ is my Head; I am His member. What
Christ did on earth—from the moment of His conception until His
death on the Cross—He did in my name. Nay more, whatever Christ
did, I did in and through Him. Hence, as a member of Christ, I must
lead that kind of life to which I was committed in my Head. And what
was Christ’s life on earth? It was a life of love, obedience, immolation
and expiation. My religion is the religion of the Suffering and Crucified
One. I cannot be a delicate member of a body whose Head is crowned
with thorns.

Examination of Conscience

1. To what extent do I practice the three great penances of the Fathers of the desert — fasting, vigils, corporal punishment?

2. Do I observe the law of fasting at least in part by depriving myself — at least occasionally — of dainties?

3. Do I rise quickly in the morning at the first sound of the bell — no matter how sleepy and tired I may feel?

4. Do I try to avoid sleep and spiritual torpor in my spiritual exercises?

5. Do I observe silence and the other points of the rule?

6. Do I bear patiently and willingly — in expiation of my sins — the difficulties and annoyances which I encounter in my daily tasks?

7. Do I accept submissively those trials, pains, privations and sufferings which are unavoidable in this valley of tears, and do I offer them to God in satisfaction for my sins?

8. Do I strive to imitate — in some measure at least — the penances of those great saints and heroes of God whose example is set before me in the *sanctorale* of the Liturgical Year?

9. Do I participate in the Mass, visit the Blessed Sacrament, make the Holy Hour and the Stations of the Cross, in reparation of my sins?

10. Is my life an exemplification of the following words put into the mouth of Our Lord by the author of the *Imitation*: “As I willingly offered Myself to God the Father for thy sins with My hands stretched out upon the cross and My body naked, so that nothing remained in Me that was not completely turned into a sacrifice to appease the Divine wrath: even so oughtest thou willingly to offer thyself to Me daily . . . as heartily as thou canst, with all thy energies and affections, for a pure and holy oblation” (Bk. IV, c. 8).

Spiritual Reading: Meditative exercise of the Way of the Cross; Plassmann, p. 116.

Meditation VI

MORTAL SIN

Studete igitur, ut, sicut a corporibus aliorum daemones expellitis, ita a mentibus, et corporibus vestris, omnem immunditiam, et nequitiam ejicatis.

Accordingly, as you cast out devils from others, seek to remove from your own minds and bodies all uncleanness and iniquity.

— Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us adore Our Lord Jesus Christ Whom the Baptist saluted as the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to penetrate our soul with a profound consciousness of the malice and heinousness of mortal sin.

CONSIDERATIONS: We shall be spurred on to works of penance in the measure in which we realize the malice and heinousness of mortal sin. Now what is mortal sin? 1. Mortal sin is a *rebellion against the Father*, Who created us, gave us all that we have and are, and keeps us in existence. It is a misuse and abuse of His gifts and graces which should be used in serving and praising Him. It is the rejection of God—Our Supreme Good and Last End—for a created thing and a passing pleasure. 2. Mortal sin is a *crucifying of Christ anew*. It is a betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver, a preferring of Barrabas to Christ, a shouting with the mob: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." 3. Mortal sin is a *violent expulsion of the Holy Ghost* from the soul and making the soul an abode of Satan.

Across the pages of Holy Writ we can read what God thinks of mortal sin. God created hell—a place of eternal separation from the Beatific Vision of Himself—as soon as the rebellious angels committed the first mortal sin, the mortal sin of pride. He drove Adam and Eve out of paradise, and punished them and all their descendants, after our first parents committed a sin of pride and disobedience. He brought the deluge upon the human race, destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha, because of man's sins. Finally, He sent His only-begotten Son upon earth to expiate our sins by His Passion and Death upon the Cross.

APPLICATION: O My God, I shudder with horror, when I think of the awful consequences of mortal sin upon my soul. Mortal sin expelled from my soul the Blessed Trinity, sanctifying grace, and all the other concomitant gifts. It deprived me of the friendship and love of God. It turned me away from God and made me His enemy. It filled my conscience with remorse, uneasiness, dissatisfaction, unhappiness, It nullified all the merits for heaven which I had earned in the past. It reduced me to a state in which I, being God's enemy, could merit nothing for heaven. It added another link to that chain of slavery which bound me to Satan and to my tyrannical habit. It entailed the loss of God and suffering in hell in case I died unrepentant. *O Deus, miserere mei. Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea.*

Examination of Conscience

1. Am I trying to develop a consciousness of the malice of sin which is a deliberate revolt against the rights of God?

2. Do I discern the offensive ingratitude in sin, since it is by God's own gifts that I offend His sovereign majesty?

3. Do I try to grasp the malice of sin by placing it alongside of the ineffable blessings bestowed on me by God — the divine sonship, redemption by the precious Blood, sanctification by the outpouring of the grace of the Holy Spirit, all of which are nullified by mortal sin?

4. Do I realize that by sin I trample under foot the supernatural prerogatives and privileges which I receive with the priesthood?

5. Do I guard myself conscientiously against all occasions of sin?

6. In a world poisoned by materialism, sensualism and incredulity, Am I inclined to minimize or disparage the Christian concept of sin?

7. Would I rather die than be defiled by a single mortal sin?

8. Do I realize that I am a fugitive from hell and that were it not for the mercy of God I would be there now?

9. Do I appreciate the fact that it is only the grace of God which has preserved me from mortal sin? Do I ever recall the words of St. Philip Neri: "My God, look out for Philip; otherwise, he will betray Thee"?

10. What am I doing now that there may be less sin in the world?

Spiritual Reading: St. Ignatius, *Spiritual Exercises*, Ex. I; Plassmann, p. 113.

Meditation VII

VENIAL SIN

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us descend in spirit into purgatory and contemplate there the innumerable souls suffering untold agonies because of their venial sins.

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us the grace to understand that, mortal sin alone excepted, there is no evil as great as venial sin.

CONSIDERATIONS: Venial sin is of two kinds. There are, first of all, venial faults of surprise. These are due to man's weakness and thoughtlessness. Such are: carelessness in prayer, impatience, anger, imprudences, rash judgments, etc. These faults — confessed so often by weekly penitents — make us conscious of our misery and make us rely more on divine grace. We must overcome them by vigilance and by rooting out their causes. We must overcome them calmly. We must not be impatient because we have become impatient; angry, because we have become angry; vexed, because we have become vexed. For all such attitudes proceed from self-love.

Secondly, there is deliberate venial sin which is a violation of the law of God, though a less serious violation than mortal sin. It does not expel the Blessed Trinity and sanctifying grace from the soul. It is remitted more easily and can be forgiven even outside the confessional. Deliberate venial sins, however, are a great hindrance to spiritual progress. Venial sin is an offense against God and, after mortal sin, the greatest of all evils. It is an act of disobedience to God, a challenge to His infinite majesty and hence truly hateful. It is an insult to God because it is a placing of our whims, pleasures and vanity over against God and His glory. It is a lessening of God's external glory because it is a withholding of a measure of glory from Him. It is an act of ingratitude, for, while God has been most generous towards us, we are niggardly towards Him.

APPLICATIONS: O My God open my eyes not only to the malice of venial sin but also to the effects of venial sin upon my life. Venial sin deprives me of many graces — which God would otherwise have given me — and consequently, of a higher degree of glory in heaven. It makes me less fervent and less generous in the service of God. It strengthens my tendencies toward forbidden pleasures, weakens my will, and reduces God's graces. Finally, it predisposes me to mortal sin, for, as Our Lord says: "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater; and he that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater" (Lk. 16:10). And in the next life what sufferings will I not have to undergo in Purgatory?

Examination of Conscience

1. With my eyes fixed on the absolute holiness of Christ do I strive, with all the resources at my command, to overcome faults which though light inevitably weaken my spiritual life?

2. Do I, under vain pretexts, minimize the importance of certain grave obligations in order to avoid fulfilling them?

3. Do I give in to a deadening routine in the accomplishment of my most sacred tasks?

4. Do I omit my examination of conscience and weekly confession, and thus expose myself to a false security of soul?

5. Do I understand that a priest has a special obligation to avoid not only grievous sins but also venial sins?

6. How many venial sins do I commit daily through willful ignorance? through negligence? through idle thoughts? through loquacity? through caprice?

7. When I commit a venial sin, do I immediately resolve to struggle against future relapses?

8. Do I indulge in readings, conversations, looks, etc. which are occasions of venial sin to me?

9. Do I recognize venial sins as a great obstacle to growth in spiritual perfection?

10. Do I strive to avoid faults and imperfections which are due more to human frailty than to a sinful will?

Spiritual Reading: St. Francis de Sales, Pt. I, c. XXII.

Meditation VIII

VICTIM SOULS

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us represent to ourselves Christ offering Himself up during His whole life on earth as a perfect Victim for the salvation of souls.

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us the grace to accept in a spirit of reparation all the pains and sufferings of both body and soul that we may obtain the extension of Christ's kingdom, the exaltation of Holy Church, the salvation of souls and abundant graces for the priesthood.

CONSIDERATIONS: There are many reasons why I should desire to become a Victim Soul. 1. The boundless love of the Saviour impels me. From the first moment that the Sacred Heart was formed in the chaste womb of Mary, it began to beat out of love for me. Its last beat on the Cross was out of love for me. In the glorified body of the Risen Christ and in the Holy Eucharist that Heart continues to beat

for me. No one is excluded from this love. Does not then Christ desire my entire love, even to the extent of being a co-victim with Him for the sins of the world? 2. Conditions in the world demand that I consecrate my whole life to reparation. Many men hate God. They spurn and offend the Lord of heaven and earth. Others aim to destroy all faith in Christ and to blot out the very memory of Christ's Redemption. They insult and profane the Holy Eucharist. 3. Even chosen souls — and I myself — often treat God and the Eucharistic Christ with coldness, neglect, and even irreverence. 4. Sacrifice is the shortest and best way to heaven. It is the most meritorious of works because it is most difficult. It offers the opportunity for the exercise of many virtues. It merits an abundance of graces and produces in us a marvelous peace of soul. To those who sacrifice themselves and give themselves without reserve to God, He gives unsparingly His reward. Should I not, then, become a co-victim with Christ?

APPLICATION: I will become a Victim Soul. I will sacrifice myself, first of all, for love of Our Lord. I will make reparation for my own unfaithfulness and for the sins of the world. I will make the thought of reparation permeate my very being. My whole life — my labors, sufferings, sacrifices, interior dryness, and desolation — will be consecrated to reparation. Secondly, I will sacrifice myself for the salvation of souls. I will implore grace for the conversion of souls. I will bring back stray sheep. I will unite my imperfect merits to the infinite merits of the Sacrifice of the Mass continually being offered up in some quarter of the globe, and gain a share in the fruits of the Mass for those who otherwise would be deprived of them. Thirdly, I will sacrifice myself for priests. I will implore heaven's blessings upon their apostolic labors so that Christ the King may everywhere be glorified. By means of sacrifice I will implore and merit the graces of conversion for sinners and in that way become a co-worker of the priests in the apostolate of saving souls.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I look upon the First Friday of the month as a day of special reparation?

2. Do I repair the offenses, committed by cold and lukewarm souls, by the fervor and burning love with which I receive Holy Communion?

3. Do I offer up the Sacrifice of the Mass as a victim offering up the Victim and offered with the Victim? Do I unite every one of my heart beats with Christ offering Himself in the Sacrifice of the Mass?

4. Do I unite myself in spirit and in self-oblation with all the Masses said throughout the whole world during the day?

5. Do I at my visits to the Blessed Sacrament repair the coldness and indifference of others by my love, fervor and fidelity?

6. Do I make the Holy Hour to appease the just anger of God?

7. Do I accept in a spirit of reparation all the crosses which God sends me?

8. Do I surrender myself wholly to God ready to accept His Will in all things?

9. Do I perform in a spirit of reparation those duties which demand a constant self-denial from poor weak human nature?

10. Do I realize that a faithful observance of Seminary rules and of the rule of life furnishes countless opportunities for sacrifice and self-denial?

11. Do I accept the opportunity of exercising the spirit of sacrifice by a childlike, cheerful, punctual, unreserved, unselfish and disinterested obedience towards superiors?

12. Do I exercise the spirit of sacrifice by being always considerate of others, by serving them disinterestedly, by bearing patiently with their faults and weaknesses?

13. Do I suffer for others? Expiate their sins? Ask Our Lord to call me before the appointed time so that a straying soul may be saved or a more important life prolonged for the Church?

14. Am I willing to spend myself and be spent for the salvation of others? Do I by my suffering achieve what is wanting to the Passion of Christ?

15. If I am face to face with a sacrifice which I can take or leave, do I prefer the Cross?

Spiritual Reading: Imitation, Bk. IV, c. 9; J. Kreuter, "Guide for Victim Souls of the Sacred Heart" (236 pages).

Meditation IX

INDULGENCES

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us in spirit listen to the words which Our Lord addressed to St. Peter, the head of the Church: "*Whatsoever* thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (Mtt. 16:19).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us the grace to understand the true nature of indulgences and to profit by every opportunity to gain them.

CONSIDERATIONS: The power of granting indulgences flows from the communion of saints, the superabundant merits of Our Lord, and from the "power of the keys." 1. The Church is not only an external visible society but also a mystical society whose Head is Christ and whose members are all the faithful. In this mystical body the members are so intimately united in and through Christ that they participate in the spiritual goods of Christ the Head and of the other members. In virtue of this union all the faithful are made partakers of the spiritual goods of the whole mystical body.

2. There is, in fact, in the Church an inexhaustible treasury of merits which can be applied to the faithful. This treasury is made up of the infinite merits of Christ and of the superabundant satisfactions of the Blessed Virgin and of the Saints. The dispensation of the goods contained in this treasury belongs to him who has the supreme power of the Church. This bestowal can be made even outside the sacrament. It can remit also temporal penalties. For did not Christ say absolutely to Peter, the prince of the Apostles: "*Whatsoever* thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven?" Did He not say absolutely to the Apostles: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven?"

3. Sin comprises three elements: guilt, eternal penalty and temporal penalty. The first two are remitted *in the sacrament* of penance, the third *outside the sacrament* by indulgences. When the indulgence take away all the temporal punishment it is called *plenary*; when it takes away some of the temporal punishment it is called *partial*.

Since the Church has charge of the dispensation of these graces, she also determines the conditions under which we may gain indulgences. She tells us that to gain indulgences we must be in a state of grace, have at least a general intention of gaining the indulgence and perform the works prescribed. The prayers must be said vocally and not merely mentally. In gaining a plenary indulgence we must have contrition for all our mortal and venial sins, for if our venial sins remain unforgiven, the temporal punishment resulting from them remains. Confession and Holy Communion are generally prescribed for the gaining of plenary indulgences. Those who are accustomed to go to confession at least twice a month or to communicate daily in a state of grace (even though they may miss once or twice a month) may without going to confession each time gain all the indulgences for which confession is prescribed as a necessary condition (Can. 931.) If prayers for the intention of the Holy Father are prescribed, *one* Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory be is

sufficient. If it is an indulgence *toties quoties* granting an indulgence for *each* visit to the church, then the Our Father, Hail Mary, and Glory be must be recited at least six times at each visit. Indulgences may not be applied to other living persons but only to ourselves and to the souls in purgatory.

APPLICATION: How beautiful, O Lord, is Thy teaching on indulgences and how eminently in conformity with Thy divine attributes. Without indulgences the divine plan for the forgiveness of our sins would seem to be incomplete. How consoling to the soul, too, is the granting and the gaining of indulgences. For indulgences wipe out my debt of temporal punishment and in that way deprive Satan of his control over me. They substitute easier exercises of piety for the very severe canonical penances of the early Church. They incite me to true repentance and amendment without which indulgences cannot be gained at all. They foster in my soul a state of peace with God. They urge me to receive the Sacrament of Penance regularly and to perform good works. They console me in my fear of the judgments of the just God. They expand my charity and let me embrace the ecumenical problems of the Sovereign Pontiff as well as the sufferings of the souls in purgatory.

Examination of Conscience

1. What is my attitude towards indulgences? Do I consider the practice of gaining indulgences as incompatible with virile piety and the Liturgical life of the Church? Am I inclined to sneer generally at all private devotions?

2. Do I realize that the doctrine on indulgence is a teaching defined by the Church and that any disparagement of that doctrine results in a weakening of my faith?

3. Is my attitude towards indulgences due to my imperfect understanding of the Church's teaching on indulgences? Could I explain this doctrine intelligently to a non-Catholic?

4. Do I know certain short prayers and ejaculations to which are attached partial indulgences? Do I repeat these prayers frequently during the day?

5. Do I strive to gain a plenary indulgence every day by reciting, for example, the Prayer to the Five Wounds after Holy Communion, by saying the prayer to Christ the King or the rosary in church and fulfilling the other conditions?

6. Do I make a general intention in the morning to gain all possible indulgences during the day?

7. Am I selfish in gaining indulgences? Do I apply any indulgences to the souls in purgatory?

8. Do I realize that indulgences can shorten and even cancel out my sufferings in purgatory?

Spiritual Reading: The Raccolta (Preface).

Meditation X

MORTIFICATION AND SELF-DENIAL

*A mentibus, et corporibus
vestris, omnem immunditiam et
nequitiam ejiciatis.*

Remove from your own minds
and bodies all uncleanness and
iniquity.

—Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us imagine Our Lord addressing to us personally the words: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Lk. 9:23).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us always the grace of victory over the solicitations of our fallen nature.

CONSIDERATIONS: Our Lord warns us that we must renounce all creaturely attachments: “Everyone of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:33). St. Paul writes that he “chastises his body, and brings it into subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away” (I Cor. 9:27). He says that “they that are Christ’s have crucified their flesh, with the vices and concupiscences” (Gal. 5:24). He bids us to “mortify our members” (Col. 3:5) and to “strip ourselves of the old man and put on the new” (Col. 3:9). He tells us that we shall live for God in the measure in which we die to ourselves: “If by the Spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

Some are terrified by the word “mortification”. They think it means killing or destroying nature and its faculties. Now our nature and its powers are the handiwork of the Creator and hence good in themselves. They were not corrupted by the Fall. But there is a disorder — a lack of harmony and coordination — in fallen nature. The body, senses, imagination and passions are continually striving to emancipate themselves from the control of reason and will. The flesh is continually at odds with the spirit. Mortification is simply the application of will power,

strengthened and elevated by God's grace, to this disorder in nature. The negative aim of this toil and effort is to guard our senses and powers from going astray and from indulging in activities harmful to our salvation; to withdraw them from dangerous occasions and from all that flatters sensuality; to prevent any passion from dominating and enslaving us. The positive aim of this self-mastery and self-discipline is to guide, educate and improve human nature, to make it prompt and pliable in the service of God, to restore as far as possible its original harmony, to make us live in conformity with the dictates of Christ's teaching, of conscience and of right reason. If there is any suffering, constraint or violence in mortification, these are not an end in themselves but a means of attaining self-mastery, inward peace and complete liberty.

APPLICATIONS: The disorder in my being is a heritage of my fallen human nature. I brought it with me into the world. It will follow me all my life long. Hence I must mortify myself not only occasionally or casually but constantly and perseveringly. Just as the weeds must be continually hoed in the garden, so we must constantly do unto death the inordinate tendencies which crop up in the garden of the soul. Self-indulgence must be replaced by self-discipline. Secondly, this disorder or "wound" of original sin has permeated every corner of my being — my body, senses, imagination, mind and will. Hence no part of my nature is to be exempt from mortification. I am to have no pet passion which would be sure to get the best of me sooner or later. Finally, I will take the initiative and be aggressive. I shall not wait until I am surprised, blitzed, confused and perhaps overwhelmed. I will make the assault. I will lay down my own terms. When the tempter comes, I shall be waiting and shall calmly bid him to go to hell whence he came and where he belongs.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I realize the necessity of self-denial and mortification for the attainment of priestly perfection?

2. Spiritual perfection consists in the love of God and love of neighbor. Do I realize that the fulfillment of this two-fold command of love will demand sacrifice and self-denial on my part?

3. Am I living up to my baptismal promise to renounce Satan, his pomps and his works?

4. Do I consider as addressed to me personally the following words of Our Lord: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it

from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand scandalize thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish rather than that thy whole body go to hell" (Matt. 5:28-30).

5. St. Bernard writes: "Let self-will cease to be, and there will no longer be a hell. For what does God hate or punish, except man's self-will (In temp. Pasch. Serm. III). Am I trying to mortify my self-will?"

6. In the Imitation of Christ we read: "The vice of excessive self-love is the root of almost every fault that you have to pluck out of the soul; when this evil is mastered and driven away, you will have great peace and lasting tranquility" (Bk. III, c. 53). How does self-love manifest itself in my life? How do I mortify it?

7. Am I as convinced of the necessity of mortification for the attainment of eternal life as was St. Paul who wrote: "Know you not that they who run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And everyone that striveth for the mastery, refraineth himself from all things; and they indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one" (I Cor. 9:24-25).

8. Do I realize that as a member of Christ's mystic body I must mortify myself? "It is shameful that we appear as delicate members, shrinking at the least smart of pain, under a Head that is crowned with thorns" (St. Bernard, *Sermo V* in festo omnium sanctorum, n. 9).

9. "One single disordered passion, even if it lead not to mortal sin, is enough to cause the soul such a state of darkness, ugliness and uncleanness, that it becomes incapable of intimate union with God so long as it remains a slave of this passion. What then shall we say of the soul that is marred by the ugliness of all its passions, that is a prey to all its appetites? At what infinite distance will it not be from divine purity?" (St. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Carmel*, Bl. I, c. 11). Does this description fit in any way my present state of soul?

10. "A soul will become like unto the creature to which it cleaves," says the same saint, "for love establishes the equal adjustment of the lover to the thing loved. Therefore, he who loves a creature stoops down to its level — nay, even lower, since love is not content with equality, but descends to slavery." Am I such a slave to any creature?

Spiritual Reading: Imitation: Bk. I, c. 25; Bk. II, c. 11 and 12; Bk. III, c. 56.

Meditation XI

MORTIFICATION OF THE BODY

*A corporibus vestris omnem
immunditiam et nequitiam eji-
ciatis.*

Remove from your bodies all
uncleanness and iniquity.
—Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us listen to the solemn warnings of St. Paul: "Mortify the members of your body which are upon the earth"; "If ye live according to the flesh ye shall die, but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh ye shall live"; and again: "He that soweth in his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth in his spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to strengthen our spirit so that it may at all times triumph over the flesh.

CONSIDERATIONS: Man's whole being has been dislocated by the jar of the Fall. Neither knowledge, nor education, nor material progress have done anything to restore the harmony in man's body and set man at one with himself. What is he to do? Is he to unchain the passions of the flesh and let them suffocate the spirit? Or is he to look upon the flesh as intrinsically evil, hate it, and destroy it? Revelation bids us consider not only the Fall, which caused the disorder in man's nature, but also divine grace, with the aid of which man controls and disciplines the body and prepares it for the Resurrection when body and soul will unite once more and live forever in perfect accord and harmony. The germ of this glorious bodily immortality is divine grace in our soul. That life of the soul must be protected and developed by a constant warfare against the flesh and by close union with God. The body must be disciplined. Its demands must be refused. Its encroachments must be checked. At the same time we must devote all our interests and energies to develop the life of the soul which will eventually blossom into the Beatific Vision and on the last day overflow on the body, making it incorruptible, immortal, subtile, bright and resplendent, free from all the vicissitudes to which it is now subject.

APPLICATION: In my fallen state my body seeks after fleshly gratification indiscriminately. In its quest of forbidden pleasure it often rebels against the mind and will which oppose it. It is an enemy all the more dangerous because it is always with me no matter where I am — at table, in my room, when I travel, etc. Unless I constantly keep it in check, it will drag me down to sin. Like St. Paul I will "chastise my body and bring it unto subjection, lest perhaps when I have preached to

others I myself should become a castaway" (I Cor. 9:27). I will not permit the flesh to extinguish the life of the spirit.

At the same time I will avoid all Manichean ideas of the flesh. For, after all, did not the Eternal Son of God and His Blessed Mother have a real human body? Did not Christ, the Physician of men, always heal both soul and body? Is not the body a "temple of the Holy Ghost" (I Cor. 6:15, 19), and is it not destined for a glorious resurrection? Hence I will always treat the body with reverence and respect. I will avoid bodily poses that smack of primness, softness, coarseness and vulgarity. I will always see in my fellow-seminarians men who are called to be other Christs.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I rise promptly in the morning or do I give in to the soft and slothful tendencies of the body?
2. Do I indulge in dozing and sleeping during Mass and meditation and other spiritual exercises?
3. Do I kneel erect during prayer or do I adopt positions of the greatest possible bodily comfort?
4. Do I at any time adopt bodily positions which though they may be comfortable open the way for temptations?
5. Do I spend an unreasonable amount of time in sleep during the day?
6. Do I complain constantly about my petty bodily ills, seeking to be pitied?
7. Do I eat and drink beyond what is necessary to maintain bodily health and strength?
8. Do I have a great respect for the body, recalling that it is the handiwork of God, a temple of the Holy Ghost, and that it is destined for a glorious resurrection?
9. Do I look upon the feasts of the Incarnation, Resurrection, Ascension and Assumption as feasts of the glorification of the human body?
10. Do I realize that Christ died for the whole man, that He is the Life of the whole man, and that after the last day man will live in his body forever?

Spiritual Reading: Branchereau, II, p. 249.

Meditation XII

MORTIFICATION OF THE SENSES AND IMAGINATION

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us imagine the moment that God created man a being composed of body and soul and endowed his body with sense-powers by which his soul is in communication with the external world.

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to make our senses and imagination worthy instruments of the soul in its ascent to God.

CONSIDERATIONS: The soul is substantially united to the body. It derives its knowledge dependently upon and through the instrumentality of the body. Whatever enter into the mind, comes through one or several of the five senses. There can be mental activity only where there first has been sense activity. Before man understands, he first apprehends through the senses. To disregard this fundamental law of human nature in the spiritual life is to adopt a method which is unpsychological. If we could not use any of the five senses, our mind would remain forever a blank. Many of us are acquainted with the story of the Canadian girl, Ludwine Lachance, who was born deaf, dumb and blind. Yet she learned her religion through the sense of touch. Her images, however, lacked the perfection which would have come through the normal use of her other senses. Thus she had no concept of color and sound. In fact, all the art and architecture and painting and sculpture of the world is built around the sense of sight, while all the great music and oratory of all times is based on the sense of hearing. How poverty stricken intellectual knowledge would be without the ministration of these two senses. Christ conveyed to his simple audience the loftiest truths by means of the rich sense-imagery of the parables, and Christ's representative on earth, the Church, teaches sublime dogmas by means of the universal language of paintings, frescoes, sculpture, stained glass windows and drama. In the spiritual life, too, the senses and imagination can be a tremendous help, but they can also be serious obstacles. We live as we think — and we think as we feel and sense.

APPLICATION: Since the Fall the senses are no longer the docile servants of the mind and will, but only too often tend immoderately toward their own object. In fact, they frequently fall under the spell of the undisciplined instincts of self-will, self-love, and of sex. Our Lord tells us that there are certain glances which are mortal sins (Mtt. 5:28). There are looks which are certainly dangerous and expose the soul to sin — looks at certain movies, stage plays, magazines and newspapers. There are certain looks which are idle and curious, and must be re-

pressed for the sake of higher perfection. The mortification of the ears and the tongue requires that we do not lend an ear and tongue to words that are opposed to charity, purity and other Christian virtues. Uncharitable talk creates divisions, suspicions, hostilities, and rancour. Discussion of matters of impurity creates serious thought problems in the listener.

We must also check all idle wanderings of the memory and imagination, and expel at once all dangerous fancies and recollections, all dangerous day-dreaming and musing. The best way to control the imagination and memory is to keep ourselves busy and to devote ourselves wholeheartedly to the task at hand. It is only the idle brain which is the devil's workshop.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I guard my imagination from all dangerous objects by carefully watching over the exterior senses?

2. Do I realize that ideas derive from sense impressions, and that if I deliberately seek or entertain a sense-image, I equivalently assent to the thought which that image will of its very nature produce?

3. Do I carefully guard my eyes, never permitting them to rest on suggestive, dangerous or impure objects?

4. Do I restrain my anxiety to hear the news and common gossip of the day, especially when it affects the good name of my neighbor?

5. Do I complain about the food when it is not to my liking? Do I recall the gall which Christ took out of love for me?

6. Do I seek excessive comfort and luxury in my daily life?

7. Do I complain about my many petty ills?

8. In my trials do I eagerly seek consolations from others?

Spiritual Reading: Plassmann, p. 80, 98.

Meditation XIII

THE PASSIONS

Discite vitiis imperare.

Learn to rule over evil habits.
—Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us adore Our Lord Jesus Christ Who was not only True God but also true Man and whose sense faculties worked in the most absolute harmony with His intellect and will.

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to strengthen our will with divine grace so that we may bring our passions under the complete control of the will.

CONSIDERATIONS: A passion is a strong and impetuous movement of our sense nature toward a sense good or away from a sense evil, reacting more or less strongly on the whole body. Authors usually enumerate eleven passions: love, hatred, desire, aversion, joy, sadness, courage, fear, hope, despair and anger. Passions belong to the integrity of human nature and in themselves do not imply defect or imperfection. In fact, the saints, especially the martyrs, have made the passions the foundations of heroic virtue and perfection.

Since Our Lord had a true human nature He also had the passions. When he drove the buyers and sellers out of the temple He was truly angry. When he caressed little children, He felt a true love for them. When He said to His disciples after the Last Supper, "My soul is sorrowful unto death" He felt truly sad. The passions of Our Lord, however, had none of those inordinate tendencies which characterize fallen human nature. Hence, the passions of Our Lord are called "propassions" — that is, they were human passions without any of the imperfections resulting in us from the disorder deposited in our being by original sin.

The Fall of Adam introduced disorder into our passions and made them insubordinate to our reason. They often cause a tumult and commotion in our nature (Love, hatred, pleasure, fear, anger, attachment to a person or thing) which well-nigh drown the voice of conscience. The more we flatter them, the more insolent and exacting they become, the more they tyrannize over us. Meyer illustrates this point with the following story: " 'Where are you going?' shouted one man to another who was galloping at headlong speed upon a public highway. 'Don't know, ask my horse!' said the latter. He had lost all control of the animal, and was completely at its mercy. Ask the slave of passion: 'Where are you going?' And if he is sincere, he will have to answer: 'Don't know, ask my passion.' He is at its mercy, and nothing but a special providence can save him from destruction" (*Science of the Saints*, I, 45-46).

APPLICATIONS: I see, and I have learned by bitter experience, how much harm is caused by ill-regulated passions, passions which tend toward forbidden sense good or which tend inordinately toward a lawful good. Such passions, first of all, blind my soul. For my sense nature

is of itself blind, and if my soul succumbs to its tyranny it will accept a blind force for its guide. It will no longer be able to see the truth, to form a sane judgment, and to fulfill its duties. Secondly, ill-regulated passions torture and agitate the soul, they give it no rest, they prevent it from concentrating on any worthwhile project. Thirdly, they weaken the will. Every time the will gives in, the passion grows stronger and lessens the strength of the will. Gradually there develops laxity, lukewarmness, and all lack of resistance. Finally, ill-regulated passions stain the soul. For the soul that yields to a passion adheres to a creature and takes on its likeness. Intimate union of the soul with God becomes impossible as long as the soul is a slave to passion. Says St. John of the Cross: "A soul will become like unto the creature to which it cleaves. As the attachment grows, the identification asserts itself, for love establishes the equal adjustment of the lover to the thing loved. Therefore, he who loves a creature stoops down to its level — nay, even lower, since love is not content with equality, but descends to slavery."

Examination of Conscience

1. What is my predominant ill-regulated passion or passions?
2. To what extent have these passions succeeded in enslaving me?
3. Do I avoid external acts (words, gestures, conversations, touches) which would stimulate or strengthen the passion?
4. Do I keep my imagination and mind off the object of the passion by applying all my powers to a task, an exercise, recreation, etc?
5. If the passion is aroused, do I keep my peace until the passion has cooled off?
6. When calm has ensued, do I have recourse to moral considerations of both the natural (health, dangers, reputation) and the supernatural (the life which a Christian should lead, beauty of virtue, loathsomeness of vice) order?
7. Do I fill my mind with thoughts and perform actions directly opposed to the enslaving passion?
8. Above all, do I pray perseveringly and receive the Sacraments devoutly in order to obtain graces to overcome my ill-regulated passion or passions?
9. Do I ever think myself secure against my passions, forgetting that upon the slightest provocation they will awake with all their undisciplined fury, surprise me, and get the best of me?

10. Do I realize that like St. Paul and the other martyrs and saints I can enlist the aid of my passions in my quest for sanctity and in the performance of heroic deeds? That I can direct love towards affection for Our Lord? hatred towards aversion from sin and vice? desire towards ambition to become a saint? sadness towards resignation to God's will in trials and tribulations? hope into trust in God in discouragement? despair towards distrust of self? fear towards dread of sin and hell? anger towards indignation against evil? courage toward fearlessness in the presence of obstacles and dangers? joy towards the satisfaction which comes from serving God and from the consciousness of duties well done?

Spiritual Reading: Plassmann, p. 122 ; Branchereau, II, p. 305.

MORTIFICATION OF THE MIND

Meditation XIV

*A mentibus vestris omnem
immunditiam et nequitiam eji-
ciatis.*

Remove from your minds all
uncleanness and iniquity.
—Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us imagine ourselves hearing the answer which Our Lord gave to the lawyer inquiring about the conditions for attaining eternal life: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy *mind*" (Lk. 10:27).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us the grace to develop our mind in such a way that it may become a fit guide for the will.

CONSIDERATIONS: The mind is an inseparable attribute of the soul. Its intellectuality is a participation in the intellectuality of God, imprinting upon our being the image and likeness of God — the Supreme Mind and Spirit — and making us at the same time essentially distinct from the brute. It is a faculty which abstracts ideas from the data presented by the senses. By these ideas we keep in touch with and know the external world. By it man comes to a knowledge of the existence and attributes of God. In baptism the intellect receives the infused virtue of faith with the aid of which we assent to divine mysteries. It is the recipient of actual graces of illumination by which the mind grasps supernatural truths more clearly. Sanctifying grace, which is a new participation in the intellectuality of the divine nature, makes the intellect remotely capable of seeing God face to face, while the *lumen gloriae* in heaven will enable the intellect to share in the Beatific Vision

of the Blessed Trinity. Such are the grand endowments of the human mind. But alas it, too, was "wounded" by the Fall, and the disorder of original sin which permeates man's whole being has penetrated even into man's noblest faculty. It is no longer master in its own household and is often overpowered by the crowds which enter through the portals of the senses.

APPLICATIONS: The intellect exercises an all-important part in the spiritual life. The importance of this role is pithily expressed in the following lines:

Sow an image, reap a thought

Sow a thought, reap an act.

Sow an act, reap a habit.

Sow a habit, reap a character.

Sow a character, reap a destiny.

A man lives as he thinks. A charitable person is one whose thoughts are charitable. An impure person is one whose thoughts are impure. A man is bad not merely because he committed a misdeed, but he did the deed because he was already bad. The moral collapse of anyone—especially of a seminarian and priest—which so often shocks a community, is simply the last act in a long, silent and unseen drama. It is in the silent world of thought that life's battles are fought, and are lost or won. The whole spiritual edifice may be tottering to its ruin even while the subject is shielded within the sacred walls of the Seminary or uttering the words of prayers on his knees.

We must, therefore, guard the entrance to the mind. We must see to it that no undesirable visitor gains admittance. We must strive to gain control over our thoughts. This effort to control our thoughts will not be gained by strained endeavours to drive away certain thoughts which have become habitual. Rather, we should overcome evil by good. We should empty the mind of evil by filling it with the good. We should fill the mind so full of healthy thoughts that there will be no room for others. A mind which has a variety of interests, which is constantly nourished by healthy thoughts, which, above all, is strengthened by actual and sacramental graces, will have no time for morbid thoughts, it will instinctively turn away from evil no matter how daintily served. In such a soul the life of faith and of sanctifying grace will grow from day to day until it reaches the zenith of the Beatific Vision. Mental sloth, inaction, lack of intellectual interests, on the other hand, not only expose the mind to the disorder raging in man's being but make it an easy prey to the crowds milling around it without.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I always keep my mind occupied with good and useful thoughts and thereby protect myself against temptations?

2. Do I indulge in daydreaming or mental inertia and thereby open the way for the lower faculties — which are opposed to the spirit — to present their objects for the consideration of the mind?

3. Do I indulge the curiosity of the mind, especially in reading novels and newspapers, or in listening to the radio?

4. Do I study merely for the sake of knowledge, or do I have a supernatural motive, namely, the moral enlightenment and uplift of others?

5. Do I mortify the pride of the mind — my feeling of self-sufficiency, my excessive confidence in my own judgment, my obstinacy in my own views, my unwillingness to submit to the decisions of my superiors and to the teachings of faith?

6. Is my sole aim to know the truth, to love the truth, and to live by the truth?

Spiritual Reading: Maturin, p. 141.

Meditation XV

MORTIFICATION OF THE WILL

Ut sint spirituales imperatores.

May they be spiritual commanders.

— Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us represent to ourselves Christ the Judge Who punishes those who have done evil and Who rewards those who have done good.

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to strengthen our will with His grace so that we may always avoid evil, overcome temptations, and perform virtuous deeds.

CONSIDERATIONS: The spiritual life is the result of the harmonious working of free will and divine grace. This thought is beautifully expressed by St. Paul: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace in me hath not been void, but I have laboured more

abundantly than all they, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (I Cor. 15:10). The Old Testament, too, sings the praises of him who has made a right use of his will: "Blessed is the man that is found without blemish, and he that hath not gone after gold, nor put his trust in money nor in treasures. Who is he, and we will praise him? For he hath done wonderful things in his life. Who hath been tried thereby, and made perfect, he shall have glory everlasting. He that could have transgressed, and hath not transgressed, and could do evil things, and hath not done them" (Ecclus. 31:8-10).

He who has a well-trained will is well-trained himself, because the will governs the whole man. Such a man controls his body, senses, imagination and his very thoughts. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "in him who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). Everywhere there is much activity, much hustle and bustle, round about us. Men hurry to and fro, they expend a large amount of energy on the daily affairs of life. But what is of importance in the eyes of God and in the light of eternity is whether the will strives after what men believe to be right or deliberately and consciously embraces what they believe to be wrong.

APPLICATION: A habit is formed by a repetition of acts elicited by the will: "Sow an act, reap a habit." Every choice develops a tendency to choose in the same direction. The oftener we choose anything, the easier it is to choose it again. Acts at first most abhorrent are gradually performed with comparative nonchalance.

The force of habit, in turn, presses upon the will, drives the will into the groove which it has molded for itself, and makes it more and more difficult for the will to change its course. The physical organism and the nervous system, after having been periodically stimulated, crave for a repetition of the stimulation. In moments of calmness we assert the inherent liberty of the will and protest that we will not yield. But when habit begins to bring pressure upon the passion, we soon become helpless. And the remorse and self-condemnation after the sin is but a revolt of the will against its slavery, against the iron grasp of the law of sin.

A man who has yielded to habits of sin must be vigilant, he must pray constantly, he must make strenuous effort. He must turn to Him Who created the will and Who alone can lift it up and restore it. He must fight and conquer the captors of his liberty, he must set his freedom free. He must conquer habit by habit, bad habits by good habits, habits of surrender by habits of resistance. It is not by violent, spasmodic or random efforts that the will triumphs. Violent efforts do not last. For when man is exhausted, a nervous reaction sets in, the old habits furtively return, bind their chains more firmly and overwhelm their victim with the dark despair of slavery. No, the work of years cannot

be undone in a few minutes. The habits of sin must be untied knot by knot. The prodigal son must tread back step by step the road which he came. The effort must be steady, unremitting, persevering.

In this connection, it is consoling to recall that good habits are destroyed no more quickly than bad ones. A good man who has had the misfortune of falling need not despair. If he repents, the long-formed habits will reassert themselves and heal the wound.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I habitually mortify any tendency which, no matter how harmless, is tending to obtain too much hold on me?

2. Do I mortify my appetite, deny myself in things I like, give up the use of things which I might lawfully have, in order to develop the independence of my will?

3. Do I use earthly things as a means to an end and not as an end in themselves?

4. Do I realize that victory over a temptation depends less upon the struggle that I may put up at the moment than upon constant effort to remain independent of my tastes and inclinations?

5. Do I realize that it is my attitude towards little things which will decide the issue in those great moral crises on which my eternal salvation depends?

6. Do I act without thinking?

7. Do I act on impulse, or from passion or caprice?

8. Do I act with excessive hesitation or with precipitation?

9. Do I act with indifference or lack of determination?

10. Do I act out of human respect? Do I merely drift along with the crowd?

Spiritual Reading: Maturin, p. 111; Branchereau, II, p. 259.

Meditation XVI

FAULTS OF CHARACTER

Discite vitiis imperare.

Learn to rule over evil habits.
— Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us contemplate in spirit the lot of Judas, Peter and Pilate who fell miserably because of serious defects in their character.

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to enlighten our mind so that we may detect the defects in our character and proceed, with the help of God's grace, to remedy them.

CONSIDERATIONS: Character is the predominant note in a man's natural makeup and disposition. This note impresses a special stamp or mark of individuality upon his person, his acts, and his relations with others, and thereby distinguishes him from others. It indicates the course which he is likely to pursue under any given set of circumstances. The stronger his character, the more predictable will be his conduct. A well-balanced character is one in which every faculty develops in harmony and coordination with the rest.

The Fall, however, has introduced disorder among man's faculties, so that one faculty may develop excessively, another only defectively. Again, one faculty, being more powerful than the rest, may disturb the harmony of the whole and predominate to the injury of others. A fault of character then is a disorder, a defect, or an excess in a faculty. Hence it is that some men are spoken of as intellectual, others as independent or obstinate, others as sentimental, and still others as sensual.

Since the soul is substantially united to the body, there is a profound interaction between the soul and body. Frequently the characteristic note of a man's natural makeup is determined by the kind of body to which the soul is substantially united. Thus we speak of the choleric, melancholic, phlegmatic, nervous, ardent or sanguine characters.

The following are examples of defective characters which are also undesirable in the priesthood:

1. *The infallibles*, men who never give in and who will not be convinced by the best of reasons. They consider themselves to be endowed with a sort of infallibility. It is useless to try to convince them for while one is speaking to them, they are pursuing their own thoughts which nothing in the world can change.

2. *The contradicters*, men who, no matter what you say, always contradict you. They never agree with you. If you say fair weather, they say bad weather. It is a malady, a mania of being "against." They are the opposite extreme of those who, no matter what you say, always agree with you.

3. *The critics*, men who are severe and merciless in their judgments. They are no respecters of persons. All — superiors, inferiors and

equals — are subject to their censures. They are satisfied with nothing and find fault with the best of things.

4. *The mysterious characters*, who envelop all their doing in great mystery, act in the dark, hide their thoughts and their plans, aim at obscurity and detours in all their actions.

5. *The unstable*, men who have no perseverance in their enterprises and no order and sequence in their thoughts and actions. They undertake many projects but finish none of them. What they favor one day, they oppose the next. Inconsistency seems to characterize all their steps.

6. *The weaklings*, men who are incapable of sustained labor and application, who have no energy and courage.

7. *The "fussbudgets,"* men who fret about trifles, who are scrupulous, who find difficulties where there are none and who exaggerate those which they do meet.

8. *The frivolous*, men who never take anything seriously, who are incapable of a profound thought, who are superficial in everything they do.

9. *The eccentrics*, men who never act like other men, who are always in quest of singularity, who always do the extraordinary, unexpected, bizarre.

10. *The egoists*, men who are cold and selfish, who have no understanding of nobility, generosity and idealism, who calculate and view everything in terms of their own selfish interests.

11. *The melancholics*, men who are sad, taciturn, given to their sombre reveries, always spinning black webs, who become an intolerable burden to all who live with them.

12. *The choleric*, men who explode in violent anger at the least provocation, who have never learned to subdue and control their temper.

13. *The sullen*, men whom the slightest incident places into a bad humor. They are suspicious and defiant, always imagining that others are laying a snare for them. They suspect the intentions of others in the simplest of procedures. A word, gesture or smile cuts them to the quick. They crawl into their shell at the first sign of difficulty.

APPLICATION: Any one of these defects of character can disfigure God's image and likeness in me. It can mar my whole priestly career and spoil my life's work. A defect of this kind can become the

source of other sins and quickly develop into a predominant fault. I can delay no longer. With the help of prayer and the graces of the sacraments I will set out at once to correct the defects in my character. I will set aside all self-love, vanity and deception. I will no longer try to elude the voice of conscience. I will turn my attention upon myself. I will ascertain what faculty dominates in me. I will find out what sins I commit most often and trace them back to their source. The virtues which I am striving hardest to acquire will also put me on the track of the defect in my character.

Examination of Conscience

Pass in review the various types of faulty character enumerated in the Considerations and ask yourself whether you have the attributes of any one of them.

Meditation XVII

MORTIFICATION OF PRIDE

*Discite per officium vestrum
vitiis imperare, ne in moribus
vestris aliquid sui juris inimicus
valeat vindicare.*

Through the exercise of your office learn to rule over evil habits, lest the enemy discover in your lives anything which he might claim as his own.

—Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us imagine Our Lord addressing to all of us the invitation: “Learn of me, because I am meek, and humble of heart” (Mtt. 11:29).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask Our Lord to open our mind to the malice of pride and to give us the grace to eradicate this vice completely from our lives.

CONSIDERATIONS: The disorder introduced into our being by the Fall reveals itself especially through seven inclinations or tendencies known as the capital sins. They are called *sins* because they lead to sin. They are called *capital* because they are the fountains or sources of sin. The seven capital sins are identical with the concupiscences mentioned by St. John: “For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh (gluttony, lust, sloth) and the concupiscence of the eyes (avarice) and the pride of life (vainglory, envy, anger)” (John, 2:16). Today we shall meditate on the nature and malice of pride.

Pride is inordinate self-esteem, an unreasonable concept of superiority, an overrating of one's excellence, a sort of idolatry of self. Pride manifests itself in various ways. The proud man exaggerates his own talents, and attributes to himself qualities which he does not possess. He views the defects of others with a microscope, closes his eyes to his own shortcomings, and looks at his good qualities with a magnifying glass. He minimizes the natural worth of others, considers himself superior to them, and lords it over them. He settles with absolute finality the most difficult questions. He criticizes and finds fault with the decisions of his superiors. Pride occasionally carries the proud man further. He does not refer his actions to God, but expects praise for his good works and for his successes as if they were exclusively his own.

As a capital sin pride is the prolific source of many sins. Because the proud man has a too high opinion of himself, he seeks the esteem of others, strives to draw attention to himself, boasts about himself. Having a too high opinion of his worth, he attempts things which are beyond his strength. Presumption in turn leads to ambition, the inordinate striving after dignities, honors, and authority. Other consequences of pride are: hypocrisy, disobedience to superiors, hardheartedness to inferiors, arrogance, insolence, obstinacy, discord, heated discussions, acrimonious remarks, bitter criticism.

APPLICATION: I am beginning to see, O Lord, the sinfulness and ugliness of pride. There is every reason why I should be humble. For of myself I am nothing. I came out of nothing and were it not for the conserving action of God I would instantaneously return to nothing. Without the same power of God I could not move hand or foot.

Of myself I have nothing except my sin. As a sinner I deserve only forgetfulness and contempt. If I have risen against God's majesty and committed only one mortal sin, I have merited hell, and am deserving of every humiliation, injury and insult.

Whatever gifts I possess originally came from God. To Him alone — and not to me — belong the honor and glory for them. Does not St. Paul say to me: "What hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received? (I Cor. 4:7). Pride is a sort of sacrilege, for the proud man steals from God the honor which belongs to Him alone. It is at the same time the greatest of ingratitude, for the proud man uses the gifts of God to offend God.

Pride is the beginning of all sin, for when a man commits sin it is because he disdains and rejects the law of God. Pride is the bottleneck of all graces and virtues: "God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble" (James 4:5). Pride precedes the fall: "Everyone that exalt-

eth himself shall be humbled” (Lk. 14:11). Pride provokes the hatred of God: “Every proud man is an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 16:5). If pride made demons out of angels, what will it make out of men? A proud man deprives his good works of all merit since he performs them with a wrong intention. “Take heed,” says Our Lord, “that you do not your justice before men to be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have the reward of your Father Who is in heaven” (Mtt. 6:1-2). Says St. John Chrysostom: “If you begin to extol yourself because you have reached a high degree of perfection, you at once become as poor and miserable as a beggar.”

Examination of Conscience

1. When people praise and honor me, do I silently say “Gloria Patri” or “Non nobis sed nomini tuo da gloriam?”
2. Do I speak rarely and only briefly of whatever may redound to my honor?
3. Do I do anything to please men, or do I always have in view the glory of God?
4. Do I elicit acts of contrition for my sins of pride?
5. Do I pray for the souls who are suffering in purgatory because of their sins of pride?
6. Do I honor the Sacred Heart especially by imitating the humility of the Sacred Heart?
7. Do I consider myself more intelligent, more learned, even more humble than other seminarians?
8. Have I become angry at others because I felt they should know better than dare to cross me?
9. Do I give in to sensitiveness, resentment, pouting, peevishness?
10. Have I withdrawn from certain projects in the seminary because I could not be first?
11. Have I shown my pride by persistently violating certain Seminary rules?
12. Do I realize that “hierarchy” means subordination? That by saying “Promitto” on ordination day I will promise obedience for the rest of my life? That some of the worst apostacies among priests have been caused by pride?

Meditative Reading of the Prayer Against Pride: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Pattern of humility, who didst empty Thyself of Thy glory, and take upon Thee the form of a servant, root out of us all pride and conceit of heart, that, owning ourselves miserable and guilty sinners, we may willingly bear contempt and reproaches for Thy sake, and, glorying in nothing but Thee, may esteem ourselves lowly in Thy sight. Not unto us, O Lord, but to Thy name be the praise, for Thy loving mercy and for Thy truth's sake. Amen" (Manual of P., p. 295).

Meditation XVIII

MORTIFICATION OF ANGER

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us represent to ourselves Our Blessed Lord in the midst of His Passion, undergoing the most cruel torments, and yet uttering no complaint and displaying no resentment. In the words of St. Peter: "When He was reviled, He did not revile: when He suffered He threatened not, but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly."

SECOND PRELUDE: Give us the grace always to repay evil with good.

CONSIDERATIONS: Anger is a movement of the soul to drive away from us a bodily or moral suffering and annoyance. Anger is lawful when it is a reasonable though strong desire to punish the guilty and restore order. Such was Our Lord's anger against the money-changers in the Temple. But, unfortunately, original sin, which has invaded every corner of our being, has caused disorder in this legitimate tendency of our soul, and anger in us is often a violent, inordinate desire, accompanied by hatred and feelings of revenge, of punishing others. Now what are we to think of such a sinful tendency?

1. *Anger is unbecoming a human being.*

a. *Anger destroys man's reason.* A man in a rage is as people say, out of his mind. He ceases to use his reason, and hence is no longer a human being. He reduces himself to the level of a brute inflicting injuries upon others.

b. *There is ordinarily no proportion between effect and cause.* Frequently it is a mere look, word, gesture, imagination or suspicion which causes a man to rage and lose his self-control.

c. *The angry man injures himself.* He is trying to remedy an evil — which may be light and even imaginary — by the greatest of all evils,

sin. By becoming angry, the man loses peace and charity, and sometimes self-control and even divine grace. Is not an angry man his own worst enemy?

d. *An angry man is like a ship without a pilot.* While under the influence of this passion, he is guilty of all kinds of excesses. He gives in to a spirit of hatred and revenge, calls others injurious names, causes discord and dissensions, etc.

2. *Anger is unbecoming to a Christian.* The prophet Isaias, in describing the future Messiah, dwells especially upon His meekness: "He shall not cry, nor have respect to persons, neither shall his voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed he shall not break, and the smoking flax he shall not quench" (Isaias, 42:). Christ Himself says that meekness and humility are the two virtues which we must particularly learn from Him: "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart" (Mtt. 11:). He exhorted His followers, saying: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Mtt. 5:44). He warned that "whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment" (Mtt. 5:22). He called Judas a friend at the very moment that Judas was betraying Him. He did not retaliate when the servant of the high priest gave Him a blow (John 18:22). On the Cross He prayed not that He be revenged of His enemies but that they be pardoned: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

3. *Anger Is Unbecoming to a Priest.* The life of a priest should reflect the meekness of the Master. The life of a priest should be a book in which the faithful will learn the virtues of Christ. How much harm, then, will be wrought if a priest gives in to his ill-temper — in the confessional, in the pulpit, in the sacristy, in the rectory. With children his angry and sarcastic words will act like frost on tender plants. Sinners who are hovering on the brink of despair will be forever repelled. Men and women who expect the priest's life to be characterized by poise and self-control and self-restraint will be weakened in their good resolves.

APPLICATION: Oh, my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, how beautifully the virtue of meekness shines forth in your life, and how weak and how inclined to anger am I. I pray daily "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us," and yet I am unwilling to pardon others. I harbor resentment against those whom I consider to have offended me. I talk about them in harsh, offensive language. I even desire to revenge myself upon them. I emphasize their faults and cling stubbornly to my own views.

For all these sins and shortcomings I am sincerely sorry: "O most meek lamb, Jesus Christ, true God and True Man, eternal praise and thanksgiving be to Thee, because Thou didst suffer Thy sacred Head to be crowned with piercing thorns and struck with a hard reed.

By this most holy shedding of Thy Blood I pray Thee for the grace of meekness against all anger and desire of revenge.

Our Father.

O Saviour of the world who by Thy Cross and precious Blood hast redeemed us, save us and help us, we humbly beseech Thee, O Lord" (Manual of P., p. 299).

Resolution: To repay with good every form of evil rendered me.

Prayer Against Anger: "O most meek Jesus, Prince of Peace, who, when Thou wast reviled, didst not revile, and on the Cross didst pray for Thy murderers; implant in our hearts the virtues of gentleness and patience, that restraining the fierceness of anger, impatience and resentment, we may overcome evil with good, for Thy sake—love our enemies, and as children of our heavenly Father seek Thy peace and evermore rejoice in Thy love. Amen" (Manual of P., p. 296).

Particular Examination of Conscience

I. *Manifestations of this fault*

- a. Does my anger take the form of red rage: Does my face redden, my veins expand under the skin, my eyes sparkle, my whole body tense?
- b. Or does my anger take the form of *white rage*: Does my face become white, my brow damp with a cold sweat, my jaws clenched?
- c. How far does my anger go? Does it remain a mere impatience? or does it become a sensible irritation? violence? fury, which is temporary insanity? An implacable hatred and a passion for revenge?
- d. What persons, things, actions, circumstances anger me?

II. *Causes of this fault*

- a. Is it due to a *secret pride* which issues in anger whenever others do not see things my way?
- b. Is it due to *obstinacy* which gives rise to anger whenever I cannot have my own way?
- c. Is it due to my habits of acting without thinking, of saying and doing things angrily, which I would not do if I reflected a little?

d. Is it due to my failure to recognize my own faults and shortcomings which may likewise be a source of annoyance and irritation to others?

III. *Remedies*: I will start at once to educate my ill-regulated passion of anger. I will use the following means: 1. I will avoid all words, conversations, and circumstances which stimulate or strengthen my passion of anger; 2. by devoting myself wholeheartedly to a certain task, I will keep my mind off the object of my anger; 3. when my anger is roused, I will keep my peace until the passion is cooled off; 4. when calm is restored I will meditate on the beauty of meekness and the loathsomeness of anger; 5. I will fill my mind with thoughts and perform actions directly opposed to anger; 6. I will pray perseveringly and receive the Sacraments; 7. I will pray for the souls who are in purgatory because of anger.

Meditation XIX

MORTIFICATION OF ENVY

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us contemplate Our Lord before Pilate "delivered up out of envy by the chief priests" (Mk. 15:9, 10).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to enlighten our mind in regard to the malice of envy and to give us the grace to root it out of our lives.

CONSIDERATIONS: Envy is sadness over another's possession of temporal and spiritual blessings, the desire to see him deprived of them, and joy when he has actually lost them. It proceeds from pride which cannot tolerate a superior or a rival. Envy takes one or another of the following forms: pain at hearing another praised; depreciating the good reputation of others by speaking ill of them; blackening their character and calumniating them; hatred of, and wishing evil, to others; a desire to eclipse others, even by questionable methods.

APPLICATIONS: How unbecoming is envy in the life of a priest who by his calling is dedicated to a life of goodness and charity. Envy is a diabolical vice, for "by the envy of the devil, death came into the world" (Wisdom 2:24). The envious person does what the devil does: he is saddened by the good and rejoices over evil; he strives to hinder the good and bring about the evil.

Envy is opposed to the virtue of charity which obliges us to love our neighbor as ourselves and to rejoice in his good fortune. The more

important the thing we envy, the more serious is our sin. To be envious of the spiritual goods of another is always a serious sin. Envy is opposition to the Will of God Who is not only the author of all gifts, but is free to distribute them to whom He wills.

Envy leads to restlessness, anxiety, dissatisfaction, and finally to all kinds of sins. Envy poisons, as it were, man's whole being. Because Cain was envious of Abel "he was exceedingly angry and his countenance fell" (Gen. 4:5). Because the sons of Jacob were envious of their brother Joseph, "they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him" (Gen. 37:4). Because Saul was envious of David, he "did not look on David with a good eye from that day and forward" (I Kings 18:9). "Envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30). "The eye of the envious is wicked" (Ecclus 14:8). "Envy and anger shorten a man's days" (Ecclus 30:36).

St. Paul places envy among the works of the flesh and declares that "they who do such things shall not obtain the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19, 21). He bids us "walk honestly, as in the day, not in contention and envy" (Rom. 13:13). And St. Peter asks us to "lay aside all malice and all guile and dissimulations and envies and all detractions" (I Peter 2:1).

Grant, O Lord, that I may crush the snake of envy and jealousy as soon as it begins to hiss in my heart. Then when calm is restored, may I recall at once the great law of brotherly love and our common membership in the mystical body of Christ in which the good qualities of one member benefit all the rest. May I turn my mind to Him who is the Source of all good qualities in my neighbor and ask Him to give me the grace to share in them.

Examination of Conscience

1. What is the cause of my envy? Is it pride? Self-love?
2. Do I love God so completely and sincerely that I am willing to praise Him in His gifts, no matter who may be the recipients of these gifts?
3. Do I realize that since we are all members of one and the same mystic body, my neighbor's blessings are my blessings, his misfortunes my losses?
4. Do I seek God's glory and the spread of His kingdom so wholeheartedly that I am totally indifferent as to who does the work as long as it is done well?

5. Do I deliberately speak well of and admire before others the talents of him of whom I have been envious?

6. Do I pray for those whom through envy I have persecuted?

7. In making the Way of the Cross do I recall that it was the envy of the Pharisees which nailed Christ to the Cross?

8. Do I pray for the souls who are suffering in Purgatory because of envy?

9. Do I occasionally meditate on the words of Our Lord: "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world?"

10. Do I confirm these reflections by an occasional meditation on the last things of men?

Meditative Reading of the Prayer against Envy: "O most loving Jesus, pattern of charity, who makest all the commandments of the law to consist in love towards God and toward man, grant to us so to love Thee with all our heart, with all our mind, and all our soul, and our neighbor for Thy sake, that the grace of charity and brotherly love may dwell in us, and all envy, harshness, and ill-will may die in us; and fill our hearts with feelings of love, kindness, and compassion so that by constantly rejoicing in the happiness and success of others, by sympathizing with them in their sorrows, and putting away all harsh judgments and envious thoughts, we may follow Thee, who are Thyself the true and perfect love. Amen." (Manual of P., p. 297).

Meditation XX

MORTIFICATION OF GLUTTONY

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us adore Our Lord fasting for forty days and forty nights in the desert" (Mtt. 4:1).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us the grace to practice moderation and temperance in our eating and drinking.

CONSIDERATIONS: Eating and drinking are necessary for our self-preservation. They supply us with the bodily vigor and strength which are required for the fulfillment of our duties. In order to facilitate these two functions, God has attached a certain pleasure to them. This pleasure is lawful only when used as a means to an end. When we pursue this pleasure to excess or as an end in itself, or to the detriment of our health, we are guilty of gluttony. In other words, "we eat to live, we do not live to eat."

Gluttony is the enemy of self-denial and mortification. It weakens the will, develops a love for sensual pleasure, and paves the way for further falls. It enslaves the soul to the body.

This is especially true of drunkenness. In drunkenness the power to use or recover reason is temporarily blotted out completely. The same is true of moral judgment, of the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. Man sinks to the level of the brute, destroys in himself the likeness of God, lets loose his animal passions, throws aside the restraints of decency and self-respect, and indulges in all kinds of buffoonery, violence, offensive conversations, and filthy actions.

APPLICATIONS: The Old as well as the New Testaments point out in no uncertain terms the sinfulness of gluttony. The gluttony of Eve brought about the first sin and thereby introduced misery into the whole world. Esau sold his birthright for a mess of potage, and both he and his descendants had to expiate this misdeed. The parable of Dives and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19) describes the punishment of the rich man who maintained a festive board and feasted sumptuously from day to day. Our Lord warns us: "Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and that day (of judgment) come upon you suddenly" (Lk. 21:34): St. Paul reckons the gluttons among the idolaters "whose god is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Phil 3:19). He tells us that the "kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17).

The teaching of revelation makes it clear that the pleasure of eating and drinking is only a mean to an end, and not an end in itself. Hence I will endeavor to take my meals with a supernatural intention, namely, that I may be the better able to work for God, for the good of others, and for the salvation of souls. I shall take my meals in a spirit of gratitude to God Who gives us our daily bread. I shall try to get up from the table with a sensation of sprightliness and vigor and not with a feeling of heaviness. In that way I shall be better prepared for prayer and study, for as the saying goes, *plenus venter non studet libenter*. In order not to become a slave to my sensuality I shall mortify myself at meals either by giving up a morsel I especially relish or by partaking of something I dislike. If the good of the Church and of souls demands it, I shall take a pledge against all intoxicating liquors for at least the first five years of my priestly ministration.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I say with faith and devotion the prayers before and after meals?

2. Do I try to derive some spiritual benefit from the reading at meals?
3. Do I complain about the quality of the food served at table?
4. Do I devour my food at meals after the manner of irrational creatures?
5. Do I observe the fast and abstinence of the Church as far as I am able?
6. Am I willing to abstain from intoxicating liquors in honor of the Sacred Thirst of Christ?
7. In making the Way of the Cross do I elicit a resolution of abstinence at the Station where Christ is given gall and vinegar to drink?
8. Do I avoid occasions that may lead me to intemperance.
9. Do I try to prevent by advice and example the sin of intemperance in others?
10. What am I doing to discountenance the drinking habits of men and women?

Prayer Against Gluttony: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Mirror of abstinence, who, to teach us the virtue of abstinence, didst fast forty days and forty nights, grant that, serving Thee and not our own appetites, we may live soberly and piously with contentment, without greediness, gluttony or drunkenness, that Thy will being our meat and drink, we may hunger and thirst after justice, and finally obtain from Thee that food which endureth unto life eternal. Amen." (Manual of P., p. 297).

Meditation XXI

MORTIFICATION OF SLOTH

Providete, igitur, ne per negligentiam vestram, illarum rerum, quae intra Ecclesiam sunt aliquid depereat.

Sit eis fidelissima cura in domo Dei, diebus ac noctibus, ad distinctionem certarum horarum ad invocandum nomen Domini.

Inter janitores Ecclesiae tuo pareant obsequio.

Take good care, therefore, lest anything in the church perish through your negligence.

May they with utmost care attend to the house of God, by day and night, and announce the hours appointed for the invoking of the name of the Lord.

Among the keepers of the Church may they be devoted to Thy service.

— Ostiarate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us listen to Our Lord condemning the “wicked and slothful servant”: “To everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not, that also which he seemeth to have shall be taken away. And the unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Mtt. 25:30).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to inspire us with a genuine hatred of sloth and tepidity.

CONSIDERATIONS: Sloth, according to St. Thomas, “is a species of disgust for virtue; it is a languor of the soul, which causes it to neglect its spiritual welfare; a sadness which oppresses and dejects the heart of man and deprives him of the power of doing good” (IIa, IIae, q. 35, a. 1). Sloth is aimlessness, apathy in action, a tendency to follow the line of least resistance. It is a fear of effort, hardship, exertion. It proceeds from a love of pleasure and idleness and hence is a form of sensuality.

APPLICATION: An indolent soul is barren in good works: “I passed by the field of the slothful man, and behold it was all filled with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall was broken down” (Proverbs 24:30-34). The punishment of the slothful servant and of the foolish virgins (Mtt. 25:1-30) is an emphatic warning to all the indolent. Secondly, sloth leads to tepidity. A slothful man gradually neglects the duties of his state as well as his other duties and so puts himself in the danger of eternal damnation. A lukewarm man is an abomination to the Lord: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. But because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth” (Apoc. 3:16-17). Finally, an idle brain is the devil’s workshop, the sink of bad thoughts and temptations. An indolent soul exposes itself to all the blows of the enemy, is carried along with the stream, and yields to all the solicitations of the threefold concupiscence: “Behold this was the iniquity of Sodom, the idleness of her and of her daughters” (Ezech 16:49).

When I reflect on God’s plans and laws in the universe, I can readily understand why sloth is hateful to God. For labor is a law of the Creator: When He created and entrusted Paradise to our first parents, He bade them to “dress it and keep it” (Gen. 2:15). Secondly, labor is a law of nature: God endowed us with brains, faculties and powers in order that we might use them; *potentia ordinatur ad actum*. Thirdly, the universal law of Christian love demands that all of us work for the welfare of one another and of the members of His mystic body. Finally, work leads to contentment and happiness. An idle man does not know how to kill time, feels very wretched and even wearies of life.

Examination of Conscience

1. In order to overcome any inclination to tepidity, do I frequently meditate on the purpose of my existence on earth?
2. Do I often recall that I shall have to give an account to God of the way I used the graces and opportunities which He afforded me on earth?
3. Do I have a rule of life and do I adhere faithfully to it?
4. Do I resort to various subterfuges in order to avoid the fulfillment of my duties?
5. Am I sluggish in the service of God, making no effort to pray, meditate, read spiritual books, etc?
6. Do I perform my religious exercises out of mere habit, routine, just because the bell calls me or the rule obliges me, without making any interior effort at attention and spiritual betterment?
7. Do I pass a good deal of my time in superfluous conversation, idle visits, unprofitable readings?
8. Do I indulge in unnecessary sleep during study time?
9. Do I spend my time on useless amusements?

Meditative Reading of the Prayer Against Sloth: "O Lord Jesus Christ, eternal Love, who in the garden didst pray so long and fervently that Thy Sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground; put away from us, we beseech Thee, all sloth and inactivity both of body and mind; kindle within us the fire of Thy love; strengthen our weakness, that whatsoever our hand is able to do we may do it earnestly, and that, striving heartily to please Thee in this life, we may have Thee hereafter as our reward exceeding great. Amen." (Manual of P., p. 297).

Meditation XXII

MORTIFICATION OF AVARICE

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us imagine Our Lord addressing the following words to His disciples: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul? Or what exchange shall a man give for his soul?" (Mtt. 16:26).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us the grace so that we may not cling to earthly possessions but use them as stepping stones to heaven.

CONSIDERATIONS: Avarice is an inordinate quest and love of money and of worldly goods. God has given us earthly goods for a very definite purpose. We need earthly goods that we may live conformably to our dignity as human beings—as beings made up of soul and body—and that we may in that way work out our destiny and eternal salvation. Secondly, we are to use superfluous goods to succor the needy and relieve the poor. When we use earthly goods against this order established by God we are guilty of avarice. This may happen in various ways; by desiring wealth for its own sake and as an end in itself; by using earthly wealth for ends set up by ourselves, as honors and pleasures; by using money in a niggardly manner; by hoarding it and loving it as a sort of an idol.

APPLICATIONS: A love of earthly wealth for its own sake cannot be reconciled with the spirit of Christianity. The Sermon on the Mount opens with the words: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mtt. 5:3). A little farther we read: “Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven” (Mtt. 6:19, 20). Our Lord tells that we cannot serve two masters at the same time, that we “cannot serve God and mammon” (Mtt. 6:24). He bids us not to be too solicitous about food and drink and clothing, but to “seek first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you” (6:33). He points out the stupidity of the rich man who was about to enlarge his barns: “Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided” (Lk. 12:20).

St. Paul says that covetousness should not be mentioned among Christians (Eph. 5:3), that the covetous shall not possess the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:10) and that covetousness is a sort of idolatry (Eph. 5:5). He says that “they that will become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and lustful desires, which draw men into destruction and perdition. For the desire of money is the root of all evils” (I Tim. 6:10). A covetous man will like Judas sell even his soul: “There is not a more wicked thing than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale” (Ecclus 10:9, 10).

Seminarians, in particular, should ponder the following words of St. Jerome: “Let the cleric, who serves the Church of Christ, first interpret his name; and finding the definition of his name, let him strive to be what he is called. For clerics are so called either because they are of

the lot of the Lord, or because the Lord is their lot; that is, the portion of clerics. He, therefore, who is either himself the portion of the Lord, or has the Lord for his portion, ought so to live that he may himself possess the Lord and be possessed by the Lord. He who possesses the Lord, and says with the prophet "The Lord is my portion" can have nothing besides the Lord; for if he has anything besides the Lord, the Lord will not be his portion" (Epist. 2 ad Nepotianum).

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I recall frequently that man at birth brings nothing into the world and at death will take nothing out of the world?

2. Do I realize that we are mere administrators of earthly goods and that we shall have to give an account to the Supreme Judge of the manner in which we used them?

3. Do I plan to invest earthly goods for heaven by giving generously to Christ in the person of His mystic members — the poor, needy, suffering, aged, etc.?

4. Do I understand the teaching of Catholic theologians that goods not necessary for the support of life and for the decent living of oneself and one's dependents are superfluous goods and to be used to relieve the needs of the poor?

5. Do I realize that if earthly wealth contributed to the salvation of souls, Christ would have chosen a life of affluence for Himself and for His Apostles, but that instead He chose a life of poverty?

6. Do I squander my money in superfluous expenses?

7. Do I incur debts easily, and delay to pay my arrears?

8. Do I view my future ministry in terms of cents and dollars, in terms of lucrative posts and remunerative services?

9. Do I realize that avarice is especially objectionable in a priest who should by word and example teach the people that our true treasures are in heaven?

10. How do I accept privations and discomforts?

Meditative Reading of the Prayer Against Avarice: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Who though Thou wast rich, yet for our sakes didst become poor, grant that all over-eagerness and covetousness of earthly goods may die in us, and the desire of heavenly things may live and grow in

us; keep us from all idle and vain expenditures, that we may always have to give to him that needeth, and that giving not grudgingly nor of necessity, but cheerfully, we may be loved of Thee, and be made through Thy merits partakers of the riches of Thy heavenly treasure. Amen." (Manual of P., p. 296).

Meditation XXIII

MORTIFICATION OF LUST

FIRST PRELUDE. Let us picture to ourselves Our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount pronouncing blessed those who are pure of heart: "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Mtt. 5:8).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us that exquisite purity which is demanded by the calling and work of a priest.

CONSIDERATIONS: In order to facilitate the propagation of the human race, the Creator has attached a certain pleasure to the acts by which man reproduces himself. This pleasure is permissible only to married people and only when they use it in the way God wants them to use it and for the purpose which He intended. Otherwise this pleasure is forbidden in all forms and at all times. Unfortunately, however, the Fall has introduced disorders into the instinct of self-propagation as it did into the other powers of man. This instinct tends continually to emancipate itself from the control of the will and to satisfy itself in diverse unlawful ways. Being in God's Providence a basic human instinct, its inordinate tendencies create special problems of self-control and self-mastery for the individual.

Impurity in all its forms leads to disastrous consequences. This vice enslaves and tyrannizes over the will. It destroys love of prayer and of mortification. It weakens man's faith in the great verities of the Christian religion. It makes the senses, imagination and mind sex-centered, and continually bent upon new ways of satisfying this insatiable monster. The heart becomes selfish and hardened. The conscience is full of remorse, dissatisfaction, unhappiness. Frequently the whole nervous system and physical frame become affected.

APPLICATIONS: The deluge and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrha clearly show how detestable this vice is to the all-holy God Who is the Creator and Master of our body. St. Paul says that sins of the flesh violate the temple of God: "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Know you not that your members are the

temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body" (I Cor. 6:15-20). The same Apostle tells us that "if you live according to the flesh, you shall die" (Rom. 8:13). He says that uncleanness in all its forms should not even be mentioned among Christians:: "But fornication and all uncleanness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints; or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility" (Eph. 5:3, 4). In his Epistle to the Romans he gives us what is perhaps the most terrible condemnation of lust in all literature (1:16-32).

The mortification of lust is a life's task and demands the use of all the resources at our command. If we wish to vanquish this enemy we must always walk in the omnipresence of God, avoid idleness and occasions of sin, mortify our senses and imagination, be moderate in eating and drinking, and devote ourselves diligently and wholeheartedly to our tasks and duties of life. Especially must we have an unbounded confidence in prayer and the graces of the Sacraments.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I often recall that the Eternal Son of God took on a human body, that the Blessed Virgin Mary had a human body, that the body, consequently, is good in itself and that only an abuse and misuse of it is wrong?

2. Do I realize that my body will rise on the last day, and that that resurrection will be glorious or ignominious according to the manner in which I use my body in the present life?

3. Do I realize that all my faculties are precious gifts from God and that I must not use God's gifts to offend Him but to serve Him?

4. Do I realize that one who says Mass, administers the Sacraments, recites the Divine Office, must be endowed with special purity and sanctity, that impurity is especially loathsome in a priest?

5. Do I rouse the concupiscence of the flesh by reading books and poetry which are more or less risqué?

6. Do I ever indulge in double-meaning jokes, in telling dirty stories?

7. Do I realize that one impure story can drive the Blessed Trinity from the soul of every listener?

8. Do I avoid all frivolous and unnecessary touchings of others, realizing that physical contact, like an electric current, is bound to arouse my fleshy nature?

9. Are my body, clothing and room scrupulously clean and reflecting the inward purity of my soul?

10. Do I avoid all unnecessary relations with members of the opposite sex, no matter how innocent these relations may happen to be?

Meditative Reading of the Prayer Against Lust: "O Lord Jesus Christ, Guardian of chaste souls, and lover of purity, who wast pleased to take our nature and to be born of an Immaculate Virgin; mercifully look upon our infirmity. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me; help me to drive away all evil thoughts, to conquer every sinful desire, and so pierce my flesh with the fear of Thee that, this worst enemy being overcome, I may serve Thee with a chaste body and please Thee with a pure heart. Amen." (Manual of P., p. 296).

Meditation XXIV

SENSIBLE SPIRITUAL CONSOLATIONS

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us listen in spirit to the royal prophet exclaiming in a transport of joy and delight: "How sweet are thy words to my palate! More than honey to my mouth" (Psalm 118:103).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask God to give us a true understanding of spiritual consolations so that we may always use them according to His most holy Will.

CONSIDERATIONS: Just as tender plants have to be watered in the beginning so that their roots may get a firm hold in the ground, so, too, beginners in the spiritual life are encouraged and strengthened by sensible consolations in order that they may obtain a firm foothold on the road to perfection. They are first given milk, as St. Paul says, and only later solid food.

These sensible consolations are an experience of spiritual joy and sweetness. They are sensible tenderness of heart which moves us to tears and cause us to find delight and satisfaction in some devotion or spiritual exercise. In a sense they are a foretaste of heaven.

These consolations excite the affections of the soul, strengthen the will in its efforts after sanctity, and add a cheerful spirit to the promptitude of devotion. They bring the lower nature (body, senses, imagina-

tion) in harmonious subjection to the will, and are a help to us in prayer, meditation, mortification, and love of God. They draw us away from the false pleasures of the world and attract us to God.

As the soul progresses in virtue, these consolations are gradually withdrawn. Some souls, like St. Frances de Chantal, suffered spiritual dryness during their entire life.

APPLICATIONS: What should be my attitude towards sensible consolations? I must receive them with profound gratitude to God Who so lovingly and tenderly dispenses these gifts to me. I must also receive them with humility, for I am so weak and tender and in need of special enticements that God grants them to me. I will use them to love God, keep His Commandments, do His Will. I will not become so attached to them that I would become discouraged and neglect my duties if God should withdraw them from me. I will not become vain, boastful, self-satisfied and even presumptuous and reckless because I possess these blessings. I will always adhere to the God of consolations as well as the consolations of God. I will be ready to stand on Mt. Calvary as well as on Mt. Tabor. I will always keep in mind that true spirituality consists in a constant and prompt will to put into practice whatever pleases God. What counts is our efforts to serve God, not what pleases us. In fact, the desire for spiritual consolations may easily be prompted by one's self-love, selfishness, and egoism.

Examination of Conscience

1. Are the effects produced by my spiritual consolations such as to indicate that the consolations themselves proceed from my soft and fallen nature or even from the enemy of my soul?

- a. Do they make me harsh, quarrelsome, impatient, obstinate?
- b. Do they make me haughty, presumptuous and rigorous toward my neighbor?
- c. Do I imagine myself as being already a saint?
- d. Do I disdain to be subject to direction and correction?

2. Are the effects such that I may reasonably conclude that they come from God?

- a. Do they make me more humble, patient, tractable, charitable?
- b. Do they make me more compassionate toward my neighbor?
- c. Do they make me more fervent in mortifying my evil tendencies?

- d. Do they make me more constant in my religious exercises?
- e. Do they make me more submissive to those in authority?
- f. Am I inclined not only to weep over Christ's sufferings, but also to suffer for and with Christ?

Spiritual Reading: St. Francis de Sales, Pt. IV, c. XIII — Plassmann, p. 131; Imitation, Bk. III, c. 52.

Meditation XXV

SPIRITUAL DRYNESS

Ut probabiles sint medici Ecclesiae tuae, gratia curationum virtuteque coelesti confirmati.

That they may be the approved physicians of Thy Church, endowed with the power of healing and with heavenly strength.

— Exorcistate

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us unite ourselves in spirit to Our Head Who in the garden of Gethsemane affirmed that His soul was "sorrowful unto death" and Who on the Cross prayed: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Mtt. 27:36).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask for the grace to remain firmly united to God in all the vicissitudes of the spiritual life.

CONSIDERATIONS: Spiritual dryness is the privation of spiritual sweetness and consolations. The soul seems to be destitute of all feeling of devotion. It seems to be a fruitless and barren desert. It no longer enjoys prayer. It is spiritually weary. Its faculties are numb. It must force itself to serve God.

Why does God permit the soul to be afflicted with such a state as this? To detach us from self-love and selfishness — for he who seeks spiritual consolations is more concerned about pleasing himself than pleasing God: to detach us even from the sweetness of serving Him and to dispose us to serve Him exclusively for His own sake; to strengthen our will and to make us persevere in all circumstances. In spiritual dryness our will must act more constantly and vigorously, and hence our works are more meritorious. In fact, the purity of divine love shines forth more brilliantly in our works in the measure in which we eliminate self-love and self-interest.

"In these conflicts," says St. Francis de Sales, "God and our spiritual enemy have contrary designs. Our good God seeks to conduct us to

perfect purity of heart, to an entire renunciation of self-interest in what relates to his service and to an absolute self-denial; whereas our internal foe endeavours, by these severe trials, to discourage us from the practice of prayer, and entice us back to sensual pleasures, that by thus making us troublesome to ourselves and to others he may discredit holy devotion."

APPLICATIONS: What must be my attitude toward spiritual dryness? I must humble myself before God, acknowledging my misery and nothingness. I must call upon God, ask Him to comfort me. With Christ I must pray: "Father, if thou wilt, remove this chalice from me, but yet not my will but thine be done" (Lk. 22:42). I shall not be too set upon deliverance but abandon myself to the providence and mercy of God. I will tell Him that I am a mere instrument in His hands and that He should do with me as He wishes. With Job I will say: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21). God, I am sure, will accept my humble resignation to His Will. At any rate, I will not lose courage. I will not omit any of my exercises of devotion. *Nam Deus intuetur cor*. I will multiply virtuous acts of patience, humility, self-contempt, resignation and renunciation of self-love.

Examination of Conscience

1. Have I done anything to bring spiritual dryness upon myself?
2. Has God withdrawn spiritual consolations from me:
 - a. because of my vain complacency, self-conceit, presumption?
 - b. because I failed to appreciate spiritual sweetness and delights at the proper season, and thereby deprived myself of those which were further in store for me?
 - c. because my soul is gluttoned with worldly pleasures and has no taste for spiritual delights?
 - d. because I am too immersed in sensual pleasures?
 - e. because I do not frankly expose the state of my soul to my confessor?

Spiritual Reading: St. Francis de Sales, Pt. IV, c. XIV and XV: Imitation. Bk. III, chapter 50.

Meditation XXVI

SCRUPLES

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us imagine Our Lord as addressing to us personally the following words: "If you become not as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mtt. 18:3).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask Our Lord to give us the spirit of true docility and so to lead us into the way of interior peace.

CONSIDERATIONS: A scruple is a worry. The following are some of the signs of scrupulosity: scrupulous persons persist in thinking that they are confessing mortal sins although their confessor assures them that they have committed only a venial sin or no sin at all; they remain dissatisfied even after they have been advised by an experienced priest; they raise questions about insignificant and trivial matters; they try most anxiously to avoid the slightest imperfections; they are doubtful about things which never disturb normal individuals; they imagine that their confessor does not understand them and hence they refuse to follow his decisions and admonitions; they are dejected about their past sins; they worry about the validity of their past confessions and wish to make general confessions; they think that they are constantly committing sins against purity in thought or that they have blasphemous thoughts; they try to give in confession the exact number of all their sins which often run into the hundreds if not thousands; they repeat and repeat their prayers, especially the penance assigned to them in confession. Sometimes the scruples bear upon purely physical acts such as touching certain objects, washing one's hands and feet, etc. Normally, however, they have reference to the moral domain.

The causes of scruples are many: Some individuals are scrupulous because they have a very imperfect knowledge of their religion and do not know the difference between temptation, venial sins and mortal sins. Others do not know the difference between a sense-image, idea and a deliberate act of the will. Others examine themselves too closely and minutely so that their mind becomes confused by viewing the same object too long and too steadily. Scruples may be caused by nervous ailments or by a mind that is beclouded, or extremely sensitive or meticulous, or very obstinate. Sometimes God permits us to become scrupulous in order that we may expiate our past sins, purify our soul from willful imperfections, detach ourselves from spiritual comforts, and prepare ourselves for the higher degrees of perfection. Sometimes the devil causes this turmoil in our soul in order to discourage us, make us think that we are constantly committing sin, and in that way keep

us from receiving Holy Communion and fulfilling the duties of our state.

Scruples have a disastrous effect on the spiritual life. A scrupulous person spends his time on trifles rather than on important subjects. He wears out the mind by fruitless worries, and has no courage and energy left for undertaking good works. He finds piety a difficulty and even a burden. He dreads all devotional exercises, fearing that he may commit new sins in performing them. Unable to bear what is a drudgery he gives way to negligence, tepidity, and eventually succumbs to temptations and falls into actual sins. He is consumed with despondency and sadness, chained in the narrow prison of his misery.

APPLICATIONS: If I am suffering from this spiritual malady, I will use all the resources at my command to overcome this affliction. First of all, I will keep my mind occupied by devoting myself wholeheartedly to my tasks. Since melancholy, sadness, retirement beget gloomy thoughts, I will try always to cultivate cheerfulness and friendly relations with others. I will renounce my ideas and opinions, and cultivate a childlike docility and simplicity. I will obey my confessor blindly. For I know that the mind of a scrupulous person is beclouded and confused; that his judgment is distorted; his ability to judge between right and wrong impaired. I will follow the directions of my confessor — without questioning, arguing or any reserve. I will mistrust myself, I will renounce the direction of my conscience, I will confide myself to better hands — as a sick man leaves to the physician all the judgment necessary for his case.

Examination of Conscience

1. Do I realize that the constant repetition of past confessions is not only useless but dangerous because it brings before my imagination ideas which may be the occasions of new sins and temptations?

2. Do I realize that such repetitions constitute a new torment for a wearied soul?

3. Do I interrupt the confessor's instruction and absolution because new points are constantly occurring to me?

4. Do I make a clear, decided and concise confession, then think solely of what the confessor is telling me, and finally in a devout manner receive absolution?

5. Do I understand that the validity of confession does not depend on the degree of self-knowledge or on the retentiveness of the memory, but on uprightness of soul and sincerity of sorrow?

6. Do I realize that confession was instituted not to torture souls but to bring them peace?

7. Do I overcome blasphemous thoughts — not by contending with them directly or opposing them violently — but by turning away contemptuously from them, despising them, not reflecting on them, occupying myself with other matters?

8. Do I realize that reflecting and worrying about temptations against purity constitute a new danger?

9. Do I understand that the more exaggerated and horrible these temptations are, the less probability there is of consent?

10. Do I realize that combat, resistance, doubt, worry, are definite signs that consent has not been given, and that I must immediately cease examining and rehearsing the temptation?

Prayer: “O my God, I know it is Thy will that the heart which loves Thee should be broad and free. Therefore I shall act with confidence as the child playing in the arms of its mother. I shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall seek to make others rejoice. I shall enlarge my heart in the assembly of the children of God, and I shall strive to acquire the child-like sincerity, innocence and joy of the Holy Spirit. Far from me, O My God, be that miserable and over-solicitous knowledge which is ever consumed with self, ever holding the balance in hand to weigh every atom. Such lack of simplicity in the soul’s dealings with Thee is truly an outrage against Thee. Such rigor imputed to Thee is unworthy of Thy paternal heart.”

Mediation XXVII

STEADY PROGRESS IN SPIRITUAL GROWTH

FIRST PRELUDE: Let us listen in spirit to the admonition of St. Paul to grow “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

SECOND PRELUDE: Let us ask for the grace of perseverance in the work of our spiritual perfection.

CONSIDERATIONS: In the preceding meditations we showed that the spiritual life develops according to certain definite laws and degrees. First there is the purgative way which is the cleansing of the soul with the view of attaining intimate union with God. It is the state of beginners — of those who live habitually in the state of grace, have a certain desire for perfection, but are still attached to deliberate

venial sin. When the soul has expiated its past sins by penance and good works, when it has sufficiently mortified its inordinate tendencies and in that way removed the danger of future relapses, the soul enters upon the Illuminative Way. After a vessel has been emptied, says St. John of the Cross, it can be filled with new contents. With Christ as its Model and Exemplar, the soul now proceeds to develop within itself the virtues of Christ, especially the virtue of charity. A soul which has reproduced in itself the dispositions of Christ begins to live in habitual union with God, and enters upon the Unitive Way. It lives in conscious union with Christ, the Head of the mystic body, and performs all its actions in and through Christ. The Holy Ghost uses the soul as a supple instrument, inspires it through the seven gifts, and produces fruits in it which are characterized by spiritual sweetness and joy. Occasionally the fruits attain so great a perfection that they are, as it were, a foretaste of heaven and of celestial beatitude. They are those fruits which under the last touches of the divine Sun have attained perfect maturity and are called Beatitudes.

APPLICATIONS: There are two dangers which threaten this uniform and gradual growth of the spiritual life — precipitation and inconstancy. Those given to impulsiveness and over-eagerness endeavour to take a short-cut to perfection. They plunge into action without consulting their spiritual adviser. They desire the higher stages of perfection without first passing patiently through the various mortifications and intermediate stages of spiritual growth. They lack docility and suffer from pride, presumption, and spiritual curiosity. They often seek new methods and means of spiritual perfection. And what is the result? Over-exertion and fatigue. Such souls must purify themselves of these faults of precipitation before they can undertake a systematic development of their spiritual life.

The other fault is inconstancy. Some souls become discouraged by the never-ending struggle against difficulties and temptations. They gradually become weary. They relax their practices of mortification. They shorten or omit their religious exercises.

Discouragement is a dangerous temptation. It shatters all the virtues to their very foundation. It makes us feel that our strength is insufficient to accomplish what God demands of us, that the persevering practice of virtue is something impossible. A discouraged soul undertakes little or nothing. She does not arm herself for the struggle. She is by anticipation already vanquished.

A discouraged soul does not realize that the attainment of spiritual perfection is a life's job and that there are apt to be occasional setbacks and relapses. Frequently such a soul relies too much on her own natural powers and not enough on prayer and on the graces of the Sacraments.

Examination of Conscience

Do I realize that certain interior promptings in my soul may come from the evil spirit? For example:

- a. Do I experience sadness and torments of conscience after I have repented?
- b. Do I lose heart and stop my advance when I meet difficulties?
- c. Do I give up my good resolutions in times of spiritual dryness?
- d. Am I secretive about my sins in regard to my confessor?
- e. Do I give in to all kinds of discouraging worries?
- f. Do I attempt penances beyond my strength and then become discouraged?
- g. Do I relax my strictness because of health and study?
- h. Do I try to practice showy virtues and be singular in my religious life?
- i. Do I disregard little things and small duties and wish to be sanctified in grand strides?
- j. Do I aspire to a perfection which is opposed to my duties of state?
- k. Am I vain about my piety and do I wish to be praised for my virtues?
- l. Do I blame myself for my shortcomings in order to be praised by others?
- m. Do I get angry at myself because I got angry, impatient, because I became impatient, etc.?
- n. Do I fail to be resigned to God in trials and times of spiritual dryness?

THE IGNATIAN METHOD OF MEDITATION

Quod autem ore legitis, corde credatis, atque opere compleatis; quatenus auditores vestros, verbo pariter et exemplo vestro, docere possitis.

But when you read with your lips, you must believe in your hearts and practice in your works; so that you may be able to teach your hearers by word and example.

— Lectorate

I. *Definition*: Meditation is a prayerful reflecting upon and thinking about a religious truth in order that, after having with the help of God's grace understood its nature and importance, we may apply it in our daily conduct and so glorify God in our lives.

II. *Remote Preparation* (during the day)

1. Mortification of the senses and passions
2. Habitual recollection
3. Humility — readiness to listen to God's word

III. *Immediate Preparation*: If separated from morning prayers — acts of the presence of God, adoration, thanksgiving, contrition, and invocation of the Holy Ghost. (See particular examination of conscience.)

IV. *Meditation Itself*

A. **FIRST PRELUDE** (senses). This first stage of the meditation is the so-called composition of place, as is clear from the opening words: "imagine," "represent," "see," "look." At this point we place the substance of the mystery before our imagination as if it were really taking place before our eyes. Or we imagine ourselves as present among Our Lord's disciples and listening to the Master's words. This practice prevents the imagination from wandering. But we should not burden or strain the imagination.

B. **SECOND PRELUDE**: At this stage we ask God for the grace to point out to us the lesson to be derived from the meditation and to give us the strength to put it into daily practice (points to resolution).

C. **CONSIDERATIONS** (mind): In the Considerations we study *the truth in itself*.

Recall now the truth which is the object of the meditation or read an explanation of the doctrine in a book. In reading the meditation you must avoid the following attitudes: curiosity, or the seeking after novelties rather than after personal spiritual profit; vanity, or the desire to learn about spiritual things in order to boast about one's knowledge of them; a critical spirit, which strives to find fault with the matter and literary form. Read the lesson with a deep spirit of faith. Try to realize that it is God Who is speaking to you and exhorting you through the writer. Read with the desire to transform and sanctify your life.

The purpose of the Considerations is to make the truth penetrate the depths of the mind, to fix it permanently in the memory, to make it a vivid and profound *conviction* influencing our daily life. For the

will desires only what the mind proposes to it. And the purpose of the Considerations is not merely to increase our knowledge but to influence our will.

If your mind finds relish, light and fruit in a particular sentence or in a particular thought, stop there without passing on to another. A bee never leaves a flower which contains honey. Ask yourself to what extent you are living this truth (which strikes and impresses you) at present, how you have lived it in the past, and how you are going to live it in the future.

If you find it difficult to reflect, use a book, reread the matter, pausing at each sentence. But beware lest meditation be converted into spiritual reading and degenerate into slothfulness.

D. APPLICATION (will): In the Application, we consider *the truth in regard to ourselves*: we try to make the truth permeate our daily life and conduct.

In the Application try to answer questions such as these: To what degree am I impressed by the truth? How far do I live it? How do I practice such a virtue in my thoughts, words, conduct? How far have I preserved myself from such a vice? How far am I wanting in that perfection which Our Lord requires of me, and how far am I from my Divine Model? What must I do in the future the better to conform my life to the religious truth on which I have meditated? What obstacles must I remove? What means must I employ?

E. *Affections*: These are certain spontaneous movements of the soul arising out of the considerations and application.

Here are a few truths and the affections which they should elicit: Attributes of God — acts of faith, admiration, adoration, praise; Incarnation and Redemption — love, gratitude, sorrow for sin; Sin, Purgatory, Hell — self-accusation, acts of reparation, atonement; Heaven — enthusiasm for virtue, withdrawal from earthly things, peace and joy; Our present state — confusion at our misery, helplessness, poverty, and imperfection; The Future — desire to get out of this state, reliance on prayer, divine grace, Sacraments.

F. *Resolution*: This stage of the meditation is the end towards which the considerations, application and affections must tend. Meditation is a spiritual exercise the object of which is to conquer a vice or acquire a virtue. A meditation without a resolution is like unto medical advice given to a patient who is willing to talk and reason about his illness but who will not take the medicine.

A resolution must be *particular in regard to persons, places, times and circumstances*. Such resolutions as: "I will be more virtuous, more charitable, etc., today," will prove useless because they are too vague, indefinite and general. We may take a virtue or a vice in its various particular aspects over a period of weeks.

G. *Conclusion: Prayer* that God may give us grace to carry out our resolution and to obtain fully the fruits of the meditation.

Recall the resolution at Mass, Holy Communion, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, at the particular examination of conscience, and at night prayers. Bring all the supernatural forces of the day to bear upon this resolution.

