



ONFERENCES
& INSTRUCTIONS
of the VENERABLE
MOTHER MARY OF
SAINT EUPHRASIA
PELLETIER · FOUNDRRESS OF
THE GENERALATE OF THE
CONGREGATION OF OUR
LADY OF CHARITY OF THE
GOOD SHEPHERD OF ANGERS

CONVENT OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD
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DECLARATION

IN publishing this new edition of the Conferences of our Venerable Mother Foundress, we declare that the terms of eulogium and the facts the volume may contain are to be understood in a sense absolutely conformable to the Decree of Urban VIII.

PREFACE BY THE EDITOR

THE work, entitled, CONFERENCES AND INSTRUCTIONS OF MOTHER MARY OF ST EUPHRASIA PELLETIER, is offered to all the Religious of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers, in remembrance of the fiftieth anniversary of the reception of the Decree which established the Generalate of their dear Congregation, and appointed their beloved Mother Mary of St Euphrasia Pelletier its first Superior General. An endeavour has been made to collect in it the notes which several religious were happily inspired to make, after hearing the instructions given by this revered Superior to her daughters during nearly forty years. She had made herself so familiar with Holy Scripture that she quoted it continually and most appropriately. She excelled also in inspiring ardour and devotedness; consequently, those of her daughters who have had the happiness of hearing her continually say to the young religious in referring to her: "When you had heard our Mother speak, you would have gone to the ends of the earth to save a soul." After listening to these inspiring words, could the Religious of the Good Shepherd fail to feel, in their turn, a spirit of sacrifice and devotedness, and go with courage to labour in their vocation in the most distant lands?

These "Instructions" have been submitted to competent judges, who have found nothing in them contrary to the doctrine of the Church.

May they contribute to keep alive and to per-

petuate in the Institute that zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls with which Mother Mary of St Euphrasia desired to inspire her daughters!

March 10, 1885.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

WHEN, more than twenty years ago, our venerated Mother Mary of St Peter de Coudenhove published the first edition of the Conferences of our Venerable Mother Foundress, she experienced one of the greatest joys of her life in presenting them to the Congregation, knowing well that the priceless volume would perpetuate the fruitful apostolate of our Venerable Mother, and diffuse during succeeding generations that spirit of regularity and love for God and souls which the servant of God so admirably impressed upon her daughters during her lifetime.

The first edition being exhausted, it became apparent in course of time that a second was necessary. A desire was then expressed from various sources, that the volume should be made more complete, that the manuscripts of the Mother House, containing the exhortations of our Venerable Mother and her Conferences to the novices, should be again carefully searched into, and new treasures added to those already published.

The request met with the full approval of our very honoured Mother Mary of St Domitilla Larose, who herself was very desirous that nothing should be lost of the precious teaching bequeathed to us. She, therefore, directed that the manuscripts should be once more carefully gone over and studied minutely. Those engaged in this research and who examined all the writings were speedily convinced of the excellence of the first work, in which the doctrine of our Venerable Mother had been judiciously and happily collected.

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The Servant of God spoke to her daughters from the fullness of her heart, according to the inspiration of the moment and the needs of the times, consequently without obliging herself to keep to any one subject during the same exhortation. Hence numerous digressions, counsels on such widely different matters, that it would have been impossible to include them under one heading. Exhortations concerning the same virtue and oft-repeated counsels were found recurring in different Conferences. It was necessary, therefore, to collect the passages which applied to the same matters, omitting others, so as to thus form interesting and instructive chapters.

Our dear sisters who compiled the first edition succeeded perfectly in this, and there has been no need to make any changes in their work.

But in so rich a mine it could hardly be expected that some precious grains should not have escaped notice, and these, now gathered up, have been added to certain chapters, besides forming others which are altogether new. In both cases, the above-mentioned method has been adhered to, of collecting together all that relates to the same subject. But there are also some hitherto unpublished Conferences, which we are happy to give exactly as they came from the lips of our Venerable Mother.

This fresh work has been submitted, as was the first, to those competent to judge of its merits, and has, moreover, been subjected anew to examination at Rome. The laws of the Church required that this should be so, as it is forbidden to print any unpublished works of the Servants of God whilst their Cause is pending at Rome, until the Sacred Congregation of Rites has examined them and authorized their publication.

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All the Religious of the Institute will receive this new edition with feelings of reverence and joy, accompanied with sentiments of deep gratitude to our very honoured Mother General, Mary of St Domitilla Larose, for having thus carefully gleaned the few precious ears of corn which had escaped the first harvest; and, above all, they will not fail to profit by the lessons it contains. Our very honoured Mother desires that these Conferences of our Venerable Mother Foundress be, more and more, read and reread, so that each one should be penetrated and impregnated by the teachings they contain—teachings so full of wisdom, so manifestly supernatural, so calculated to form us to the spirit of our dear Congregation and to make us all true Religious of the Good Shepherd.

From our Monastery General of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, Angers.

April 24, 1907.

LETTER of our VERY HONoured MOTHER
GENERAL MARY OF SAINT DOMITILLA
LAROSE

Live Jesus
and Mary!

*From our Monastery General of
the Good Shepherd, Angers, April
24, 1907.*

*Our vocation is a vocation of zeal, an apostolate of
charity (Conf. Ch. III).*

MY BELOVED DAUGHTERS,—It is an immense consolation to us to be able to offer you, on this anniversary of the death of our Venerable Mother Foundress, a second edition of her Conferences and Instructions. The hope that the perusal of this work will contribute to perpetuate amongst us the spirit which animated the great servant of God, who was our Mother is the cause of the truly maternal joy which we feel in placing it in your hands.

In presenting you with this volume, we love to repeat the mysterious words once heard by our Father, St Augustine: "Take and read." Yes, beloved daughters, let your hearts be nourished, your minds impregnated with the spirit that overflowed the soul of our Mother and was so fruitful in results, for by it the apostolic zeal, which is characteristic of our holy Institute, will be strengthened and kept alive within you. May we all draw from the religious teachings of her who said to her daughters, "I leave you, as my last testament, zeal for the salvation of souls," the secret of perpetuating the works she has bequeathed to us, and of causing them to bring forth fruit.

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We desire that this zeal should increase in your hearts, and to bring about its more efficacious exercise that you should sanctify yourselves according to the holy teachings she has left to us. Whilst we contemplate her in glory, on this day so dear to our filial piety, and kneel beside her venerated tomb, thinking of you all, we exclaim, as did our elder sisters thirty-nine years ago: *Oh, beloved Mother, may your spirit rest upon us.** Yes, may this spirit of zeal and charity rest upon us, and then the blessing of Heaven will be shed upon our Foundations, and we shall bring back to the Divine Pastor numerous strayed sheep whose salvation will ensure our eternal happiness.

In this consoling hope, I remain, in union with the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary,

My Beloved daughters,

Your attached Mother in Our Lord,

SISTER MARY OF ST DOMITILLA LAROSE
Superior General.

Blessed be God!

* Mortuary Circular, May 4, 1866.

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CONFERENCES AND INSTRUCTIONS

of the

VENERABLE MOTHER MARY OF
SAINT EUPHRASIA PELLETIER

CHAPTER I

The Church—the Institute

WE would wish, my dear daughters, to speak to you unceasingly of our Mother the Church, of the love which is due to her and of the obligation we all lie under of praying much for her. No Religious Congregation should be more attached to her than ours, for there is not one that owes more to her, not one which stands more in need of her protection and support. Let us then remain always so closely united to her, that she may be able under all circumstances to recognize us as a mother recognizes her obedient and devoted children. On arriving at a Foundation you should consider that as daughters of Holy Church you are sent by her, and animated with these sentiments go amongst our dear penitents and devote yourselves as apostles to their salvation.

The Church is the ship which contains the treasure of our Faith and Hope, and for more than eighteen centuries it has borne these riches to all nations, passing victoriously through every storm.

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Jesus Christ Himself is the Pilot; He it is who holds the helm and steers it safely through all the shoals it encounters. Sometimes Our Lord seems to sleep; then the tempest threatens, hell rises up against the Church and by persecution endeavours to annihilate it; but a cry of distress is heard and our loving Saviour rises, with a word appeases the storm, and the holy Ark of God continues its triumphant progress throughout all ages.

The Church is a spouse whose bosom is rent by her own children; always persecuted she is still ever beautiful, and was there ever a mother who has given more children to heaven than the Church? On the day of our baptism she received us into her arms, and she is jealous of our sanctification.

Listen to the following words spoken recently by a Catholic writer: "Great works are never accomplished without difficulties. God who has confided to His Church the sublime mission of saving souls, has willed that its earthly existence should be marked by great struggles and formidable trials. We must not be unreasonably alarmed by the attacks which it experiences on all sides. It has passed triumphantly through terrible crises, and it will ever be victorious."

We wish to call your attention likewise to what has also been said to me, by persons well worthy of credit, to the effect that our little Congregation follows closely in the footprints of the Church. See the prodigious efforts that are being made at the present time for the propagation of the faith. And it is precisely at this moment that our Institute seeks to extend itself. The sheep enter our folds in crowds, and requests for foundations reach us from all parts. You are filled too with joy by the

consent and encouragement granted by Rome with regard to our missions in America. In fact, could we be more honoured than by hearing the Sovereign Pontiff himself say to us by the mouth of our Cardinal Protector, "I wish you to found in America; it is my wish—my desire"? Yet such are actually the words which the head of the Church now addresses to us; therefore, my dear children, you will found Houses in Montreal and Louisville. The more these works are persecuted, the more will Heaven come to their aid, and those who oppose them will perish rather than the work be prevented. When we were seeking to obtain the approval of the Generalate, the divine protection was manifestly miraculous. Efforts were made to prejudice the Holy Father against us, and one day he remarked: "The more they are persecuted, the more will I uphold them." Far from being lessened, the love of the Holy Father for the Congregation has only increased. When Cardinal Odescalchi entered the Company of Jesus, the care of the Congregation was given to Cardinal della Porta; but when confiding this office to him, the Pope added: "I give you the charge of looking after it in detail, but I will myself be its Protector."

You know, my dear daughters, that the Church consists, so to say, of three branches which together form but one body; hence we speak of the Church triumphant, the Church militant, and the Church suffering. The Church triumphant is in the possession of perfect beatitude; the Church suffering is in a state of indescribable suffering, it is true, but the souls who compose it are sure of the Beatific vision, they know they are being purified to appear before Him Whose purity cannot endure

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the slightest blemish; that they are suffering only for a time, awaiting the glory which is prepared for them in the abode of the blessed, and they are besides consoled and relieved, each day, by the suffrages of the faithful. The Church must combat—combat unceasingly. The Church militant means the Church combating: hence we must fight, my dear daughters, against the world, against our faults and above all against our self-love. We must be indefatigable in our zeal, no difficulty must deter us. Were it necessary to scale the highest mountains, we should courageously ascend them. Should it ever happen that every one turned against us, we must not on that account be cast down, but continue steadfastly at our post, happy to die in the exercise of zeal, since we should be considered as martyrs and would be such in reality.

What was the conduct of the Apostles? They were apprehended and cast into prison, but no sooner were they released than they hastened to preach the Gospel anew in all parts. It is impossible for us to be Religious of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd without paying for the honour. The evil spirit hates you, he pursues you with fury, for there is none whom he hates more than those who not only labour for their own perfection, but also consecrate themselves to the conversion of souls. Let us always be ready to fight, let us present ourselves on the field of battle with the strong arms of prayer, obedience, and, above all, with the desire to sacrifice ourselves for the glory of God.

Let us pray then—pray unceasingly for the Holy Church to whom you are so attached. Let us sacrifice and immolate ourselves for her that her conquests may be multiplied, and that the

splendour of her beauty may become more and more manifest. The Institute is founded to labour not only for the salvation of the souls around us, but also for that of little pagans, of negroes, of idolators.

When St Teresa founded monasteries, the special end she always had in view was to establish a centre of prayer in behalf of the Church, thus to repair the offences committed against God by His infuriated enemies. The saint lived at an epoch when the Church was much afflicted, particularly by the heresy of Luther, which had begun to make frightful ravages. Though they do not bear the name, there are, at the present time, but too many Luthers and Calvins. Unfortunately, multiplied subjects of sorrow to the Church exist in these unhappy days.

“As I had only my prayers with which to testify to God my love,” says St Teresa, “I unceasingly offered them to Him. I exhorted my companions to do the same, and sought to enkindle in them a lively desire for the salvation of souls and for the extension of the Church. Truly the graces I received were very great, but it seemed to me that, remaining shut up within me, they were useless. I felt a holy envy for those who, desiring to make Jesus Christ known, found means of consecrating themselves to so glorious a work, exposing themselves to death even a thousand times for the triumph of so holy a cause.” This great saint says also: “I must acknowledge that an ardent thirst for the salvation of souls is one of the strongest attractions God has given me. I will say more: when I read the lives of saints who by their apostolic labours won to God fresh adorers, I am moved to devotion, I weep, and I feel more envy for them

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than I do for the martyrs. In my opinion, Our Lord thinks more of a soul that we have won for Him by our labours and prayers, aided by His grace, than all the other services we could render Him."

I often think that if St Teresa had lived in our day she would have been a Religious of the Good Shepherd, considering her great attraction for the conversion of souls, and because her vocation, though apparently so different to ours, had nevertheless the same end. It was necessary that a Religious Order should be instituted specially to pray and offer a sort of violence to Heaven, in order to smooth the way before we entered the lists, and whilst we should be engaged in battle. We read in Holy Scripture that when King Amalec sought to destroy the people of Israel in the desert, Moses commanded Joshua to choose brave men and march against the enemy, promising to remain on a neighbouring mountain watching and imploring the assistance of the Most High. And Holy Writ adds that whilst Moses prayed with his arms uplifted to Heaven, the Israelites were victorious; but when Moses grew weary and his hands fell a little, Amalec had the advantage. Then Aaron and Hur supported the arms of Moses until the Amalecites were completely defeated by Joshua or put to flight at the point of the sword. This, my beloved daughters, is an illustration of our work and of that of the holy daughters of Carmel. The latter are on the mountain praying fervently with uplifted hands to Heaven, offering fasts and austerities, to obtain victory for us whilst we struggle, hand to hand, with the infernal enemy. Let us then have great devotion to St Teresa, let us look upon her as one of the principal protectors of our Institute, and endeavour to imitate her incom-

parable fervour and her tender affection for Holy Church.

This seraphic virgin died from the violence of her love, and we read in her life that her last words were: "I die a devoted daughter of the Holy, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman Church." As for us, if we are faithful to our vocation, we shall be able to add: "I die a true daughter of the Good Shepherd."

MAXIM

As in the Church there is but one Faith, one Law, one Baptism, so there should be in our Congregation but one Institute, that is to say, no shadow of difference should exist in our monasteries but everywhere the greatest uniformity should reign.

CHAPTER II

The Double End of our Vocation—The Reformation of Morals and the Confirmation of Souls in the Faith

OUR holy Congregation has two ends, my dear daughters, to reform morals and to strengthen faith in souls. The demon, who never ceases his angry efforts for the loss of souls, perceiving the great good which this holy Institute was to effect, raised a furious storm of obstacles and persecutions against it, endeavouring to crush it in its birth, a war he has continued to wage against it ever since. We must resist the efforts of our enemy by leading a humble, retired life, sacrificed entirely for the glory of God. By this life of mortification and suffering only shall we prepare ourselves for the struggles which are still before us.

Each one amongst you must labour to become strong in the faith of the Catholic Church, by instructing herself thoroughly in the truths of our holy Religion, so that she may not be exposed to the danger of bending like a feeble reed before the first breath of wind, or of running the risk of being lost and causing the loss of other souls, through her ignorance of the doctrine that she professes.

In the excess of His love the Lord has deigned to choose you as guides to lead other souls to Him. He does not wish you to be fountains whose waters are of no use, He desires that others should profit by the abundance of the blessings with which He has enriched you, by the graces which He con-

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tinually bestows upon you. He wills that your virtues should spread around you the good odour of Jesus Christ. Our vocation is a vocation of zeal, an apostolate of charity; let us bear in mind that our entire life should be consecrated to the propagation of our holy faith and the sanctification of souls. We must mould hearts by instructing them, that is to say, we must dispel their ignorance, enlightening our own minds by studying the truths of religion. Our own convictions must be first of all deeply rooted within us, so that we may imprint them on the souls confided to our care, thus providing them with a sure guide to accompany them everywhere, which when they are tempted to fall into sin will make its warning voice heard in the depth of their souls. We shall thus accomplish our fourth Vow which is the essence of our vocation, the three others being so regulated that they co-operate with this supreme end of our Congregation.

Our holy Constitutions point out that all Religious Institutes have a common as well as a special end: the common end of all is to serve and glorify God by the practice of the Evangelical Counsels, yet *As there are many mansions in the house of our Heavenly Father, there are also diverse families and many different offices.* Our special office as Religious of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd is not only to sanctify ourselves and save our own souls, but also to labour for the sanctification of others.

I feel much pleasure in quoting to you here the words of a venerable Prelate on the subject of the different objects of the various Institutes. "Nearly all Religious Congregations," he said, "take, as you do, perpetual Vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience; but then each Institute has an end which is

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proper to it. In the Institute of the Visitation, for example, the religious devote themselves to prayer, to chanting the praises of God and also to the education of young girls; the Carmelites, to prayer and penance; the Religious of St Joseph, to prayer and the education of the poor; the Sisters of Charity pray, take care of the sick and of prisoners, and are to be found wherever there is human misery to relieve. And you, what is the special end of your vocation? Your end also is certainly charity, and, if you are not called Sisters of Charity, you bear the name of Religious of our Lady of Charity. But what does this title signify? It means that you consecrate your life to charity under the invocation and protection of the Blessed Virgin." A servant binds herself to carry out the intentions of her mistress, and to do her will in everything, from the day she enters her house until she leaves it; and the mistress, on her part, pledges herself to maintain the servant and pay her just wages. In the same way you may say, a similar contract was made between you and our Blessed Lady on the day that you entered this holy Institute of the Good Shepherd. On your part, you pledged yourself to labour in a special manner for the conversion of sinners, and the salvation of those poor sinful Magdalens who, under you, become penitent Magdalens. And, on her side, Mary has pledged herself to afford you her special protection, as long as you are faithful to the obligations you have contracted.

But bear in mind that the great and special means of labouring for the salvation of souls and the conversion of sinners, is to instruct them in the truths of faith, and impress these deeply on their hearts; to teach them the catechism and explain

The Double End of our Vocation 11

to them the maxims of the Gospel, for this is the only road to Christian sanctity.

You have also in your Houses orphans and boarders to educate, as well as young girls who come to you to be preserved from evil. You will succeed in forming these young souls by grounding them so solidly in their Religion, that faith may take deep root in their souls and make them appreciate the beauty of virtue.

Apply yourselves diligently then, my dear daughters, to the study of religion that you may become good mistresses to your children. I cannot recommend too highly the study of the catechism. You should always have it at hand. However long you live, you will always need its doctrine for yourself and to teach it to others. Often read sacred history, above all the history of the Church. Do not read pious books that are not approved, and do not allow your penitents or children to read amusing books without knowing their contents.

You will find in the perusal of the history of the Church plenty of matter for the instruction you are bound to give to the classes. Your children will listen to you with pleasure, you will edify and do them good.

The following verse of the Gospel, *And His Mother kept all these words in her heart*,* are thus explained by the holy Doctors. They say that Mary preserved the treasure of truths to impart it to the Church for the instruction of the faithful; they also affirm that one reason her Divine Son left her so long after Him on earth was that she might instruct the first Christians in the doctrines of the faith when it began to be propagated throughout the world. And when the Divine Master, leaving

*St Luke ii, 51.

His parents, remained in the Temple conversing with the Doctors, He wished to show us the necessity of being instructed ourselves so as to enlighten others.

Do not neglect anything then, my dear daughters, which will advance you in the knowledge of your religion, remembering that we are told in the Gospel, *If the blind lead the blind, both fall into the pit.**

Nothing is more dangerous than ignorance. Where can you find greater folly than in one who knows nothing of religion? *If thou see a man of understanding, go to him early in the morning, and let thy foot wear the steps of his door.†*

Our study of religion should, moreover, be always accompanied with humility, which will prevent our short-sightedness from attempting to fathom the impenetrable secrets of God's infinite wisdom. Therefore he falls unhappily into the abyss of error, who seeks to ascend on the wings of pride to examine the mysteries of faith. Bear in mind the example of Tertullian and Origen, to whom the following words may well be applied: *Be not more wise than it behoveth to be wise.* That is, as the holy Doctors explain, we must not pretend to fathom the divine mysteries of faith, because they are beyond the reach of our intelligence. He who seeks to know too much ends by knowing nothing, and instead of becoming wise becomes foolish, because of his presumption and pride.

Nevertheless, it may be said that there is more danger for the salvation of an ignorant person, than for one who knows her religion. A person who is instructed may finally listen to the voice of conscience and yield to remorse. But what hope is

*St Matt. xv, 14.

†Ecclus vi, 36.

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there of converting a poor ignorant creature who has never heard of God, who does not know how to distinguish between vice and virtue? You know, my dear daughters, that there are seven Spiritual Works of Mercy, of which one of the most important is to instruct the ignorant. Therefore, instruct the young persons and children confided to your care thoroughly and solidly; and here I will warn you to be very much on your guard against all novelty in the teaching of faith and morals, that you may not be exposed to the danger of falling into error. It is necessary for Superiors to be prudent and take precautions on this point. The poison of false doctrines insinuates itself into a community as a serpent glides along concealed in the grass, and communities have been known who were completely infected with them before they were aware of it. The celebrated Abbey of Port Royal had the misfortune to allow itself to be entrapped in the snares of the Jansenists. The young Abbess, Mother Angélique d'Andilly, who died in 1661, placed in her office by the King at fourteen years of age, was possessed of excellent qualities, and, despite some natural faults of character, sought to do good in all simplicity. She even wished to leave her Abbey to go and become a novice in the then recently-founded Order of the Visitation; but St Francis de Sales believed he ought to withhold his consent to this step, and so she did not enter. Later, having unwittingly placed herself under the guidance of the Jansenists, whom she believed were men of great virtue and piety, she was led into error, and with her all the other religious which brought about the suppression of the Abbey.

The Apostle St Paul, wishing to warn us against

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these new and false doctrines, writes: *Henceforth be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine.** And elsewhere he tells us: *Beware, let no one rob you of your faith.*

You also must beware of ever letting your spirit of faith slacken. Instruct yourselves, instruct yourselves! Do not hesitate to go back upon the fundamental truths of religion, to read again and again the Epistles and Gospels. Cling to Catholic doctrine and do not deviate from it on the smallest point. It is said that even St Paula, being visited at Bethlehem unknown to St Jerome by a hypocritical pilgrim imbued with the heresy of Origen, was disturbed for a moment by his clever and artful speech.

In the life of St Ignatius we find that the heretics, enraged at the establishment of such a society of celebrated men, resolved to infect it with their pernicious doctrines. For this end, they first sent from Germany to Rome one of their young disciples, a clever hypocrite, who succeeded in gaining admission into the novitiate, hoping to artfully instil the poison of his heresy into the hearts of the novices. To begin with, he showed himself more regular than the others; he approached the sacraments all the oftener that he had no faith in them. Then, after a time, he began to gently insinuate to a companion with whom he shared the care of the refectory, that certain thoughts arose in his mind against the honour paid to holy images, against the authority of the Roman Pontiff, and that he had some doubts of the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Under pretext of exposing his doubts, he sought to instil into his companion false dogmas. The novice whom he selected for the

* Eph. iv.

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object of his first attack, and through whom he hoped the more easily to reach the others, being both pious and shrewd, soon perceived the presence of a wolf in the fold. He took down the tempter's words in writing, and noted that they contained more than twenty-five errors. He acquainted his Superior of the fact, and the wolf was driven from the fold before any harm had been effected.

This measure failing, the heretics conceived the idea of sending to this same house, through different persons, several cases of very beautiful books by Catholic authors, in which the poison was skilfully concealed; but the Superiors, who examined the works, at once perceived the errors and committed the works to the flames.

You see, my dear daughters, all that the devil's partisans have recourse to in order to ruin souls, therefore it is essential that we should be very prudent and thoroughly enlightened, that we may defend ourselves against their artifices. I think it right to tell you, for your experience, that recently a penitent in one of our Houses tried to ruin a religious by her discourses against faith. Be always prudent and on your guard. Keep firmly attached to obedience, to your Rules and Constitutions. It is the surest guarantee you can have, that you will always remain devoted to the doctrine of Jesus Christ, through which only can you hope for light, justice and sanctity, for yourself and for your neighbour.

We again recommend you to converse frequently amongst yourselves of the Church, in order to keep alive the spirit of love and submission which you owe to her. Speak often on this point to our dear children, so that they may come to know

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and love the Holy Church, and do so also to our penitents to awaken, maintain and strengthen their faith.

We particularly desire that the mistresses who teach catechism should never fail to announce the approaching feasts, saying a few words in explanation of them, to accustom the hearts they are forming to enter into the spirit of the Church.

Show charity and consideration in your instructions to the penitents, make them realize that your whole study is to procure their welfare, and let all you say convey some lesson to them. For example, when you speak of the light of the Gospel which has spread through the world, place before their consideration how the same light has enlightened them and led them to Our Lord's House. Illustrate what you say by sentences from Holy Scripture. Then, in concluding, relate some edifying story. If your instruction be on penance, it would be appropriate to speak to them of the ancient anchorites. These poor children listen with great pleasure to these instructions, brought to their level by examples. How often I have most successfully used this means to keep them good and quiet. The mere promise of one of these instructions sufficed to maintain them in good order and docility for several days. Poor children! tossed about in the midst of the world's tempest, they have known nothing but suffering, some of them at least have never experienced the sweetness and attractiveness of virtue, it is for you to make this known to them. But do not, on this account, speak to them only of what may touch their hearts at the moment without making any solid impression. Enlighten them by instruction and feed their minds with wise discourses. Thus you will labour

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efficaciously for the reformation of their morals, you will raise them in their own estimation, and you will fulfil the double end proposed by our holy Congregation. Remember, my dear daughters, these words of St Paul: *I became all things to all men, to gain all to Christ*. The Church has ever been animated by this spirit. As for ourselves we sail in two barques, that of the Gospel and that of our Constitutions, and we can dwell in both, or rather we should pass constantly from the one to the other. Oh, how I rejoice that our Congregation should be so closely united to the Church! We can have no greater assurance of our preservation; it was the Church itself that brought us into existence. In fact, no sooner did the project of the Generalate present itself, than we at once cast ourselves on to Holy Church, which is the cause of the special affection the Sovereign Pontiff bears towards us. Lastly, I have such entire confidence in the Church, my dear daughters, that when she speaks I believe as firmly as if Jesus Christ Himself had spoken.

MAXIM

Oh, my daughters, how I love our holy Faith and the Church our Mother! How consoling it is to witness our Congregation labouring in the interests of this Faith and of the holy Church, to which you should all be attached with as much devotedness as constancy.

CHAPTER III

After the Journey to Rome of our Mother Foundress, Mary of St Euphrasia—Departure from Angers, Easter Tuesday, April 17, 1838—Return to Angers, July 17 of the same year

NEVER forget that as this House of Angers possesses legitimately the title of Mother, to it only belongs special grace for directing the others. It alone has received for this end the blessing of the Holy Apostolic See.

When you are sent, my dear daughters, in virtue of obedience, to any of our Foundations, never cease to look to the Mother-House as a model for imitation in preference to any of the other Houses, even though they appear to you to be advancing in perfection.

As the ivy clings to the oak, and by this means grows and thrives, so must we in like manner attach ourselves to Rome, and thus we shall be strengthened and supported in times of trial. I do not mean to say that Rome will enter into every little difficulty we may encounter, nor that occasions may not arise when Rome will deem it fitting to correct and reprehend us. We know that Rome is a mother, and we know also that mothers frequently have reason to correct their children. *What son is there, says St Paul, whom the father doth not correct.** It may also happen that false reports concerning us may reach Rome, a proud and

* Heb. xii, 7.

discontented subject may deceive Superiors, this must not discourage you in the least; truth always triumphs at Rome. Our work is God's work, and He will protect it.

As the sunflower, so named because it ever turns towards the sun, and the mariner's compass always points towards the pole, so should you look continually towards Our Lord, towards Rome and towards your Congregation.

I cannot express to you, my dear daughters, the emotion which I, as well as our sisters, experienced on entering Rome. No sooner were we in sight of the Holy City than we prostrated ourselves and reverently kissed the sacred soil. In the Vatican Basilica, kneeling at the foot of the altar where the bodies of SS. Peter and Paul repose, I felt impelled to promise Our Lord to give my life, if necessary, for each of our Foundations, and at the same moment our dear Sister Mary of St Teresa of Jesus (de Couëspel) made the same promise. The Holy Father and the Cardinals gave us the most fatherly proofs of the interest and affection with which they regard our work.

His Eminence Cardinal Odescalchi, that great example of humility and of all virtues, related to us that one day, after celebrating Mass in St Peter's—it was the feast of the Annunciation—he was meditating on the immense good accomplished by the Society of Jesus, and he said to himself, "Why should there not be a Religious Order of women to effect in due proportion the good done by the Jesuits, and who would take charge of prisons for women." That very day the venerated Cardinal received our letter, which began thus: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to Thy word.* Deeply moved, he understood at once

that the request for a Generalate was according to God's will. His Eminence made known to us that the letter and the sentiments of submission it contained made so great an impression upon him, he from that moment formed the resolution which he afterwards executed of founding a House of our Institute in Rome. And you see, my dear daughters, that it is clearly explained in article v of our First Constitution, that we may accept the direction of houses of detention for women.

He told us that never was there a more unanimous suffrage, than when the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars approved of the establishment of a Generalate. Thirteen letters had been written against us, yet notwithstanding the unfavourable impression these might have produced in the minds of the Cardinals assembled to deliberate on the question, not one refused it his vote. We had petitioned that the Generalate should embrace all the Houses which we should found in France. On hearing this, Father Kohlmann, of the Society of Jesus,* rose, and turning to Cardinal Odescalchi, Vicar of His Holiness, said, " I humbly beg your Eminence to substitute the word *universe* for that of *France*." " Then you wish to create a Society of Jesus? " replied the Cardinal. " You are right," Father Kohlmann answered. " Truly it will be universal," rejoined his Eminence, " in fact such a work cannot be otherwise. Holy Father, we are all but one in heart and voice in favour of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd." To this the Pope added, " And I also give it my heart and my voice."

The Holy Father told us that he regarded our

* Rev. Father Kohlman, Consultor of the Sacred Congregation.

Institute as one of the brightest gems in his crown. Let us endeavour to correspond to the opinion which the venerated Head of the Church entertains of us, by practising faithfully all our Observances and holy Constitutions.

Do not waver, my dear daughters, between one side and another, like inconstant souls. Preserve intact the sacred deposit of your vocation. Be not pusillanimous, affected by every breath of wind. It may happen that you will be advised, even with good intentions, to introduce novelties into the Institute; but hold firmly to what is set down, never permitting a spirit of novelty to find entrance or anything which is not in conformity with our holy Rules. Preserve your religious observances in their primitive purity. Instruct yourselves thoroughly in all that relates to the Institute, even in the smallest things. Be very diligent, gathering up, grain by grain, like little birds, the spiritual food which is given you. If any of you be inattentive or dissipated, the instructions will be useless to you, it would be like casting grains of wheat into the river.

Remember, my dear daughters, nothing can be altered in our Rules and Constitutions without the authorization of the Sovereign Pontiff, whose Brief establishing the Generalate (dated April 5, 1835) confirmed them all in general and each in particular. Therefore, if any difficulty should arise, reference must be made to the Cardinal Protector of our holy Congregation, recourse must be had to Rome and from thence light will come.

You are placed for all time under the protection of the Church; and as the Holy Church cannot fail, it is impossible that a Religious Congregation should perish which maintains an inviolable

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fidelity to its august authority. When the Institute encounters persecution, the Church protects it as a mother protects a child whom she sees in danger. If in some climate the tree cannot bear fruit, the Church 'with maternal wisdom transplants it to another.

Thank God unceasingly for the great blessing He has granted you in causing you to be born in the bosom of the Catholic Church, that Holy, Apostolic, Roman Church whose daughters you have the honour to be in a twofold sense. You are at the gate of Heaven; to enter you have but one step to take. If anyone have the misfortune to fall, let her not be discouraged, but trust in God and rise again promptly. Let us people the Church with holy souls. God's Vicar on earth rejoices each time we ask to found another of our Houses. Priests who labour with apostolic zeal for the conversion of souls, would frequently be at a loss how to place in safety the prey they wrest from hell, if our folds were not at hand to afford them an immediate asylum.

I feel consumed with zeal when I meditate on our vocation, which appears to me to resemble so closely that of missionaries. I seem to hear the pitiful cries of little savages calling to us, " Mother, mother, come and save us! " We must pray much. God wishes that we ask with importunity, if we desire to be heard. He wills that we be daughters of labour, of prayer and of sacrifice, not allowing ourselves to be, as it were, stagnant water. We must know how to patiently endure crosses, humiliations, contradictions, if we would draw down on ourselves and our Institute the blessings of Heaven.

At one time I was very sensitive to contradic-

tions, particularly to those which came through certain persons, they troubled me much. Now my soul is equally tranquil under all circumstances. When I contemplated, whilst at Rome, the Catacombs where the bodies of the martyrs repose, the horrible cavern into which the Apostles were let down through a narrow opening, that Coliseum, the amphitheatre where so many generous souls endured such cruel torments, I said to myself: "What are our sufferings, what our tribulations, compared to such tortures?" Let us then suffer, let us suffer in union with all the Church which has always had to endure calumnies, tribulations, persecutions.

Closely united by suffering, by zeal, by prayer to the Church Militant, you will relieve the Church Suffering and prepare the way to become (were it even by martyrdom) part of the Church Triumphant. Yet more, my dear daughters, by generously bearing your crosses, by keeping firmly to the faithful observance of all that our holy Constitutions, Directory and Spiritual Exercises prescribe, you may have the honour of being looked upon as almost so many martyrs. Be very fervent then, God has great designs upon each of you. Beg of Him to give you His love and an ardent zeal for souls, and you will see the prodigies this holy love will effect for you.

I shall frequently converse with you about Rome, of the wonders I there witnessed. I shall always preserve a most delightful remembrance of the Convent of the Sacred Heart at the Trinità dei Monti and of its estimable Superior. What true Religious and how perfect these sisters appear to be!

MAXIM

My dear daughters, do all according to the spirit of our Institute; if you follow this path, you will never go astray.

CHAPTER IV

*Our Congregation was founded through Love
of Souls—We must sustain it through
this Love*

THE following passage of the Gospel applies perfectly to our vocation: *What woman having ten groats, if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house, and seek diligently, till she find it? And when she hath found it call together her friends and neighbours, saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost!*" Our groats are our dear penitents. Rejoice at their entrance into the fold, for they are so many groats which were lost and have been found. Before you knew these poor children they belonged to you. You should love them, my dear daughters, you will reach Heaven only by working for them. Strive to bring them back to God; this is our vocation, the vocation to which He has deigned to call you and by which He distinguished you amongst so many others in the great family of the Church. A religious of our Congregation can be esteemed but in proportion to her charity to our dear penitents and the fidelity with which she devotes herself to their salvation.

Only this morning we received a poor young woman of twenty-five years of age, who was in such extreme misery that she was reduced to despair. I asked her amongst other things if she had made her First Communion. "I may have,"

* St Luke xv, 8, 9.

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she replied, "but to tell you the truth I hardly know what First Communion means. I remember that once when I was seriously ill they brought me what they called Viaticum, but I do not know what it is. I know nothing except sin and hell." Then I asked her if she would have something to eat. "Oh, Mother," she answered, "no sooner do I come here than you speak of giving me food! Yesterday I was starving, and I could find no one to give me anything. I feel really ashamed to appear before you in this condition; I should have liked to have begged money to procure myself a cleaner dress." In saying this she shed tears which touched my heart. "Have you ever thought, my child, of praying to our Blessed Lady?" "Oh yes," she replied, "even when I was most wicked, I never forgot to say a *Hail Mary* every day." A charitable person happened to meet this poor child, and seeing her miserable condition took compassion on her and brought her here. This is an instance of the protection of the Blessed Virgin whose clemency is wonderful even towards those who hardly think of her. Oh, how unworthy we should be of the title of "Co-operators" with our Divine Saviour, if we were not animated with great kindness and great charity towards our poor penitents! Remember, my dear daughters, that they call you by the sweet name of mother, and therefore you should be really their mothers, according to grace, in order to raise them to the love and service of Our Lord. To you it belongs to co-operate in their spiritual regeneration and to help them to regain divine grace. Whatever your employment may be, there should be a holy rivalry amongst you to unite together, as far as possible, in bringing about the noble end of the sanctification of souls.

Whether you have the immediate care of them or not, your love for the penitents should be unbounded, like that which an affectionate mother bears towards her children. Love them whatever may be their natural defects, however little attraction you may feel for their miseries; that is to say, your love for them must be inspired by faith, looking upon them as God's children. Love them sincerely in God, avoiding all familiarity, all that is unbecoming, and above all without particular friendship, otherwise you will fail utterly and the penitents will have no respect for you. You understand now the manner in which I would have you love them. I warn you also to guard against their deceits, to fear them as you would the snares of the serpent. Remember that whilst we are studying these poor children in order to understand them, they are cunningly, I would almost say maliciously, studying us. You may be sure they examine you from head to foot, and they watch you continually. It is important that their scrutinizing gaze should never find anything worthy of blame, nor detect anything disedifying in us.

A mistress who does not love obedience and the regular life, may be quite sure she will never convert a penitent; a mistress who is not possessed of solid and persevering piety can do no good to their souls. It would grieve me much, my dear daughters, if I knew that anyone amongst you disliked being employed amongst the penitents, and felt dissatisfied when occupied in our classes. We cannot but think with regard to persons who speak in this manner that the zeal we should possess for the salvation of souls is stifled in them by their love of ease, by their desire to satisfy their tastes, to enjoy the comforts of life, and that they do not under-

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stand that such things are incompatible with devotedness and charity to our neighbour.

Usually we like work the results of which are seen; for instance, the education of youth; nothing is more pleasant than to educate young ladies or to take care of the sick, because these are external occupations; but when there is question of souls all is hidden, nothing appears outwardly. It is a very general saying that it is extremely difficult to convert souls. This is true, but that which is impossible to many is possible to a Religious of the Good Shepherd. A true Religious of the Institute who leaves all for God, who renounces herself also, which is a far more difficult matter, will convert souls and many of them.

It is consoling for me to be able to say that our beloved Sister Mary of St Teresa of Jesus (Couëspel) is particularly worthy to be cited, as one who well understands the spirit of our vocation. We had written desiring her to leave Rome,* and on receiving our letter she told us she seemed to hear a voice which said: "Start, without delay; think of the souls to be gained who await your coming." She had an intimate conviction that some time would elapse before she returned to Angers, and she was not mistaken. When she arrived at Nice, the Bishop† prevented her from continuing her journey, confiding to her the charge of a new House. Our dear sister belongs to a distinguished family, is a person of rare merit, is our great benefactress and a religious possessing all kinds of good qualities; one who could be placed at the head of the most important works, yet instead of expecting a first charge, she begs me to send a Superior fitted to

*1839.

† Monsignor Dominic Galvano, then Bishop of Nice.

direct all according to the spirit of our Congregation, proposing to give her an exact account of everything, then retire with our permission and occupy herself solely with the care of the penitents, in which she finds her happiness and consolation.

With such an example before us will anyone be found to manifest repugnance to being employed in the classes or to make a difficulty in obeying, when there is question of going to assist one of our Houses? You know that you are shepherdesses, guardians of the sheep; but if you are unwilling to take care of the flock, of what use are you to the Divine Shepherd to Whose service you have devoted yourselves?

M. de Neuville,* who is much stricter than I am, frequently tells me that I should place these matters before every postulant who presents herself, acquainting her fully with the difficulties which belong to our vocation and obligations, and then if she acknowledges it is not her object to undertake so many labours, that she prefers meditation and repose in God, say to her at once: "May God bless you, my child, go and ask to be received amongst the Carmelites or in the Visitation Order, God does not call you to us." In our Institute we can do good only in proportion to our willingness to devote ourselves to the salvation of our neighbour. It must be acknowledged that if we have obtained something of the success we desired, it has been only because of the zealous love we bear our dear penitents.

+ It is generally recognized that our Institute was founded only through love for souls; I was not possessed of riches, talents or any exterior attrac-

* The Count de Neuville, our founder.

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tions, but I always loved the penitents and I always loved them with my whole soul. I even made a vow never to refuse entrance to one because she had nothing to give, and you see, my dear daughters, we are none the poorer in consequence.

That you may understand, more and more, the grave importance of your obligations towards our dear penitents is one of the most ardent desires of my heart. God extends our works and is ever adding new ones, and this should cause us to redouble our ardour and efforts to attain perfection until we arrive at the perfect day, which is Heaven.

The gifts and benefits we receive are not for us, but for the persons under our care. In reality it is not we who win blessings from the Sovereign Pontiff, encouragement from the bishops, protection from all governments whatever their character. All this is directly owing to our vocation, to the zeal and love we have for our penitents. In fact had we remained in the world would the Pope, the bishops, the great ones of the earth have thought of us? It is our duty then to acquire the virtues proper to our vocation, and to labour efficaciously in the holy works to which we have consecrated ourselves.

A venerable bishop has just sacrificed a large part of his revenue in favour of one of our Houses. Do you suppose this zealous Prelate did so for the sake of having a few more religious in his diocese? Certainly not. The learning or even the sanctity to be admired in some of them would not suffice to excite charity to such a degree. Only a desire to save souls could bring it about.

The worthy religious to whom we have had the honour to offer hospitality for a few days said on leaving: "What are we compared with the Reli-

gious of the Good Shepherd!" Do you think the kindness and courtesy of some of the novices caused them to speak in this way? Assuredly not; their admiration was won by the good order and regularity of the community, by the zeal with which each one seeks the good of our poor children, the sacrifice and devotedness they observed in the mistresses of the classes, by nothing else. You are looked upon as so many saints, my dear daughters, that is why you are wanted everywhere, why missionaries and other zealous persons ask for you; you must take care, therefore, not to deceive those who place confidence in you. I mean, you must really be saints. Therefore, advance, redouble your efforts to reach perfection. St Chantal's novices became such perfect religious at the end of a few months, she could do what she pleased with them. I would that I had her holiness for a year, at least, that I might in a short time form novices who could be mistresses of our classes, Superiors and foundresses, offices for which we shall greatly need sisters, for some of our enterprises are languishing for want of assistance. -

A Religious of the Good Shepherd ought to be happy in our Foundations and glad to be employed in the classes, and never say: "I prefer to be at Angers, I shall never feel at home here." Or "another office would suit me better." Such sentiments would prove that far from possessing a good religious spirit, she could hardly claim to be a good Christian, for as such she ought to be ready to endure contradictions and sacrifice herself. How many persons in the world are contradicted from morning till night and resign themselves to their fate in silence. How then can religious complain of what is not to their liking—they who should be

aiming at that love of the Cross which is so necessary for perfection? If love of the Cross, the desire of suffering, and a spirit of self-sacrifice come to be wanting in the Institute, we may believe it to be on the point of perishing.

Suppose, that yielding to your wishes, I permitted you to choose your own destination and employment, you may be sure you would be most unhappy, tormented in this life by remorse, and overwhelmed in the next by the severity of God's judgements.

You grieve and your tears even flow abundantly when the time comes to leave the Mother-House, because you feel keenly the separation from all that is dearest to you in the world. This is the natural outcome of grateful hearts and far from blaming you, I like to see this tender affection in my religious. I am convinced that as long as this sorrow exists at leaving the Mother-House the Institute will live and flourish.

Always remember that our Congregation was founded only through love for souls and by this love alone will you maintain it. Do you know the term I use for the love we bear to souls? I call it *a love of appreciation*. The saints loved souls because they had cost the Precious Blood of Our Lord. They appreciated the soul of a poor child in rags and full of faults, the soul of a sinful man or woman, because God loves that soul and Our Lord shed His Blood for its ransom. Such were the thoughts which animated St Francis Xavier when he hastened to the conquest of souls. A religious who fears trials and difficulties, a religious who says: "I have an attraction for this, for that"—thinking only of her own satisfaction—has no true love for souls in her heart. Her sentiments would be different, were she

to think more of the offences and blasphemies Our Lord has to endure from wicked men, and also of the faults committed by His chosen ones which He feels even more sensibly. Or again if she were to consider the goodness and the patience of God Whose hatred of sin is infinite, and Who by one word could annihilate the world, yet through love of us spares it, assuredly she would never be wanting in zeal for His glory and the salvation of souls. O my God! What are we doing in this world, why are we here if not to contribute to the salvation of our neighbour? Let us unite ourselves to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. There He is continually annihilated, offering Himself as a Victim to His Eternal Father, to repair the injuries and crimes of erring souls whose iniquities are drawing down on them the manifold punishments of Heaven, yet they continue heedless. Still Jesus loves them, and He unceasingly offers to His Father the wounds which He endured for their salvation. These souls are His Own, they belong to Him by so many titles that He desires all should be saved. He came down upon earth to redeem them, and Heaven was filled with admiration when it witnessed the accomplishment of this mystery of love in which each Person of the Blessed Trinity shared. The Father gave what was dearest to Him, His Own Son, and that this mission of love for His creatures might be accomplished, He sent a messenger on earth, the Archangel Gabriel, to the holy Virgin who, as the masterpiece of the Creator, was already filled with grace and the most precious gifts of Heaven. The celestial ambassador descending to earth, announces to this privileged creature the designs and decrees of the infinite mercy of God towards mankind. The Holy Spirit waits but the consent of this

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pure Virgin to overshadow her with the power of the Most High. Then are effected marvels which our weak intelligence can never comprehend. And for whom has God worked these wonders? Perhaps for elect souls His friends? No, my dear daughters, all this was done solely for poor depraved creatures who have wandered from the right path. Behold the love of a God! He loves us passionately, and we, shall we make Him no return? Oh yes! we will draw to Him some of these souls so dear to His Heart, and at the hour of our death, at that supreme moment when we must appear before Him Who should be the only object of our love, the souls whom we shall have sent before us to Heaven will come and lay their palms and their crowns at our feet, recognizing us as the instruments that God graciously employed to win them to His love. How great then will be our joy! What a festival! How Heaven will rejoice when the Religious of the Good Shepherd shall triumphantly enter within its gates! I will conclude now, my dear daughters, for there is so much to be said on the subject upon which I have touched, that if I tried to express it all I should have to continue till to-morrow. Love your dear penitents, love them more and more, value this precious vocation for which you should be immeasurably grateful to God's ineffable goodness.

Whether you be employed in manual labour, in writing or in cooking, whatever your occupation may be, remember you must always have the intention of labouring for the salvation of souls. You know the mission which the Son of God came on earth to fulfil. Consider that you have in a measure the privilege of a similar vocation; you should feel honoured thereby. Be proud of the noble enter-

prise confided to you, let us present to Our Lord the souls which cost Him His Blood and His life, let us offer them to Him as a pledge of our love and as a title to the eternal reward He is preparing for us.

MAXIM

Every religious who loves the penitents shall uphold the works of the Institute. We shall please God by our love for the penitents; we shall attain our salvation by our love for the penitents.

CHAPTER V

*The Institute of the Good Shepherd is an
Institute of Faith and Love*

I UNCEASINGLY offer my prayers and desires to Our Lord that the sanctity and honour of our Congregation may be perpetuated through our novitiate. O my dear daughters, become saints in your vocation and remember, that to acquire its spirit and make it your treasure, you must remain hidden from the eyes of others, endeavour to be forgotten and have no desire to appear abroad, nor to find any satisfaction for self. Do not fear to say: *We are made as the refuse of this world*, since the great Apostle of nations did not hesitate to say it of himself. After our own sanctification, the end to which we engage ourselves is, as you know, to labour for the salvation of souls. Our mission is to receive with open arms, so to say, the most abandoned souls. There is no misery, no spiritual wound however repulsive, which we ought not to seek to cure with the assistance of grace.

Obey promptly when obedience calls you to go to the conquest of souls. Do not allow yourselves to be frightened by the prospect of the obstacles, difficulties and combats, that you must encounter in devoting yourselves to the glorious work of delivering poor souls bound in the slavery of the devil, and enveloped in darkness and in the shadow of death. Meanwhile, begin at once to form yourselves to a love of your vocation and to the zeal

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which belongs to your state. O my God, what does not love effect! What undertakings are accomplished by divine love! Our Institute was founded by love; you have been drawn hither by love. In all sincerity let us declare that we are not slaves, or in any way under compulsion, but the beloved daughters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. You are victims of your love of souls. I feel assured that you will persevere in this love until death, always happy and contented in your vocation.

Our Institute is an Institute of Faith and Love. Faith is a gift of God, and is the root and foundation of the greatest virtues. A religious animated by lively faith sees God everywhere and in everything, therefore her obedience is perfect. Her mind, understanding and will all are under subjection. If all our actions were animated by a spirit of faith, they would become meritorious and would be imputed to us unto justice and sanctification, as was formerly the undoubting belief of Abraham. God had announced to this holy patriarch that he would become in his old age the father of a great nation, and that his posterity would be as numerous as the stars of Heaven. Although everything seemed contrary to it, Abraham believed God's word even when He commanded him to sacrifice his only son, the son of promise. He hoped against hope, sustained by his faith in the immutability of God's word. I fully approve of those of our sisters, who to obtain the gift of a lively faith, have recourse to the intercession of this holy patriarch.

Spiritual life cannot exist without a spirit of faith, and unless animated by it our good actions cannot be perfect. But I would have you observe

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that faith is not noisy; on the contrary; it tends to peace and unobtrusiveness; it would not lead us to break silence or to transgress religious tranquillity in the choir or cloisters. We read in an ancient hymn: "I see faith enveloped in a large mantle, by day she passes almost unperceived, by night she glides noiselessly along carrying a torch."

If, my dear daughters, you possess a spirit of faith, you will hear with joy this sentence which may be applied to you: *The just man liveth by faith*,* as also that other: *They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity*.† You are of the number of the first, you who live by faith, and the promise is made to you that you will shine amongst the elect by the sublimity of your vocation. Be convinced that we merit more by labouring for the salvation of souls than we should if we were to give ourselves up to martyrdom, since our life is a perpetual holocaust, all the greater because a more prolonged sacrifice. For example, do you not think that those of our sisters who will go to distant missions amongst infidels, or those now starting to found one of our Houses in London amongst Protestants, will not merit as much or perhaps more than if they laid down their lives at once for the faith? Be animated then with that faith which will fill you with an ever-increasing love of your vocation, and enable you to tread with ardour the ways of God. You should have the faith of Rome, the ardour of our sisters of the south, the reserve of our German sisters, and the zeal of our English sisters. Angers must unite all in her heart in order that she may be found a model Mother-House.

The way of faith is the way of the Cross. A spouse of Our Lord Jesus Christ who lives by faith

* Romans i, 17. † Daniel xi, 3.

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is always contented, whatever tribulation she suffers or whatever contradictions she experiences in the employment assigned to her, because she esteems herself happy to have something to offer to God, to Whom she flies on the wings of faith.

For your consolation listen to these words also, "The just live by love." Oh, how happy are the souls who live by love! It is true they do not live without sorrow, but love delights to suffer, and nothing is hard to one who loves. A soul that ardently loves God no longer runs, she flies in the path of perfection. We should all live by love. Fear should never trouble nor constrain your hearts. This is not the spirit in which the Good Shepherd wishes you to serve Him. He who fears is not perfect in love, for love inspires confidence, joy and peace, whilst fear is accompanied by trouble. St Francis de Sales says, "How mistaken are those who make sanctity consist in anything but the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ." *Love is the fulfilling of the law.*

The Saints tell us that:

Faith is love that believes.

Hope is love that expects.

Adoration is love that worships.

Prayer is love that petitions.

Mercy is love that pardons.

Charity is love that sacrifices itself.

Mortification, martyrdom, is love that immolates itself.

St Philip Neri loved Our Lord so much that one day, when he was praying with extraordinary fervour, he felt his heart enlarged by the violence of his love. A short time before her death St Teresa said: "I feel so strongly the love of God within me that this violent emotion makes it impossible to live."

If we sometimes see natural love producing marvellous results, what may not the supernatural love of God effect in an upright soul? Two brothers loved each other tenderly. One of them having undertaken a short journey, returned home, and not meeting his brother inquired for him, but was answered only by tears, " My brother is dead! " he exclaimed, " I cannot live without him! " and as he uttered these words he died of grief.

During the reign of Michael Paleologus, Emperor of Constantinople, the Turks captured two Greek girls and sold them as slaves to two different masters, which involved their separation. It would be impossible to describe their grief at this prospect, and when the moment of separation came and they were embracing each other for the last time, their emotion was so violent that they both fell dead.

St Francis de Sales relates the story of an eagle which had been reared with care by a young girl, and which was accustomed after the manner of its kind to go in pursuit of other birds, and then returned with the prey to its mistress. One day whilst the eagle was abroad, the poor girl died, and when it returned the body of its beloved mistress was about to be burned, according to the custom of the country. The faithful bird, however, would not leave her, it extended its wings as if to defend her, and disregarding the flames remained thus, allowing itself to be burned to death.

You see how even animals love their benefactors. How great then should be our love for God, from Whom we have received so many benefits, and Who only asks as a proof of our love that we should keep His commandments. We can every one of us love our good God, the light-hearted as well as those inclined to sadness, the thoughtful



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as well as those who are less so, the talented as well as those with fewer gifts. A good lay brother remarked one day to St Bonaventure that he was fortunate to have so great a mind, because it enabled him to surpass others in the art of loving God. The Saint replied that in this art the unlearned could advance, side by side, with the most learned, and even outdo them. Some peasants passing at the moment, the brother asked the holy Doctor if these poor people also could have a great love of God, and being told they could, he cried out, "Oh, good people, men and women, rejoice, for you can love God as much as Father Bonaventure, who is such a learned Doctor!" And he was so overcome by the thought that he fell into an ecstasy which lasted three hours.

Do everything as far as possible through love, and you will see what great things you will be able to effect. We can make more progress in one year by love than we could in ten through fear. The animating principle of our Institute is one of love, and a Superior who endeavours to make herself feared rather than loved is wanting in the spirit of our Congregation.

I always feel deeply touched by the passage of the Gospel in which Our Lord addresses these words to St Peter who had been unfaithful to Him: *Lovest thou Me?* Peter had offended Him, yet He does not ask, "Fearest thou Me?" And when the Apostle's last reply to the reiterated question showed that he was grieved by the doubt they implied, the Divine Master was not satisfied with saying as He had done the first and second time, *Feed My lambs*, He added also, *Feed My sheep*, thus constituting him the Pastor of pastors, the Head and infallible Master of the whole Church. And here let us re-

mark in passing, that Jesus Christ did not say to Peter: *Govern, be the Master*, but He used the word *Feed*, which signifies, *prepare pasturage, give nourishment to your lambs and to your sheep*.

Thus He made it evident that He did not institute a law of *fear* but one of *love* in His Church, a law, nevertheless, which includes every prerogative of authority, even that of correcting and administering salutary punishment to the guilty, but again this is done through love.

We also would guide you in the Congregation only by love, reproving and correcting you but through love, wishing you to obey only from love. When we say to our dear daughters, "Do this or that," they will obey promptly in all we tell them. They will act in everything with the greatest exactitude, and will show they do so from a motive of love, not through fear, bearing in mind that divine love is the motive and principle in the formation of saints. Fénelon remarks, "God desires that we should not only do His will but do it with love."

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If we are animated with love for God, for Holy Communion, for the penitents and for our Constitutions, we shall be ready to cross the seas. If you are asked, "Who are you, whence come you?" Your reply should be: "I am the spouse of the Good Shepherd, a Daughter of our Lady of Charity, Heaven is my country."

"But for what end have you come hither? We have come to win souls to God."

CHAPTER VI

The Good Shepherd

I *AM the Good Shepherd: the Good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep.*

During this week we will converse together only of the Good Shepherd. This subject will furnish us with abundant matter for thoughts and reflections, because Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd is the true model Whom we must endeavour to imitate, in order to acquire the perfection of our holy state. He is the divine Original that we must strive to reproduce in our whole conduct. We must endeavour on our side to form ourselves to the spirit of this Adorable Master and live His very life, since He has deigned to associate us with His work, to allow us to discharge His office, so to say, in the fold into which He has brought so many lost sheep. You will effect no good, my dear daughters, you will not possess the spirit of our vocation until you become animated with the thoughts, sentiments and affections of the Good Shepherd, of Whom you should be the living images in the midst of your flocks. Now what did Jesus Christ say of Himself? *The Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.** How did He act? He pursued sinners with fatherly solicitude, He endured every kind of fatigue to bring them back to Him. Remember the ineffable goodness with which He received Magdalen, the great sinner of Jerusalem, who threw herself at His

* St Matt. xviii, 11.

feet, watering them with her tears. *Let her alone*, He said, *Why do you molest her?**

See Him on another occasion seated by the well of Jacob. He is weary, He rests awhile, that is, He awaits a soul. He desires to convert the Samaritan woman. Again, when at Jerusalem they bring Him a guilty woman who deserved to be stoned, He said, *He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,†* and the crowd dispersed.

Consider Him after His Resurrection, always acting the part of the Good Shepherd, pursuing the two sheep who, sad and discouraged, had abandoned Jerusalem, the city of peace, to go to Emmaus, the castle of confusion; He joined the two disciples, who were filled with consternation and whose faith was wavering. He walked with them, accommodating His pace to theirs, taking part in their discourse, condescending to their weakness in order to instruct them and enlighten the darkness of their minds.

Here, my dear daughters, is the example you should follow, for you are all destined to be so many Good Shepherds, and you must imitate the abnegation, the spirit of charity, the zeal of Jesus Himself. Like Him go to Emmaus in search of the wandering sheep and fulfilling the office of the Good Shepherd, in their regard, you will bring them back to the fold. Your task is difficult, but to the eyes of faith, it is one that is grand, noble and divine; never must you be daunted by obstacles. Sometimes God Himself places them in our path to reanimate our zeal when we may be tempted to lukewarmness. The object of our thoughts, desires, words and actions, should be the salvation of our dear sheep, after the example of Our Divine Saviour,

*St Mark xiv, 6. †St John viii, 7.

Whose thoughts, desires, efforts and labours had no other end. Moreover, the marvels which He so frequently effects in our dear penitents show clearly how greatly He desires their salvation and conversion. Be filled, then, with a holy zeal for the salvation of these poor souls confided to your care. Make it the one occupation of your life. Let this thought follow you in your prayers to render them more fervent, in your Communions to animate them with holier affections, in the discharge of your duties to inflame you, more and more, with the fire of charity and zeal. Do not forget that to labour efficaciously for souls we must be holy, we must belong entirely to God, and cease to think of self or of creatures. Jesus Christ has chosen you, He has associated you with His mission to nations, that you may bear fruit. But what fruit? Fruits of conversion and salvation. You will thus draw down on yourselves manifold blessings and an abundance of grace. Always take the Shepherd of shepherds as your model, render yourselves worthy of your sublime vocation by an ardent, active, vigilant zeal, and a boundless charity. God said by the mouth of a prophet, *You who govern the flock of Israel are so many Shepherds. Endeavour to strengthen the weak, to cure those that are sick, to bind up the wounds of those that are hurt. Raise up those that are fallen, seek those that are lost. Take care not to rule over them with rigour nor with a high hand.* Take notice of this, my daughters, that a hard correction will never do any good. I am far from blaming those, who on certain occasions and obliged by the circumstances of the case, give a strong firm correction, but it is kindness that wins hearts. Once you gain the heart, you can do what you like with anyone. You will tame these rough

natures, you will soften them and finally lead them to God.

Our Lord appears to have always had a special predilection for the title of *Shepherd*. The rulers of His people had been named shepherds, and He chose as His first adorers at His birth not only the poor, but poor shepherds. And the reason for this was, because their conduct towards their flocks represents better than any other figure, God's tenderness and solicitude for His dear sheep. For how does a shepherd act? He forgets himself, he frequently endures hunger and thirst, he is overwhelmed with fatigue and labour. But this matters little to him, provided his sheep do not suffer, and he recovers those that were lost. What pains he takes to lead his flock to good pastures. In summer he seeks cool places with refreshing streams, in winter he guides them to districts where the cold is less severe and the grass greener and more abundant. If he see any poisonous plant near his little lambs he uproots it, and to protect his sheep from wolves he watches by night as well as by day, he never allows himself entire rest. This should be your conduct with regard to the young persons and children whom God has committed to your care. Watch over them carefully, observe their needs, whether of soul or body, providing for them with prudence spiritual food suited to each one's state and condition. It is essential, therefore, that you should become deeply penetrated with the spirit of our Institute, which will inspire you with the true manner of discharging a duty of such high importance. •

When vegetation becomes scarce, the shepherd folds his tent and taking with him, if necessary, other shepherds, he goes in search of richer pas-

tures, where he remains, leaving relations and friends and at the cost of great inconvenience to himself. As long as his sheep are fed he counts no cost. Shall we not do as much for souls as these shepherds do for their flocks; souls bought by the Precious Blood of Our Lord should be inexpressibly dear to us. I must confess that even in my novitiate the desire to labour for the conversion of souls pursued me so strongly that I felt uneasy, and accused myself of it as a temptation. I often shed tears at night because of our small number of penitents, and when Monsignor Montault sent to negotiate concerning the foundation of a House at Angers, my joy was so great that I almost felt myself in Heaven. In those days a new Foundation was rare and a most difficult matter to bring about. Now that we have obtained the favour of the establishment of a Generalate for our Institute, with the fullest blessing of the Head of the Church, the worthy successor of St Peter, who desires to see our establishments multiplied throughout the universe, you will go forth and erect your tents from one end of the world to the other. One town, one Foundation should not satisfy your zeal, it must embrace the whole world.

St Paul said, *I am neither Greek nor Roman, I belong to all nations.* And St Francis Xavier also said, "I am not only a Spaniard, I am an Indian, a Chinese, a Japanese, I belong, in fine, to every country in which I have the happiness to preach the Gospel." Such ought to be your sentiments, my dear daughters, and the dispositions of those who belong to our Institute. We must rouse ourselves, we must be ever ready to march. Since we are all pastors, or if you prefer it shepherdesses, we must not be attached to one little corner of the

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earth. As for myself, I do not wish it said any longer, that I am French. I am Italian, English, German, Spanish, African, American, Indian, etc. I belong to every country where there are souls to save. When we see there are sheep to be gathered into the fold, we must not fear to go and pitch our tents on the most distant shores. In Italy, in Bavaria, in every part of Europe, in America, Africa, Asia, Oceania, everywhere must we go in search of Our Lord's sheep. The conquests you achieve will be in proportion to the alacrity with which you answer the call.

And here, my dear children, I feel it is my duty to give you a very important recommendation. You know that it is written in the Gospel that the Good Shepherd left the ninety-nine sheep to seek the one that was lost. In like manner let us leave ninety-nine good works to bring back the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and by this I mean that if you cannot establish several classes you should give the preference to those for penitents and Magdalens.* I have remarked that Houses which are satisfied with these two kinds of work always flourish. Moreover, my dear daughters, never open an establishment for Magdalens unless you have a suitable locality in which to do so. They require air and solitude, and you will expose them to dangers and temptations if you place them where they cannot have a garden and apartments entirely separated from the other classes. Here at Angers, the centre of the Institute, we multiply our establishments because we must train the novices to our various works. But you see that we have different buildings, separate from each other,

*Our Mother often remarked: "The foundation of the Magdalens is the crowning work of the Good Shepherd."

and a very large enclosure, and we have also many resources for the various classes. There is no communication between the classes, mistresses are not wanting, and a large garden can be given to each category.

In some of our Houses it is difficult to provide all this, in which case the dear sheep must be considered first, who borne away in the vortex of the world find it impossible to rise again when they have fallen, whilst still surrounded with snares and dangers. If you abandon them to take up other works you will forfeit the favours and blessings of God. Remember the words of our venerated Founder on this subject when he recommends us to faithfully keep our Vows to God, particularly the fourth, of employing ourselves in the conversion and instruction of souls who have wandered from the right path. "Know," he says, "that whilst you remain in this holy employment you will be the true daughters of the most holy Heart of the Mother of God. She will heap upon you every kind of favour and blessing. But if, under any pretext whatever, you withdraw yourselves from this work your name will no longer be, *Daughters of the most holy Heart of Mary, Mother of Jesus, but daughters of Belial*; the blessing of Heaven will withdraw itself from you and its malediction will fall upon you."

These words fill our hearts with fear, yet we come across them constantly, they are printed and you will find them in the first pages of our holy Constitutions. Can it be possible that there be no middle course? Must we be daughters of Mary or daughters of Belial? No, truly there is no middle course; if we wish to stand we cannot rest one foot on the ground and keep the other raised in the air without falling.

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We must keep to our vocation and to the Vows we have made, otherwise we shall fall and be lost. Let us always have the same aim, never losing sight of the end of our Institute, then we shall people Paradise with souls and secure it for ourselves.

When with the requisite permission you undertake the education of young girls, you do not deviate in any way from the end of your vocation, because such has been the custom in the Congregation from its earliest days; you will find a little rule in our *Book of Customs* which was then drawn up expressly for them. But, at the same time, you must be sure that the attention you have to bestow on these pupils, does not interfere in any way with the care of the penitents; should this be so you must give up the young girls.

As regards preservation classes and orphan-ages, I refer you to the words of the venerated Head of the Church in the Brief establishing our Generalate.

Therefore, my dear daughters, as we have already said, your orphans and your boarders, if you have any, will be as it were, the lambs of your fold. Bring them up with greatest tenderness and immense charity, sacrifice your life for all the members of your flock, but I must remind you that if the number of religious is limited and if there is not accommodation for more than one class, you should confine yourselves to receiving penitents only. Thus you will go straight to the end of your vocation.

Above all beware of engaging in enterprises altogether foreign to our Institute. We have sufficient obligations, and should not undertake others, for example *Salles d'asile*, Hospitals, and

similar works which do not belong to us in any way.* If you think that any benefit will accrue to our Houses by these undertakings, you are very much mistaken. It is true we are poor and our needs are great, but a miraculous Providence watches over us. Every year we require large sums of money for this House, and every year we find them. We must own that our Congregation is but Providence and miracles! Do not be anxious, my children, continue to take care lovingly and zealously of the Divine Pastor's sheep and lambs, serve Him and endeavour to persuade others to serve Him faithfully, and be assured that if you do this He will not let you want for food, and will provide with fatherly care for all your needs.

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God's blessing always rests upon those folds where many penitents are admitted. Do not fear to impoverish yourselves in order to receive those who ask admittance; if you have but a morsel of bread left, share it with them and remain in peace. God will take care of you.

*In 1855 Monsignor Pascal Vincie and the Company superintending the construction of the Suez Canal asked that in addition to their other works, the Religious of the Good Shepherd might keep the accounts and look after the linen of the hospital at Port Said. Our Mother Foundress agreed to this on condition that the Sisters Tourières should attend to the hospital and she sent some for this purpose. Later it was found necessary to make certain concessions.

It was proposed to one of our Houses to open a Home for little boys and girls. Our Mother refused, saying she would rather recall our sisters from that town than accept the work. She also declined other undertakings of this kind.

CHAPTER VII

On our Vocation—How we should love it

YOU work hard, my dear daughters, which is one reason why God blesses you. Your charity towards our dear penitents, towards the children of our classes, your watchings, your anxieties, take the place of austerities and of long prayers. You should not wish, for instance, to imitate the Carmelite Mothers (whom I love dearly) in their macerations and prayers.* If I knew that anyone of you desired to introduce into our monasteries practices proper to other Orders or Congregations, I would reprove her and say that she did not understand the spirit of our vocation.

It is necessary, therefore, that you should thoroughly comprehend the spirit and excellence of your Institute. Your motto should be, devotedness, zeal and labour. By its practice you will succeed in establishing Houses and you will found many more than we have opened so far; your poverty will be no obstacle. When and how, I cannot tell you, but one thing is certain, that these new Houses must be the fruit of the sweat of your brow, of your privations and of your sacrifices. It

*These words of our Ven. Mother have sometimes been misunderstood. As her whole life testified, it was far from her thought to condemn a love of prayer or of bodily penance. She was too truly Catholic to blame what the Church has always approved and all the Saints practised. She only wished to say that those would be blameworthy who would use these means to an excess so as to neglect the works of our vocation. For example, we cannot give the same time to prayer that the Carmelites do without prejudice to devotedness to work.

is thus that you will establish flourishing works in England, in Germany and in America, etc.

Switzerland also is the object of my desires. In fact it is to Switzerland that the daughters of the Good Shepherd must go. There we shall assuredly meet with persecution, humiliations, contradictions, labours and poverty, but we shall be consoled because in exchange we shall be able to gain souls. We must enlighten and convert Protestants.*

The holy Bishop of Geneva wishes to have us in his diocese, but he does not venture to invite us because he has neither house nor money to offer, and many other bishops, poor like him, help us by their prayers and remind us of these words of Our Lord: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.* The venerable Bishop of Geneva has sent you his blessing, he has also blessed our holy Institute, because, to lessen the expense of their journeys, we offered to admit the young girls he wished in his zeal to place under our care, into those of our Houses which were nearest to Switzerland.†

We have also been remembered in the prayers of his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, in return for having admitted into our House in London, several young persons whom we hope to win back to a good life and to the practice of their religion.

You will go to Louisville, whither you are invited by a holy Prelate,‡ who prays that he may not die before he sees you in his diocese. He also is poor, he has nothing to offer you except souls to save.

Would you like to know the wish that is in my

*1842.

†1842.

‡Mgr Flaget, Bishop of Louisville, Kentucky, U.S.

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mind at this moment regarding each one of you? It is that I may see the larger number of the professed sisters now listening to me leave for distant lands before two months elapse, to labour for the salvation of souls. O my daughters, you would not hesitate a moment if you realised how eagerly these souls long for you, you would ask me to choose you at once for so great a work. Render yourselves worthy then of this sublime vocation. Love it, uphold it, cause it to be esteemed, inspire every one with a love for it, cherish it in adversity as in prosperity and always regard it as the greatest blessing Heaven has bestowed upon you.

St Paul often repeated these words in speaking to the faithful of his time: *Renew yourselves in your calling*, and we address them equally to you. Let us renew ourselves in the love of our vocation and in its spirit. We shall never have a great enough love for this holy vocation, which is so glorious a one in the eyes of God, and even of men. That our works are talked about and win distinction does not always prove that we possess a love of our vocation. If we are content to live in solitude, in silence, in suffering, when obedience requires this of us, we shall show more love for our fourth Vow than if we were in the midst of work. A religious who says, "I have an attraction for this or that because I shall find no difficulty, no trouble in it," clearly manifests a total want of true love for souls. Go then, my daughters, when obedience sends you to save poor souls who are enslaved in the darkness of heresy, and through love save them, disregarding the resistance and struggles of nature and paying no heed to any obstacles whatever which may present themselves.

But what shall I say of a religious who does not

appreciate the excellence of her vocation, who does not love it, nor possess its spirit? I must confess that I cannot find words to qualify her. One or two such subjects are sufficient to injure the spirit of a whole community and destroy its fair name; because every one knows how important it is for the good works of a community that its reputation should be preserved intact. St Teresa, that pattern of humility, said the loss of our reputation was the most deplorable injury that could be suffered. Once that of a community has been lessened by the behaviour of a few of its members without love for their vocation, the outside world easily supposes that the whole community is worthy of blame.

I agree with the opinion of a Superior of a Religious Order who told me, that when we find that a novice does not appreciate her vocation and is indifferent about the works proper to the Institute, we should have no hesitation in dismissing her that very day before the sun sets. On the contrary we ought never to refuse a subject in whom we recognize virtue and zeal, and the capacity necessary to labour for the salvation of souls. I would receive without delay a person possessing these qualifications even had she not wherewith to pay the bridge toll.*

When M. de Neuville was told that a postulant had applied who had no means, he asked: "Has she the requisite qualities? Do you know if she loves her vocation?" If these questions could be answered in the affirmative, he at once sent her dowry.† I have much devotion to those Saints who

*In those days ten centimes had to be paid for crossing the bridge near the Mother House.

excelled in a love of their vocation, to St Francis Borgia, St Francis Xavier, and St Teresa, who delighted in renewing constantly their Vows, and who never thought of the glorious day of their profession without transports of joy and gratitude.

One of the most learned theologians draws this distinction between a religious who loves her vocation, who upholds it, who causes it to be esteemed, and one who does not love it and by her conduct mars the beauty of the House of God: "The one," he says, "is a queen, the other a slave; the one may be compared to the sun the other to the moon." A forcible illustration truly!

Our first religious were animated, I can assure you, with the highest love for their vocation. Their delight was to study the Rule and Observances, to converse about the missions, sing the Litany of our Lady, to obey at the first sign. Their religious spirit was much admired by Father Barthés of the Society of Jesus, who was an occasional witness of it.

I should indeed need commiseration had we slothful, indifferent religious here, persons interested in nothing, without affection for anyone, upon whom no impression can be made, who, so to speak, are pillars of salt! Such souls do not condemn the things of earth and they think but little of those of Heaven. This kind of tepidity is one of the most difficult to overcome, and it must be acknowledged that those whom it has attacked are most frequently vanquished in the hour of combat.

Sad examples of this occurred during the revolution of 1793, but there were likewise instances of all that fervent courageous religious are capable of. On one occasion soldiers went to take possession of a convent and carry the religious off to prison. They were in the church at prayer. The soldiers

told the Superior to order them to leave the chapel, but she calmly replied, "It is not time yet; in thirteen minutes the meditation will be finished." These fierce cruel men astounded, waited quietly. All the communities in the town were desired to assemble together in one house, and there these holy religious continued their exercises of piety to prepare themselves for the death which was awaiting them. When the hour of recreation came, they spent it joyously, and when the signal for recalling the presence of God was given, instantly all were silent, raising their hearts to God to offer Him the sacrifice of their lives. Their keepers, touched by so much virtue, procured them the means of receiving the Sacrament of Penance, and against the orders of the Government often brought comforts for the sick. What heroism did not that sad period witness! Rather than be unfaithful to their Vows almost all the religious women chose to suffer imprisonment, exile or be beheaded.

Were we placed in similar circumstances, should we act as did these great souls? We ought to hope, it is true, for the needful grace for the hour of trial, but can we expect that Our Lord will grant this indispensable grace to a tepid indifferent religious who has no love for her vocation? This is a thought which should make us reflect and tremble. Let us love our state, love it in spite of all the difficulties and troubles we shall have to endure. May neither fire nor sword ever cause us to be unfaithful to our Vows. Let us drink in the spirit of our Institute so that it may absorb our whole being; let us be always united amongst ourselves, and should terrible moments come upon us Our Lord will assist us to suffer and die, and even if only eight fervent religious of the Congregation were left they would

be sufficient to propagate it and cause it to flourish anew.

Oh, how many sorrows we meet with in our missions! thorns strew our path, but do not lose courage when God does not grant you success. St James the Apostle made but few converts in the whole of Spain. Souls that have strayed from the path of virtue are converted with difficulty, and often when we expect to reap an abundant harvest we find all has failed. Do not heed those who come and say to you: "What are you about; are we not in the midst of persecution? You will lose your lives!" Answer in the words of St Basil: "So much the better, our exile will be shortened; a Daughter of the Good Shepherd is not afraid of death."

Prepare for suffering wherever you go. The fury of the evil one is directed against Religious of the Good Shepherd because they snatch souls from hell. Nevertheless, if we always have crosses you see that we are never without graces, and I venture to say that they are greater than our crosses. God always triumphs whatever be the efforts of hell. Our Institute is not the work of man: it is a divine work, and the adorable designs of Providence will infallibly be carried out.

Our vocation requires humility and self-annihilation. Each one should consider herself the last in the community. In this way we gain souls to God, but our works must have the impress of the Cross, without it they would be neither Catholic nor Apostolic.

I could not describe to you all the sufferings and trials some of our Houses undergo which seem the most flourishing. M. Olier used to say: "Remember that if Our Lord loves you, He will humble you, for generally the greater the blessings He bestows

on a work undertaken in His Name, the more He humbles the workman." We must then love to be humbled, and we must love our abjection.

We spoke to you to-day,* at recreation, of the Institute of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, pointing out the difference that exists between that holy Society, which I revere, and our little Congregation. The object these religious have in view is not only to give a first-rate education to young ladies, but to bring them up in piety and innocence; on this account they often come in contact with persons of rank and are obliged to a certain appearance of opulence, though they are themselves very, very poor. Our object is to attract penitents and receive, as far as possible, all who present themselves, refusing none however poor they may be. And truly one would say that there is a special Providence for Houses of the Good Shepherd. They often seem without resources, yet they have never wanted what was necessary. God has always helped them, in one way or another, as our yearly community letters testify. An instance of this happened in our monastery of Metz.† The great draught had made vegetables and every kind of food very dear. With the little money they possessed the Superior had bought provisions for some days. Their destitution was so great that when a letter arrived from Angers they had not wherewith to pay the postage. In this extremity the good Superior went and threw herself at the feet of our Lady, and full of confidence in her power resolved to try and borrow a thousand francs. A letter for this purpose was begun at once; before it was finished the Superior was summoned to the parlour to find a visitor who had come to

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give her five hundred francs. The evening of that same day another person brought five hundred more, and the next day M. Challandon,* their Superior, visited the community, giving them another five hundred which had been entrusted to him for this purpose. As you may imagine the letter requesting the loan was of course destroyed. A thousand times has Our Lord come to our aid, my children, in similar ways.

MAXIM

In our vocation we must prepare for trials and even love them, they are a presage of the consolation to follow. If you possessed riches and every means to undertake great works, should subjects not love their vocation, I assure you these riches will perish with them.

*Later Bishop of Belley, afterwards Archbishop of Aix.

CHAPTER VIII

On Holy Communion

“Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened,
and I will refresh you.”

NO one knows better than we do, my dear daughters, who enjoy the happiness of living in religion, no one knows by experience better than we the truth of these admirable words of Our Saviour: *Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.**

It is above all in Holy Communion that the consoling truth contained in these encouraging words is verified. In this great mystery our souls find the strength and courage of which we stand in so great need. It may well be said that Our Lord's loving invitation to draw nigh to Him is really an invitation to approach that Table of heavenly delights, to which through the goodness of God we are frequently called; but it also is an invitation to the foot of the altar, to meditation, to our office, to the Sacrament of Penance. His call makes itself heard during our work, filling us with a special sense of His Presence in the midst of our fatigues, assisting us and reanimating our courage. Whenever we feel moved to have recourse to Him, He is at our side, ready to help us with His grace, to strengthen and bless us.

Is it not true then when you feel overwhelmed, alone, Our Divine Saviour says to you: *Come*

*St Matt. xi, 28.

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unto Me, and I will refresh you. You go to Him, and calm and peace are restored to your soul.

But to-day we wish to speak to you of Holy Communion only, for it is in this Holy Sacrament that we truly find God and really enjoy His Divine Presence. "There are certain persons," writes St John Chrysostom, "who say, would it were granted me to see Our Lord clothed in His mortality, as they unto whom was given the happiness of conversing with Him on earth. I should be filled with rapture in seeing His countenance, His bearing, His garments, even the sandals on His feet. . . . And I tell you it is this very same God who permits us not only to see Him, but also to touch Him, to receive Him within us."*

God could not do more for us and we could not desire more. Yet do we know how to profit by so many graces? Let us reflect a little upon ourselves. When Our Lord was on earth, it was sufficient to touch His garments to be healed of any infirmity whatever, and we, for many years have had the most intimate relations with Him; we touch not only His garment but frequently press Him to our hearts. So intimately does He unite Himself to us, that, according to His own testimony, He makes but one with us, yet we are not cured of our spiritual maladies. We receive into our hearts Jesus Christ, Who is the Light of the World, the God of strength and power, yet we frequently remain in spiritual darkness, we are as weak as before. We receive within our hearts this God Whose Heart is an ocean of charity and our hearts continue as cold as ice. Whence comes this strange fact? I will tell you. It is because we are secretly attached to our faults, because we cherish, almost

* Office of Corpus Christi.

unconsciously, certain weaknesses, certain imperfections. This is the reason that our prayers, our Communions are not fervent and that we remain so miserable and imperfect. Banish quickly from your heart all that displeases your Divine Spouse and you will feel His grace descending in great abundance upon you, your interior state will be manifested to you more clearly, special strength will be granted you to resist your faults and overcome yourself; little by little you will be completely transformed. Above all, if you desire to obtain from your intimate relations with Our Lord rich treasures of grace, endeavour to approach the Holy Table with great confidence, joined to a deep sense of your misery and needs, looking upon yourselves as lacking all things. Draw near to Our Lord thoroughly penetrated with your nothingness, your weakness, your poverty, and you may hope all things from His goodness and mercy. Do not forget that Jesus Christ is no less powerful, no less generous in the Blessed Sacrament than He was during His mortal career, when He lived on earth and conversed with men.

We are told in Holy Scripture that *He went about doing good*. Every step of this Adorable Saviour was marked by some great act of beneficence. The leper of the Gospel had only to say to Him with faith and humility, *Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean*, and his leprosy was instantly cured. He did not need to be urged, a word from the poor sufferer was sufficient to excite His compassion: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean," and his leprosy was instantly cured. How great should be our confidence, when the signal favour is granted to us of possessing within us this Divine Physician of souls, this

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Master from Whom every blessing proceeds. Oh! speak to Him then of your poverty, speak to Him of your infirmities. Beg Him to cure you. "The just man falls often," says the wise man, how then will it be with us who are so weak, so inconstant in good? Our daily faults and imperfections form a sort of leprosy in our souls, which is the cause of our continual need of drawing near to Our Saviour to be healed and purified. Do not fear to approach Him since He Himself calls you. He is the God of all consolation and He loves to see that we confide entirely in His divine goodness.

Yes, my dear daughters, have great love for Holy Communion. I know that you desire it, that you ask to receive it, that you hunger and thirst for it, and you are right, because at the Holy Table you will find strength, courage and light. Holy Communion will always be the peace, consolation and life of your souls. Since you have the happiness of being admitted so frequently to the Divine Banquet, approach it always in a spirit of love. Take care each day to prepare carefully and fervently for Communion and bring to it hearts pure from every stain. As our First Communion usually influences in a great degree one's whole after life, it is also true that the progress of a religious depends above all on her Communions; I speak of progress in virtue and presume that she brings the requisite dispositions to this holy action. But what will become of a religious who receives this divine Sacrament coldly, perhaps negligently, even with disgust? "A religious who at each Communion advances a step in virtue does not eat her bread in idleness," says Rodriguez, "nor does she eat it in vain, since by it she derives so great an advantage to her soul. But woe," he adds, "woe

to you who for so many years have been fed with this Heavenly Bread, and who eat it in idleness, without mortifying yourselves in anything, without overcoming yourselves, without correcting your faults, for you eat this Food only to your loss and prejudice. Oh! let it not be thus in future." I could not tell you, my dear daughters, how grieved I should be if I knew that there were religious here who approached the Holy Table without love or fervour, but only through routine or some human motive.

A religious who is not submissive to her Superiors, by her bad example renders herself little worthy of being fed by this Bread of Life, this Heavenly Manna, this pure Body of Our Lord, Who descends upon the altar through obedience, Whose life was one act of obedience and Who was obedient, as St Paul says, unto death, even the death of the Cross.

Do not neglect your meditation before Mass on days on which you communicate, nor come in when it has begun.

Oh, I can never impress this too often upon you: always approach the Holy Table with a heart well prepared. Watch carefully over yourselves, be obedient, devout and charitable and guard against all wilful faults, for as St Thomas says: "A vessel destined for anything very precious should be spotless." But we must never miss Holy Communion because of the dryness we may experience in it. One Communion lost through our own fault will deprive us of many graces, and for its omission we shall probably incur punishment in Purgatory. Those who are faithful in receiving Holy Communion and are careful in their preparation for it usually become very holy; on the contrary, a tepid

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languishing life is generally the result of keeping at a distance from the Holy Table.

I am glad to be able to say that I see you all have a good will to correct your faults. By the grace of God no bad example is given, and the Rule is faithfully observed. As long as this continues, you may be sure, my dear daughters, that you habitually possess the right dispositions in which to receive Holy Communion. "Holy Communion," says Father Judde, "is a powerful means of rising out of the state of tepidity, when one is tepid in good faith; that is, when one would wish not to be so, that it is merely a weakness of the mind."

I have several times told you and I repeat it again: "Holy Communion should be our food, our consolation, our one desire. The soul that abstains from it, languishes, loses her vigour and the zeal proper to her vocation and ends by neglecting her gravest duties."

Two things keep us from Holy Communion: cowardice and a false conscience. Frequently we believe that a motive of humility, fear, or a desire to prepare better, prevents our approaching the Holy Table, whereas the real though secret cause is a want of courage in overcoming ourselves and in conquering certain inclinations which we ought to resist and destroy. Have you not remarked, that when you have given up the thought of going to Communion the next day, because of your so-called unworthiness, it has cost you but little to fail in certain matters which appear to you trifling? For instance, you more easily say a few words during silence, your meditation will not be made as fervently and you commit many other infidelities in your actions. You may be sure that ordinarily the inclination to approach the Holy Table less fre-

quently is a snare of the evil spirit. St Cyril says: "Take care that the devil does not hinder you from communicating by maliciously insinuating scruples into your mind, so that you may be deprived of this grace which is the fountain of life and sanctity. I conjure you not to refrain from participating in the Eucharist, which will preserve you, not only from death, but also from all kinds of infirmities. Our Lord comes to us to strengthen our piety, to heal our wounds, to raise us up when we have fallen."

The devil, our cruel enemy, takes pleasure in aiding us to form a false conscience and in troubling our peace of soul; he sometimes succeeds in making us believe that there is sin in everything, in order that, thus deluded, we may deprive ourselves of the happiness of participating in the Eucharistic Banquet, and so lose the precious graces which Our Lord distributes to souls that receive Him worthily. Take care not to become the sport of the spirit of darkness. I am sure that by God's special grace none of you are guilty of mortal sin.

This divine Sacrament is the joy, the glory, the support of every faithful soul and particularly of a Religious of the Good Shepherd. Living in a world thickly strewn with thorns and surrounded with difficulties of every kind, what would become of us if we had not the immense happiness of possessing the treasure of Holy Communion? Without alluding to many other trials, we often find ourselves in great troubles when there is a question of founding new Houses for our Institute. What difficulties and contradictions! The work is hardly begun sometimes before it encounters hindrances which nearly overthrow it. On these occasions, who does

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not see the need we have of recourse to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, to Our God, strong and all powerful, Who alone can disperse every obstacle?

A religious overwhelmed with work and suffering from spiritual dryness and darkness should communicate; a religious enriched with spiritual lights and enjoying God's consolations should communicate in order that the love of God may increase within her; a soul that is languid should communicate in order that she may become invigorated by the Holy Spirit. Perfect religious should approach this august Sacrament that they may maintain themselves in perfection and make further progress therein. Imperfect religious should communicate to obtain the perfection they need. Cardinal de Lugo says: "The Blessed Eucharist is termed the Bread of Angels, not that it is their food, but because we are transformed into angels when we receive it worthily."

If it be important that you should not have a false conscience, it is of equal consequence that you should have a delicate conscience. We have said that religious would probably go to Purgatory for losing Communion through their own fault, and I add, that those who by indulging their natural character cause others to commit faults and so lose Communion, will go there also and suffer doubly.

We must never offend anyone nor say anything likely to wound another. We must cordially help each other in our employments and never allow day after day to pass without speaking to each other. Were this to happen, how could we receive Holy Communion in peace, since we are told in the Holy Gospel: *If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath*

*anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother: and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift.**

Have a great horror of faults against charity, of petty detractions and tale-bearing, which are the cause of so much harm. I have always felt very much afraid of faults of this kind because of the unhappy consequences that may be their result. Avoid them with great care.

The time of all others in which we should be the most recollected is when Jesus Christ dwells within us after Holy Communion, for it is the moment when He bestows most favours upon us. Consequently, we recommend you to be very fervent in making your thanksgiving. "On leaving the Holy Table," says St John Chrysostom, "you should be strong as lions." You must render yourselves formidable to the evil one, concentrating your thoughts on Jesus Christ our Head and on His love for us.

The recollection prescribed by the Rule to be observed during the morning must be kept to faithfully, so that each one may continue her interior thanksgiving after meditation and Holy Communion, a thanksgiving which should be uninterrupted. The silence and the exercises of the afternoon should be a preparation for our next Communion; in a word the thought of this great action ought to be continually in our minds. Rodriguez cites the example of a great servant of God who said that he did not know what it was to make an immediate preparation for Holy Communion, that for his part he knew but one preparation, which was to keep oneself always as well prepared as possible. You also must neglect nothing in order

*St Matt. v, 23-24.

to approach worthily to this Sacrament of love.

You know the meaning of these three words which alone might suffice as an habitual subject for our meditations—Eucharist, Host, Communion. *Eucharist* signifies thanksgiving, praise, gratitude; it places before us the sentiments with which we should be animated before and after Holy Communion.

Host is another word for *Victim*. When we have the happiness of communicating, we receive the Sacred Host, that is to say, the Sacred Victim, the Body of Jesus Christ sacrificed for us.

The holy Doctors write that when we receive Jesus Christ we are united as closely to Him as two pieces of wax when melted into one, the word Communion signifying “union with.” What a mystery, my dear daughters, what a grace, what a favour! . . . I cannot understand how a religious can live without uniting herself frequently with her heavenly Spouse; it should be her life, her one consolation, her rest in all her labours. St Teresa always increased the number of her Communions in times of trouble. Mother de Blonay, Superior of the Convent of the Visitation at Annecy, seeing that her approaching death caused her probable successor in office much sorrow, proposed to transmit to her a legacy which she herself had received from St Francis de Sales. This legacy consisted of the privilege of communicating on Tuesdays and Saturdays, in addition to the Communions permitted by Rule. In granting this favour the Saint had said to her: “As a heavier, more painful burden is laid upon you in becoming Superior, it is fitting that you should seek and procure for yourself more special assistance from Our Lord.” The

new Superior accepted the precious legacy and profited by it for the rest of her life.

We have so many important enterprises in hand that we have need to nourish and fortify ourselves frequently with this Divine Manna. Later, when you are engaged still further in the works of the Institute, and the devil wages war against you with still greater fury (for you must expect this), Holy Communion will be your support, and all the good you do will be the effect solely of the strength of God living in you. Be sure that in proportion to your labours for God's glory, and to your earnest endeavour to bring about this great end, will be the malignant and multiplied efforts of hell against you. It will be then above all that you will feel the need of drawing near to our Eucharistic Lord, but I recommend, I entreat you to always do so with great fervour and great love.

However, though it be very true that you stand in extreme need of being nourished with the Bread of the strong, you must not importune or insist too much in the matter, as it is always best to abide by what obedience directs on the point. My advice is that each of you should communicate as often as the Rule prescribes. Do not be like the two Carmelites who pretended that they could not live unless they communicated daily. St Teresa, who was told of this, knew that these poor religious far from being led by the Holy Spirit, were deceived by their self-love. She thought it well to go to their convent in order to cure them of their delusion. To begin with, she allowed them to receive Holy Communion as it was Sunday, but when she perceived they were preparing to do so again next day, she reminded them that this was not in conformity with their Rule. Then followed tears and fainting

fits. They would die, they said, if deprived of this divine nourishment. St Teresa seeing, more and more clearly, that all this was an effect of the imagination and a diabolical delusion, continued firm, and meanwhile the religious did not die. The next day and for several succeeding ones the same desire, the same refusal, and the same scenes of fainting and tears. Finally, however, the poor sisters, who had really good intentions, submitted completely to obedience, recognizing their delusion and allowing themselves to be governed and directed, were entirely cured of their fainting attacks and followed the customs of their community like all the others.

The holy Doctors say: "The Blessed Eucharist may be considered as the pledge of the future glory promised to the Saints and reserved for all just souls. For the faithful soul that is nourished with the Bread of Heaven, this Sacrament is a title that will obtain mercy for her on the day of judgement and cause her to be admitted amongst the citizens of heaven."

We would urge you, my dear daughters, frequently to ask Our Lord for the favour of receiving the support of Holy Communion at the end of your life. When I have seen our dear sisters receive Holy Viaticum, that is, their provision for the last journey and expire soon after, I have always felt a sort of envy, desiring the same happiness for myself. What a great grace it is, how happy the souls who are the recipients of it. We may say that they bear Jesus Christ with them, and that He is their Companion in their passage from time to eternity. Let us pray that God may deign to grant us all this great favour. Meanwhile, that we may not be unworthy of it we must receive this ineffable Sacra-

ment fervently and devoutly. I ardently desire that the following words of Holy Scripture may with truth be applied some day to each one of us: *Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord*, that is, blessed are they who enter eternity fortified with the Sacred Body of Our Lord, *for they rest from their labours*.*

MAXIM

As you do not withdraw from the light of the lamp when you cannot see well, so you must not remain from Holy Communion because you are imperfect.

*Apoc. xiv, 13.

CHAPTER IX

Eve of the Feast of Corpus Christi

TO-MORROW, my dear daughters, is the Feast of Corpus Christi, and although the solemn celebration is deferred until Sunday, we must not forget that the Thursday after Trinity Sunday is really the day consecrated by the Church to renew the memory of the institution of the Blessed Eucharist, as Thursday was the day upon which our loving Redeemer instituted this Divine Sacrament.

I know that many of you grieve that this beautiful Feast is transferred, our Italian and German sisters in particular, who have seen it celebrated in their own country on the Thursday with the greatest solemnity; it is only in France that the Feast is thus transferred to the Sunday. I own that every year I also feel pained, but we must remember, my dear daughters, that as it is ordained thus by Holy Church it should not be a source of trouble to us. The arrangement is one of the articles in what is called the *Concordat*, which was granted as more or less of a necessity to preserve our holy Religion from greater evils at a time when it was going through severe dangers in France. The holy Church, our guide, who is ever led by the spirit of God, deemed this concession expedient, but it does not prevent the faithful from regarding the Thursday as the proper day for the Feast of Corpus Christi.

To-morrow then we shall commemorate it in our

Office and gain its indulgences, and I comfort myself with the hope that later we shall be permitted the solemn celebration in our convents of this great Feast, on the day upon which it really falls. But understand clearly that rather than murmur in a spirit of insubordination against the decision of the Church on the point, it would be a thousand times preferable to relinquish the Thursday celebration of the Feast. We may, besides, take this view of the subject; perhaps Our Lord in permitting it to be transferred to the Sunday has wished to excite the whole Christian people to celebrate with greater pomp, deeper joy and greater dignity, the solemnity of the day dedicated to God, adding still greater splendour to the beauty of the Feast itself. Moreover, what day is there that cannot be said to be dedicated to the Blessed Sacrament?

The sacrifices of the old Law were already a foreshadowing of it. But since the promulgation of the Law of Grace, the memory of its institution is daily renewed in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and will be renewed until the end of time. St John Chrysostom writes: "All that is most to be revered, all that is most holy and most solemn in whatever feast we celebrate, is contained in the Holy Eucharist, in the Divine Sacrifice."

The Church, which we may say celebrates this august mystery throughout the year, did not institute a special feast for it until the thirteenth century, when she established one expressly to condemn, by this public testimony of our faith, the impiety of heretics who were then more violent than ever in endeavouring to insult this Sacrament of love. She wished that the faithful should make known to the whole world, the glory and grace they enjoy in the possession of the veritable Body

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and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the mystical veil of the Sacrament. And further, she desired that they should thus excite one another to love their Saviour more and more. A further object of the Church was to offer, by means of this exceptionally solemn celebration, public reparation to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, for all the irreverences, offences, ingratitude and contempt He endures from heretics and bad Christians.

For this reason devout souls, who are careful to conform themselves to the mind of the Church, make it a duty during this precious octave to frequently visit this Divine Saviour on His altar throne, and find great consolation in so doing. They endeavour to redouble their love for Him, and pray with renewed fervour, wishing to become mediators with His Heart for all sinful souls. Oh, my dear daughters, as religious we should above all others enter into these sentiments, and it is for us to console Our Lord for all the outrages committed against Him in this Sacrament of His love, offering Him our whole-hearted fervour, acts of reparation, our regular observances, our religious spirit, and all the virtues which should adorn our Institute.

We must accustom ourselves to enter in to the spirit of the Church at all times, never neglecting to unite ourselves with her, above all on great feasts. The true spirit of the Feast of Corpus Christi is one of joy, gratitude, love and reparation. You should, therefore, spend this octave as devoutly as possible, and prepare to receive the Blessed Sacrament with all possible splendour when the procession comes to our Chapel and grounds on Sunday. I wish flowers to be scattered before Our Lord and strewn on all sides; the altar adorned with our

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richest and most beautiful ornaments, and that your songs of praise should proclaim your affectionate devotedness and tender love for Jesus Christ. "Let the praise be loud and high" we are told in the Church's Liturgy of the day, "Sweet and reverent be the joy felt to-day in every heart." Enter into the meaning of these words of the Church, unite yourselves with her, and endeavour to be fervent religious by honouring the Blessed Sacrament more and more. You cannot carry too far the worship of adoration, love and respect, which is due to this adorable Sacrament.

During these blessed days endeavour to keep yourselves in great recollection. Clothe yourself with the spirit of Jesus Christ, imitate His life of silence, sacrifice, zeal, obedience, poverty and humility. Spend your hour of adoration as devoutly as possible. In order to please God avoid making the least noise, and take care not to cause any distraction to those of your sisters who feel the need of a closer union with God by entering deeper into the delights of prayer.

You are devoted to the works of the Congregation and you wish that they should increase rapidly, but if a rapid growth is good, a solid growth is better. And where shall we find the strength needful to make our works solid and lasting? We shall find it at the foot of the altar, by our petitions to Our Lord in the quiet of meditation, in the shadow of the Tree of Life. It is there that we must strengthen ourselves. The mistresses of the classes in particular should often have recourse to this source of life. We have moments of terrible trial to go through sometimes.

Remember, my dear daughters, that our Institute came into existence through the virtue of the

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Holy Eucharist, and that it owes its development to the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph, consequently we must seek from Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, from our Blessed Lady and St Joseph, the courage and zeal we need for the conquest of souls.

I take this opportunity to remark that you should not ordinarily prefer to pray before a statue of the Blessed Virgin rather than before the Blessed Sacrament. This might happen specially with young novices, who, almost unconsciously to themselves, are inclined to this kind of devotion, which is, however, in no way pleasing to our heavenly Mother. Rather let your devotion to Mary be based on your devotion to the Blessed Eucharist. I say the same regarding devotion to St Joseph and the other saints. You should attend to the difference existing between the figure and the reality, and remember that, as you no doubt believe by faith, the Son of God dwells substantially and really, as true God and true Man, in the Sacrament of the altar, whilst on the contrary, Mary, Joseph and the other saints, are not really present in the statues and pictures which represent them. I need hardly remind you also that the nature of the prayer which we offer to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, asking graces from Him as the Supreme Giver of all good, differs from that which we address to the saints, supplicating them to be our intercessors with God to obtain the graces we desire. Nevertheless you should greatly reverence representations of the saints, they inspire us to invoke their protection, and this is so agreeable to God that He has vouchsafed to show His pleasure by working innumerable miracles.

It is certainly not my intention to deter you from this pious devotion. On the contrary, I pro-

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pose to make it more solid by impressing upon you a love for the Blessed Sacrament. At the feet of Jesus Christ, Whom you should strive to imitate, you will learn the true way of honouring the Blessed Virgin and St Joseph, to whom, as you know, He paid so much honour Himself.

Therefore, go frequently to pray before the holy monuments which we have erected, as a mark of our gratitude for the innumerable benefits we have received from Our Lord by the intercession of our true Superior, our true Mother, Mary, and of St Joseph, whom we have now elected as Superior and head administrator of the whole Congregation. You can never honour these glorious advocates as much as Our Lord Himself honoured them. Visit them, therefore, frequently, and rejoice to see them placed so that they preside over the community and never fail to offer them some token of love and respect when you pass them. The sight of a statue or holy picture filled St Teresa with transports of fervour, and she would have wished them to be placed everywhere. "What could we have more precious," she used to exclaim, "or more desirable to gaze upon than the beloved portraits of those whom we love so much! Oh, how greatly are heretics to be pitied who by their obstinacy deprive themselves of this consolation as well as of many others." When she travelled, the saint always carried with her amongst other holy images, a little statue of the Infant Jesus, and usually held it in her arms to keep herself and her companions in God's presence. Yet in her instructions to her daughters she said to them, "Be sure never to leave Our Lord to look upon His image, particularly after Holy Communion, for you can readily understand that if a dear friend

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were to visit you, it would be a great folly to leave her alone to go and hold converse with her portrait."

In Holy Communion Our Lord comes to speak to and instruct us, to really converse with us Himself. There is no happiness to be compared to this, and no consolation should be as dear to us as that of being with Him. "If we truly love Our Lord," says Father St Jure, "we shall love all that is His and particularly all that He loves." Nowhere, my dear daughters, can you receive better instruction than at the foot of the Tabernacle, where Our Lord will vary His lessons according to the needs of your soul. His goodness is infinite, and you will find Him ever the same to you. Pray to Him with confidence and with love; recollect that He Who desires to do you good holds in His hands the power of God.

You have seen the burning zeal for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls of the virtuous Superior of our Monastery at Oran, Mary of the Heart of Mary Borel.* In hearing her speak of her mission you must have perceived that, in spite of natural timidity, she rises superior to herself and surmounts all obstacles when there is question of doing good. After having edified us all she left yesterday begging us to ask your earnest prayers for the important affair which caused her sudden departure. She had taken steps to obtain an audience with her Imperial Majesty, Empress Eugénie,† and a telegram announced that she would be received to-day at eleven o'clock. Although very much pleased with the intelligence, her natural timidity caused her to be much agitated, and I could easily understand her feelings.

*Died at Oran 1866. †1856.

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But she took courage in the thought, that she might have an opportunity of obtaining resources with which to save souls, saying: " Even though I should only receive a small sum it will serve to feed a few penitents."

In all probability the audience will last hardly five minutes, and you may be sure she will not be allowed to remain alone with the Empress. Such are the great ones of this world. It does not require so much ceremony to obtain audience with our God. He is ever inviting us to go to Him, and we may converse with Him as long as we wish. Let us then address ourselves to Him on all occasions.

Let us expose our needs to Him with perfect confidence; let us ask His grace. He is an abyss of charity, and we shall always find in Him the assistance we may need, and also inexhaustible treasures of consolation. *Let us hope in the Lord, and never shall we be confounded.*

MAXIM

Never omit your Communions whatever may be the thoughts the devil puts into your mind. He well knows that it is the only food that strengthens you, and by deterring you from it he hopes to cause you to fall away little by little.

CHAPTER X

Before the Feast of Corpus Christi

THE Royal Prophet was overwhelmed with affliction, trials and sorrow when he wrote these words which we repeat very often during the octave of Corpus Christi: *The sparrow hath found herself a house and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young ones; Thy altars O Lord of Hosts** shall be my home and the place of my rest. Ought not this to be our language also, my dear daughters, in the midst of the labours we undertake, in the midst of the weariness and contradictions which we constantly experience? Oh, what need we have to rest in the Blessed Sacrament in order to obtain strength and courage! Persecuted by his enemies the Prophet's grief was profound in finding himself at a distance from the Tabernacle of the Lord, and he ardently desired to be once more near that holy dwelling. "My soul fainteth," he said, so great was his longing, and he continues: "the sparrow more fortunate than I am, finds a habitation where she may rest and the turtle-dove, after seeking hither and thither, chooses a place where to build her nest; and I, O my God, languish with the desire of drawing nigh to Thy House where I hope I may one day find my refuge and peace."

When David spoke thus, my dear daughters, there was but one tabernacle on earth, and what was that compared to the numerous tabernacles

*Ps. lxxxiii.

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we now possess? What did it contain? The Ark of the Covenant in which were the Tables of the Old Law given to Moses, a little of the Manna fallen in the desert, and the rod of Aaron which had flowered miraculously. How different to our tabernacles where God dwells truly and actually on this earth. Here is no longer the figure but the reality. What happiness should fill our hearts when we are privileged to kneel before the thrice-holy God, Who deigns to dwell so near to us. And when we enjoy the ineffable favour of receiving this loving and gracious God in Holy Communion, do not our hearts become so many living sanctuaries? Into how many beautiful tabernacles does not Our Lord enter on General Communion days? O my dear children, let us rejoice at the thought that on such occasions there are more than three hundred tabernacles amongst us. Legions of angels surround us and unite their adorations to ours. We are not capable of understanding what takes place during these precious moments. I urge upon you the importance of never omitting through discouragement or tepidity a single one of the Communions prescribed by Rule. When Our Lord is inundating the hearts of your sisters with His consolations and graces, would you voluntarily hold coldly aloof? To show ingratitude or even only indifference towards Him would be a very grave fault in us.

There are people who are filled with excessive fear when they approach the Holy Table. This great fear is not pleasing to God, who is much more pleased to see us come to Him with joy and with entire confidence in His infinite goodness. These troubles and fears are inspired by the evil one, who hopes thus to deprive us of the precious graces

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which belong to this Sacrament of love. Be on your guard against this snare, my dear daughters, and remember the words of St Paul: *Take unto you the armour of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day.** Reflect also on the following advice given by a learned and enlightened theologian: "Be not afraid when you approach this most sweet and consoling mystery, for fear banishes love. Do not fear God as a hard and cruel being; do not look upon Him as always holding in His hand the thunderbolts of His wrath. The Eucharist is the sweetest bond which can unite us to Him."

Souls possessed of good will who are faithful to their Communion usually become great saints. Yet we have known souls who, tried in a sensible manner by God, did not venture to approach the Divine Banquet, although they were not committing a single wilful fault. Then there are others so weak or so full of suffering that Holy Communion alone can sustain them. We should conclude from this, *Let not him that eateth despise him who eateth not, and he that eateth not let him not judge him that eateth.*† If you are lukewarm, my dear children, renew your fervour by receiving this Holy Sacrament. Ask the God of all mercy to renew and strengthen your souls. Present yourselves before Him penetrated with the sentiment of your misery and with an ardent desire to be cured of your spiritual infirmities. Has not Jesus Himself said: *Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.*‡ After such an invitation who could refuse to give themselves up to His love? And then, too, we have so many things to say to Him, so many secrets to communicate to Him. Let us go to Him, therefore, with confidence.

*Eph. vi, 13. †Rom. xiv, 3. ‡St Matt. xi, 28.

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Let us make Him the confidant of our hopes, our desires, our longings; let us seek from Him the strength we need for our days of trial. He will secretly strengthen us and pour out upon us in abundance ever new graces. He asks in return from each one of us a special tribute of love and gratitude. Let us offer Him this tribute by boundless devotedness and by constant fidelity in fulfilling our holy engagements.

MAXIM

I recommend to you an ardent devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, and with it the virtues of obedience and meekness. These are three wings which enable us to fly along the path of perfection.

CHAPTER XI

On the Feast of Corpus Christi

WE have reached the most precious time of the year, my dear daughters, the Feast of the Blessed Sacrament—that Feast of all feasts—that greatest of solemnities which sums up and recalls every other. The Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist is the dearest, the most consoling remembrance, the most sacred pledge of the merciful goodness and incomprehensible love of our adorable Saviour. We draw the light, strength and life of our souls from this Sacrament. It is the veritable treasure of the Church, and it is a treasure that belongs to us all. Were the Holy Eucharist to be taken from us, our souls would at once lose their vigour, we should languish and die.

Yes, the Blessed Sacrament is our life, it is a fountain of love. I know nothing more beautiful than the eighty-third Psalm, in which the Royal Prophet exclaims: *How lovely are Thy tabernacles O Lord of Hosts ! . . . Better is one day in Thy courts above thousands.* Truly, my dear daughters, the hours spent near the tabernacle are very sweet to our souls. They are the most precious moments of our life. No creature can possibly give us the consolation, peace and happiness which we find at the foot of the altar.

Our love for the Blessed Sacrament should be carried to the highest degree; the highest degree of love and adoration is the silence which prays and pours itself out in admiration before the grandeur of a hidden God. Therefore, during this octave par-

ticularly, the soul should be in a complete retreat, observing an interior and exterior silence, listening to the voice of her Spouse, making reparation to Him, desiring only to please Him, breathing but His love.

In our Institute there are three *Cenacles*. That of the *Church*, in which we find all our Customs, our religious ceremonies, our strength. That of *Communion* or the union of the soul with God by the reception of the Blessed Eucharist, and that of our *vocation* or the study of our vows, and of the duties of our calling. These are three special solitudes linked one with another, and the bond which unites them is the spirit of the Church. Act always in accordance with this spirit, entering into the sentiments it inspires. Therefore, be recollected during these holy days and deeply penetrated with love and gratitude towards Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament; meditate constantly on the excess of His tenderness for men, on the excellence and value of Communion, and on these admirable words addressed to us: *Come to Me all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you.**

Our Divine Lord has often made known His desire of being honoured and visited in the Blessed Sacrament, in order that He might satisfy His longing to bless us and overwhelm us with His graces. These are His words to St Gertrude: "My delight is to be with the children of men, and it was for this end that I instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the altar." One day whilst St Teresa was in prayer Our Lord appeared to her, and showing her a treasury of grace said: "Behold, my daughter, the graces men forfeit by keeping at a distance from Me." When the saint visited her monastery at

*St Matt. xi, 28.

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Avila, she felt ineffable consolation, because of the extraordinary devotion to the Blessed Sacrament which existed there amongst her daughters. One of their greatest pleasures was to be allowed to pursue their occupations in the ante-choir, and so be nearer to their Spouse. Owing to your busy life, my children, you cannot go and work in the ante-choir in joyful, peaceful recollection close to your God, but you also must endeavour with all your heart to love, honour and imitate Jesus Christ. This must be your chief exercise if you desire to attain sanctity, and at the same time help weak souls to do so too.

The Blessed Sacrament is the first and supreme object of our worship; but you must remember for your consolation that the worship of the Blessed Sacrament should be chiefly interior, that is to say, we must preserve in the depth of our hearts a constant and uninterrupted, profound adoration of this precious pledge of divine love. Whether in choir, in her cell, on a journey or in the midst of grave and important business, St Teresa was always united to God.

Although St Francis Xavier was ordinarily deprived of the consolation of possessing Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, when he was in the depths of India, do you suppose that he was not in continual adoration interiorly? On the contrary, it is related of him that, notwithstanding his numberless occupations, he was as recollected as a solitary living on a rock, always keeping God before His mind and seeing Him in everything.

This profound and continual adoration which you owe to God will cause you to look upon our Mother-House and each of our convents as so many temples where "all who live should bless

the Lord and proclaim His works." This spirit of adoration, and of zeal for the House of God, will animate you to contribute by your devotedness to the perfection of your monastery, in order that by it God's glory may always be more and more advanced therein, and that the consoling acknowledgement made to us lately by a man of the world might be repeated: "The work," he said, "to which you devote yourselves with so much charity and zeal reanimates and increases my faith."*

St Teresa says that the Church Militant should be one with the Church Triumphant; the one is plunged in the essence of the Divinity, the other united to the Blessed Sacrament. It is only by devotion to the Holy Eucharist and the practice of the interior life that we can fulfil our Vows and relieve our sisters who need assistance. If we cannot fly to help them in their combats, it is always in our power to aid them by prayer. For this reason I wish to inspire you with an ever-increasing devotion to the adorable Sacrament of the altar. It is also for this reason that I would constantly speak to you of this august Sacrament, which is the food of souls, the consolation of hearts. Jesus Christ is the only friend who never abandons anyone. He it is Who in our last moments comes to visit us on our bed of death. Let us, therefore, remain united with Him by prayer and Holy Communion. Let us go before the tabernacle and weep, not only for our own sins, but for those of the wandering sheep confided to our care. A House of the Congregation where this consoling devotion exists, where its members are faithful to the Observances and to charity, is a paradise on earth.

*The Attorney General. This passage is taken from an instruction of May 26, 1842.

St Teresa's foundations were very poor, but she always rejoiced and looked upon a House as well established, when in it she had erected an altar where the Blessed Sacrament could be reserved. She made known after her death, that Our Lord had given her a much greater reward for having increased the number of His tabernacles upon earth, than for all her penances and other good works. During one of her journeys, having heard of the death of a benefactor of the Order, she shed many tears on account of the fears she entertained regarding his salvation; but Jesus Christ appeared to her and told her not to be troubled, for although he, for whom she grieved, had lived as men of rank and position usually do in the midst of the world, yet He had shown him mercy because by his alms he had built a church for the Carmelite Religious.

The Count de Neuville, our founder, being one night in prayer, saw his father, who said to him: "I take delight in the church of the Good Shepherd which you have erected." Our church which you know was built for the repose of his soul.

Since, as we are told, St Teresa is placed in the rank of the Seraphim, not because of her great austerities, ecstasies and revelations, but rather on account of her great love for our Blessed Lord, and her zeal in founding convents where the Blessed Sacrament was reserved, what will not be the reward of Religious of the Good Shepherd, who have already founded so many convents?

No, my dear daughters, not one amongst you can be lost, unless she should unfortunately be unfaithful to grace. When I reflect upon the extent of Our Lord's love for us, I feel that we are most ungrateful in making so poor a return of love to Him; but it consoles me to think that His mercy is

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boundless. Let us love Him then in gratitude for His benefits; let us take to heart the interests of His glory, and in exchange He will ever overwhelm us with His blessings.

MAXIM

Lead a wholly interior life. Cut off all wandering thoughts and replace them by the interior spirit, love of the Blessed Sacrament, fervour, and in short by all the virtues that constitute a soul hidden in God.

CHAPTER XII

Three Inseparable Devotions

NEVER, my dear daughters, have we seen the month of Mary celebrated with greater fervour than this year. Never have the processions been made with more piety and zeal, and never have our establishments shown more ardour for virtue. Every day of this beautiful month ten of our penitents have received Holy Communion; the Magdalens have made retreats and acts of reparation; Our Lord has blessed the fervour of the community by sending the postulants we so earnestly desired.

There is no doubt that we cannot have too great a devotion to the Blessed Virgin, nor love her too much. Her help will never fail us and Our Lord is infinitely pleased to receive the humble prayers we present to Him through the hands of this good Mother. St Bernard assures us that a true servant of Mary can never perish. You who are so well instructed need not be told that the homage paid to Mary should not surpass, nor even equal, that which is due to her Divine Son who is King of Heaven and earth. But devotion to Our Lord Jesus Christ and devotion to Mary are intimately united. The more we love Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, the more we love the Blessed Virgin; and the more we love the Blessed Virgin, the more we love the Blessed Sacrament.

To speak to you of the Blessed Sacrament is to speak to you of all that is most sacred. The

Blessed Sacrament is our life; the Blessed Sacrament is our love; the Blessed Sacrament is the first object of our adoration. It is our consolation, our treasure. Often when we are in trouble and in difficulties men withdraw; they abandon us, leaving us to extricate ourselves from them as best we can. Sometimes they even load us with reproaches just when we are overwhelmed with crosses of every kind. But Our Lord hidden in the tabernacle never abandons us; He is there always awaiting us and ever ready to help us.

Have you not observed, my children, how we love the Blessed Sacrament when we are forsaken by creatures, and have you not experienced the ineffable consolation the soul enjoys at these moments, as if God wished to teach her to desire the cross in order to taste His consolations, and to make her understand that virtue is only perfected in suffering?

The Blessed Sacrament is the river upon which our Institute, like a ship, is borne swiftly along. Were it not for the Blessed Sacrament, never could it have made such rapid progress. We embarked upon our enterprise inspired by our Adorable Saviour; under His guidance and in His company we spend our days and march onwards to the attainment of sanctity and of an immortal crown of glory. I will say with the Royal Prophet: *Blessed is he whom thou hast chosen and taken to thee: he shall dwell in thy courts.** Yes, my dear daughters, this blessed abode where you possess the God of your hearts should be very dear to you. You live under His eyes, you enjoy His presence, you rest under His protection, you dwell under the same roof with Him; it is nearly Heaven upon earth.

* Ps. lxiv.

St Clare used to say that she was unable to understand how a religious could ever find life wearisome when she had the Blessed Sacrament in her convent. I must acknowledge that with the Blessed Sacrament in our chapel and a class of penitents, I have a foretaste of eternal happiness. I must own too that I cannot look without a sort of envy at the little lamp constantly burning before the Blessed Sacrament. I would like to be in its place remaining there day and night, consumed by love for Our Lord. Have you remarked that the oil of the lamp burning before the Holy of Holies is sweet and of a golden colour? How carefully was the sanctuary oil prepared in the monasteries of old! To St Euphrasia was confided the care of the sanctuary lamp, an honour granted because of her rank as princess.*

How many salutary reflections does not this lamp suggest to me! The little flame shedding its light and rising towards Heaven represents the zeal we should have to enlighten souls needing our guidance to pursue the right path, and above all the zeal with which we should burn to bring to God and to a life of virtue those who have gone astray. Sometimes when I see the little flame flickering and uncertain, it reminds me of the fears, doubts, weaknesses and troubles which at times cast us down, and which would completely dishearten us were it not for the divine help.

The oil which is consumed in keeping the lamp alight brings to my mind the charity and spirit of self-sacrifice with which we should be filled, that we may be ever prompt in immolating ourselves, even giving our lives, if needful, for the salvation of our neighbour.

*From Instruction given 1849.

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My heart is full of joy when a sanctuary lamp is lighted in a new church of the Congregation, or in some ancient monastery beaten by many a tempest, during long years used for profane purposes, but which we have the privilege of restoring to its original object. One of my greatest consolations is to have seen the lamp burning once more before Our Lord in the Abbey of St Florent.* Each time I visit our sisters in that dear House, my soul is inundated with the sweetest consolations when kneeling beneath that light. And how many other lamps have we not had the happiness of relighting!† Do you not rejoice greatly at this? I would impress upon you to be very grateful to God, redoubling your fervour in His service as a proof of your gratitude.

If ever you find certain days long and weary, seek refuge at once with Him whose word or glance suffices to dissipate the clouds of sadness and restore joy to your heart; go with confidence and lay your burden at His feet, confide to Him the bitterest trials of your heart, pour out your soul into His, all burning with love. Take up your dwelling in His Divine Heart, bury yourself there; you will find ineffable peace and receive more even than you expected to obtain.

Our Lord says to us, *Ask, and you shall receive*. Specially during these days you may ask, my dear daughters. Our Lord Jesus Christ opens His treasures to us; He is there ready to listen to you, to anticipate your desires, to provide for all your needs. Go to Him with your troubles, your weariness.

*The Convent of St Florent, near Saumur, founded July 21, 1835.

†Saint-Savinien at Sens, convent founded May 15, 1837. The Abbey of St Nicholas at Angers, where the first Mass was celebrated August 29, 1855.

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ness, your disappointments, your sorrows, and you will come away consoled and strengthened for the path you have still to travel.

When I began this conference, I said that the month of Mary which had just closed had been one of the most beautiful we had witnessed. In fact all that we had recommended to you was faithfully observed, and our exercises so faithfully performed, I have often felt almost in an ecstasy when listening to your pious hymns and to those of our good penitents. I am sure that by your prayers, your fervour, your spirit of obedience, you made yourselves worthy to obtain great graces for our dear Institute during this month. I even venture to say that you have offered a holy violence to the loving Hearts of Jesus and Mary in obtaining the graces we desire.

To-day I finished my letter to the Blessed Virgin asking for postulants. I wrote: "My loving and holy Mother send us chosen souls." I felt it impossible to use any other expression; even had I wished I could not have done so. In fact, chosen souls are the result of true vocations. To obtain what we ask in prayer we must have faith, therefore do not say, "*I hope* for a hundred postulants," but "*I am sure* that a hundred postulants will come to us." But you understand, my dear daughters, that I speak of subjects really called by God and capable of being some day of use to the Congregation.

The month of May should be a preparation for the month of June. Many feasts fall during these two months: the Ascension, Pentecost, the Feast of the Blessed Trinity, Corpus Christi and the Sacred Heart. Feasts succeed each other, each one bringing joy to our souls, reanimating them and

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filling them with devout sentiments. The feast of the Sacred Heart is in very truth the feast of love, because love springs from the heart. "Behold the Heart which has loved men so much and wishes to be loved in return," said Our Lord to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque, showing her His Divine Heart. "Behold the source of all blessings," adds the Church. "Draw water with joy from this fountain of the Saviour."

The present time is especially suited for prayer and recollection, it is one in which all graces can be obtained, and by the mistresses of the penitents above all. It is particularly during these days that we see the most hardened sinners converted and the greatest obstacles surmounted. We must celebrate this month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus with unequalled fervour. Two religious will be in retreat every day.* Let us imitate the dove which, with a plaintive sound, takes refuge in the depths of the rock from the-grasp of the vulture. This asylum is the Sacred Heart of Jesus; the vulture, the numerous troubles and temptations which beset us. Enkindle in your hearts a love for the Adorable Heart of Our Lord; ask Him for all you desire; remember that His Heart is an inextinguishable furnace of grace. If we were permitted to behold one single ray of this divine fire, the sun would lose its splendour and the fiercest flames would seem as ice compared to it. Offer a holy violence to the loving and generous Heart of Our Saviour, and infallibly you will be heard.

When you pray, think you are praying to your Judge, but at the same time address yourself to Him with confidence and filial love.

When our habits lose their whiteness, we plunge

*An exception for that year.

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them into water to cleanse them. In like manner, plunge your souls into the Sacred Heart of Jesus as into a spiritual fountain, and they will come forth purified and without spot.

Our Lord has been pleased to make known His desire that on the feast of His Sacred Heart, special acts of atonement and reparation for sin should be offered to Him. Do not fail to do this, my dear daughters; place in the holy sanctuary of this Blessed Heart, as a little treasure, the mortifications you have practised.

We shall look upon as foundresses of our various Houses those amongst you who, although always remaining here, will by your devout practices increase devotion to the Sacred Heart, and thus draw down special graces upon our rising foundations.*

Our Institute was really the first to pay public homage to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary. Our Venerable Founder wished us to wear a silver heart on our breast, as a distinctive mark of our consecration to these loving Hearts.

It has been observed that wherever heresy has arisen it has first attacked the worship of the Blessed Sacrament and devotion to our Blessed Lady; wishing to begin its work of destruction by closing these two sources of divine grace. And what efforts have been made by the powers of darkness to prevent the private and public worship devout souls desire to render to the Sacred Heart of Jesus! What obstacles, what difficulties! What mockery and sarcasm it has excited amongst Jansenists and amongst the impious! But all this could not prevent the devotion from spreading, almost instantaneously, throughout the entire world. It is as it

*Note of 1844.

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were the completion, the perfection of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, or rather the two devotions are so linked together that they cannot be separated; for whoever loves and honours Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of His love cannot fail also to love and honour His Heart, the seat of the great love shown us in the Blessed Sacrament. I will sum up as follows what I have been saying:

Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament,

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus,

Devotion to the Blessed Virgin,

are three inseparable devotions we should lovingly cultivate, and which will insure the perfection of the good works we have undertaken, as well as our eternal happiness.

MAXIM

We stand in need of many graces, let us endeavour to offer violence to Heaven to obtain them.

CHAPTER XIII
On Mental Prayer

MY dear daughters, have great zeal, great ardour for the salvation of souls, and to obtain this be devoted to prayer and Holy Communion, for where will you find the graces necessary to fulfil your mission, if not from the Author of grace Himself? The more a religious is animated by the spirit of her vocation, the greater is her love for meditation and prayer, in which she finds strength to labour efficaciously in the work of restoring souls to God.

Prayer should be our preparation for approaching the Sacrament of love, just as from it we ought to draw a spirit of prayer, by means of which we shall gain all the graces needful for our own sanctification, and for that of the souls committed to our care. Would it not be lamentable, if we who so particularly ought to apply ourselves to prayer, if we who have so great need to approach the source of grace, were to stand aloof because of temptations and troubles of mind? These trials are, on the contrary, an additional reason to cause us to draw near to our God, Who is the God of peace and consolation.

The evil one sees how to use his batteries to the best advantage. He knows that a religious without prayer has no longer strength to labour for the salvation of souls; therefore he adroitly endeavours to turn us from it. But we must not listen to him nor allow ourselves to be discouraged by his

malicious insinuations. Provided we do not deserve by our infidelities to be deprived of Our Lord's grace, we must not be alarmed by the distressing thoughts our enemy suggests. Ordinarily, we are freed from spiritual trials and fears only by great fidelity to prayer, and it is also this fidelity that renders us worthy to receive God's graces.

I earnestly recommend you never to omit your meditation when you are unable to make it with the community. Those, for example, who are employed in the classes should fix some other time and keep to it exactly. After twenty-five years spent in a class, your conscience should be able to bear testimony that you have never failed to make your meditations. I implore you, my dear daughters, apply yourselves earnestly to the interior life, the life hidden in God, to the spirit of prayer. In religion, specially in our holy Institute, there is much need to seek from our Divine Saviour the courage and zeal needful in working for the salvation of souls.

Perhaps some of you will say that you experience great difficulty in prayer and meditation, that as soon as you have placed yourselves in the presence of God, you are assailed by a multitude of distracting thoughts which so confuse and discourage you that meditation seems impossible. Then examine if this arises from not having prepared as you ought for this holy exercise, or from a want of fidelity to the recollection prescribed during the day; for you must remember that recollection facilitates prayer, and prayer facilitates recollection. Therefore observe your rule of silence perfectly in the hours in which it is prescribed. How can you expect to meditate well in the evening, if you have been talkative and dissipated all

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day? The assembly which we make beforehand should serve as a preparation; and when meditation is over, take care not to yield to dissipation. Do not forget that you have been in God's company, and thus keep your mind prepared for your next meditation.

Very often the difficulty that seems to meet us in meditation is a deceit of the evil one, who fears nothing so much as this communication between God and our souls. At other times it is a temptation arising from our indolence. We are singularly afraid of labour, particularly of labour of mind. Many would like to meditate without taking the trouble to recollect themselves, or were it to cost them no effort. If they encounter the slightest difficulty they think all is lost and that it is impossible to overcome the obstacles that present themselves. Yet whatever may be your trials, my dear daughters, you must never be disheartened, but raise your thoughts and eyes to God, placing all your confidence in Him, recalling the words of St Paul: *I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me.** Always preserve an earnest desire to make your meditation well and do not fear, for the Divine Master will assuredly strengthen you; confidence in Him is the true means of making rapid progress in prayer. If you are sometimes mute in God's presence, unable to speak to Him, it is, perhaps, owing to a want of filial confidence in Him. To keep your soul in silence before God in meditation may rightly be done, you have no need to speak—keep silence and let God speak. Oh! how beautiful is the prayer of a soul who in silence listens to God's voice. And it is to her that are applied these words: *Wake not My Beloved.* God

*Phil. iv, 13.

looks upon every soul that meditates as His Beloved; He speaks to her, listens to her and grants her prayers.

Every time that you go to prayer you should think that Our Lord Himself invites you and that He is ready to give you the lights and graces necessary to pray well. If you experience dryness and aridity, if you find it difficult to use your spiritual faculties, it may be a trial sent by God, so bear it patiently, remaining humbly at His feet, simply assuring Him that you only wish what is pleasing to Him. At other times this heaviness of mind, these difficulties may arise, as we have already said, from a want of preparation for this holy exercise, from your levity, from your habitual dissipation of mind, your immortification or from certain affections for creatures; in this case you must promptly apply a remedy to the evil, begging Our Lord to give you strength to remove the obstacles which prevent your union with Him in prayer. Above all remember that to fly humiliations, crosses and sufferings, is to fly from prayer.

When, therefore, it happens that you find yourself in this state of trouble and trial, you must seriously examine whether this spiritual indisposition does not point to a secret malady, from which you do not seek to be delivered. I do not speak here of grievous evils, but of certain miseries which are, as it were, part of our nature. Ask yourself if your pride is really conquered—your self-love wholly dead? Do you not still desire to be esteemed? Do you submit your judgement, as you ought, to the yoke of obedience? Do you fulfil your duties with fidelity and exactitude? Are your exercises of piety performed with attention and in a spirit of faith? Do you not still easily commit slight

faults? Begin first of all by these important inquiries; examine into your state of soul. Have recourse to the Divine Physician of souls, entreating Him to make your spiritual infirmities known to you, and to grant you the grace to remedy them. Confide entirely in the power and goodness of God, and thus you will be enabled to fortify yourselves against negligence and tepidity, and unite yourselves entirely to Him in the fervour and recollection of meditation. A soul that is continually troubled and allows herself to be distracted by innumerable apprehensions, will make no progress in prayer. Darkness gradually envelops her mind, grace penetrates with difficulty, and she becomes, as it were, almost powerless to make any effort for good.

Remember also that where there is no humility there is no spirit of prayer. Pride, according to Holy Scripture, estranges us from God. *The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds.* The rich he hath sent empty away.†* Therefore, if you wish to meditate well, be humble and carefully avoid dissipation. These are two most essential points for you and for all. Prayer is founded on recollection and humility, just as recollection and humility are sustained by prayer.

God, says St Teresa, only bestows His favours on a soul when she humbles herself and applies herself to recollection, considering herself as nothing. This great saint, raised to the highest degree of contemplation, possessed deep humility, proportionate to the great favours bestowed on her by God. By the light she received in prayer, her smallest imperfections were clear to her, so that she believed she was always accumulating in-

* Eccclus xxxv, 21.

† St Luke i, 51.

gratitude upon ingratitude, sin upon sin, and she complained to Our Lord that He punished her infidelities only by new graces. It is true, however, that during more than fifteen years she suffered from such desolation in prayer that it would, she said, have cost her less to go to martyrdom than to recollect herself for meditation. She found the time of prayer so long that she often shook the hour-glass beside her. Sometimes she found herself, instead of praying, counting the panes of glass in the windows, and examining the tiles on the chapel floor, and worse than all this, the devil persuaded her that she was too great a sinner to meditate, and that it was sufficient for her to recite the office and pray vocally. So when the hour for meditation arrived, she sometimes went and hid herself at the bottom of the garden, to thus escape from Our Lord, yet feeling withal great sorrow at being at a distance from the Beloved of her soul. She finally spoke to her confessor of the temptation, who pointed out to her the snare which the spirit of evil had laid for her ruin. She listened to his holy counsels and resolved never to abandon the exercise of meditation, but to be faithful to it till death at any cost. In times of dryness she often said to God: "Lord, the more Thou hidest Thyself from me, the more will I seek Thee; the more Thou dost fly from me, the more will I hasten after Thee." Sometimes she had recourse to a book and found relief.

You must do likewise, my dear daughters; the more Our Lord appears to retire from you, the more should you seek Him with affectionate perseverance, without yielding to negligence or sleep, but making holy aspirations from your heart as our *Spiritual Directory* suggests, following the attraction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, making use

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also of the good books and of the excellent methods taught you. Moreover, you will find by experience that we only learn to meditate well by meditating. For this reason when the disciples of St John of the Cross requested him to instruct them how to meditate, he usually replied: "Meditate. Go and make a meditation." As for myself, I, too, feel inclined to say the same when I am questioned on the point.

Prayer is a private audience granted to us by God in which He manifests Himself to us to shower His graces upon us; but believe me, my dear daughters, no one can initiate you into this secret communing of the soul with God, no one can teach you this secret converse of the creature with its Creator. To you it belongs to beg God with all earnestness that He would teach you to converse with Him, and it is to you to strive to make yourselves worthy to receive this grace. Prepare yourself constantly for prayer by great fidelity to your duties, then in all simplicity present yourself before our Divine Saviour. Hearken to His voice when He speaks to your heart and when He tells you to correct certain faults or suggests certain sacrifices. Ask His pardon for your faults, thank Him for His innumerable benefits, beg new graces for yourself, for your neighbour, for your sisters labouring in our missions. Exercise your understanding, memory and will, as much as possible, and above all excite in your heart sentiments of love, gratitude and generosity. In a word, your prayer should be a prayer of zeal, of abnegation and of sacrifice; a prayer as fervent and persevering when God leaves you in dryness, as when He consoles you with His ineffable spiritual consolations. Finally, your prayer should be what may be called an Apostolic prayer, animated not only with a great

desire to please God and glorify Him by your service, but also by a longing to bring the whole world to His love and service, even at the cost of your life.

The holy King David says in one of his Psalms that he soars as an eagle above all the goods and honours of this world, because they are but smoke. Who is there amongst you that does not realize this truth, however little she may love prayer? For what profit should we draw from meditation if it did not enlighten us to see, more and more clearly, that our hearts should be fixed on God alone? The days of the just should be filled with good works and if this is to be so with us, our meditations should not be made indolently, tepidly, coldly and without good resolutions.

When you are all assembled together in recollection and meditation, I seem to see, as it were, a fountain playing whose waters flowing on all sides refresh your souls, more or less, according to each one's recollection and particular disposition. Let your dispositions be such that these precious waters of grace may flow abundantly upon your souls and become a vast treasure, from which you may draw to reanimate in yourselves a spirit of holiness and zeal, suitable to the sublime vocation to which God has called you.

It is in prayer that we find courage to support the humiliations, the opprobrium, the anguish, the sufferings which we encounter in the discharge of our duties. If there is any good in us, we must recognize it as the fruit of prayer, whence we derive every spiritual grace. Without an interior spirit, without prayer, the labours and fatigues we undertake are useless, in fact we see that no fruit results. Never, my dear daughters, will you labour effica-

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ciously for the salvation of souls, if you have not first sought in prayer and silence the lights which are necessary for this end. Religious animated by the spirit of God effect many more conversions than those who are only endowed with great talents, and who speak well and fluently.

Prayer helps us in forming a right judgement and in determining our course according to the rules of a wise prudence. A Religious of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, however young she may be, should earnestly devote herself to prayer, in order to acquire the virtues and qualities which form a wise and prudent woman. Though a religious be naturally impetuous and thoughtless, if she apply herself to prayer she will become staid, thoughtful and calm. Finally, prayer is the efficacious means of acquiring perfection; hence we see that all the saints began their career of sanctity, by applying themselves to this holy exercise of communion with God.

The seraph of Carmel speaking of prayer makes this charming comparison. Our soul, she says, is like a small field that is cultivated, and which needs to be continually watered in order that its plants of virtue may prosper and increase, so that the soul may later gather beautiful flowers and fruit therefrom. Now you know that it is more or less trouble to water a field. In like manner, meditation is made with more or less facility, it requires more or less trouble; but when a soul has been faithful to this exercise, when she no longer refuses God anything, she no sooner presents herself before Him in prayer, than she naturally finds herself recollected and this without effort on her side, and Heaven showers its abundant graces upon her. Our Lord loves to reveal Himself to such souls,

as He did to His happy disciples on Thabor, without cloud or shadow. He causes a bright light to shine before their eyes and pours into their hearts a torrent of love and consolation. He leads them, so to speak, to the summit of a mountain, separating them from creatures and raising them above human affections. There, alone with them in this dear solitude, He permits them to enjoy the sweetness of His presence and discovers to them rays of His ravishing beauty, so that the time of prayer seems all too short, and they willingly exclaim with St Peter: *Lord, it is good for us to be here; let us make three tabernacles here.**

And where in fact, my dear daughters, did the saints imbibe the sweet sentiments which inflamed them with love? They drew them from meditation. St Peter of Alcantara was so inflamed with this divine fire in prayer that, on one occasion, he plunged himself into freezing water to temper the heat which consumed him. St Aloysius Gonzaga was so ravished with love when praying, that his countenance appeared illuminated and his heart throbbed with such violence, that it seemed as if his breast could not contain it.

After the example of the saints, love to listen to God's voice, and make it your delight to converse with Him in the recollection of prayer. Let this holy exercise be the occupation dearest to your heart and you will then become like the evergreen tree mentioned in Holy Scripture, which *brings forth fruit in due season*. Unceasingly watered by streams of grace the little garden of your soul will be verdant and adorned with flowers; the germs of good desires will thrive therein, and holy virtues spring forth which will bear abundant fruit.

*St Luke ix, 33.

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Observe that these fruits are the result of prayer well made, and if you have great desires for virtue and perfection you may hope that yours is such. But if you make no progress in virtue, if you are cowardly and indifferent in the accomplishment of your duties, there are assuredly some grave defects in your prayer, since it fails to produce the fruit which should spring from it. In this case rouse yourself at once, that you may not become a withered plant upon which the dew of heaven makes no impression. The heart of a religious who does not meditate or who is careless in meditation, is in the language of Holy Scripture "a broken cistern" which cannot hold the waters of grace.

You know, my dear daughters, that you ought to follow in the footsteps of Mary, our incomparable model. Now the heart of the divine Mother was a sanctuary of prayer, a perpetual altar of sacrifice on which the incense of prayer burnt unceasingly. She was continually adoring and thanking God. In like manner prayer should be your habitual occupation. Whatever may be your exterior employments your soul should be always absorbed in adoring, thanking, blessing and loving God. Your heart is consecrated to God in a very special manner and consequently the virtues which shone in Mary should be found reflected as perfectly as possible in your soul. Your life should be as was hers, one of prayer, a life hidden in God. Thus you will have the happiness of being her beloved daughters; she will watch over you with the incomparable tenderness of her maternal heart, and she will lead you by the hand beyond the tomb.

MAXIM

When your heart is filled with God alone, my dear daughters, your meditation will be more pure, your prayer more fervent; the less of the creature, the more of the Creator.

CHAPTER XIV

Preparation for the Great or Annual Retreat

WHEN the Apostles returned from their missions they gathered round Our Lord and the Divine Master said to them: *Come apart into a desert place and rest awhile*.^{*} We may address these words to you, for you also have laboured much.

One day, being transported with love for Our Lord, St Teresa did not fear to say to Him: "I know well, Lord, that there are souls who serve Thee better than I do, but I do not hesitate to assert that no one loves Thee better. The others with greater talents speak more eloquently of Thee, perform greater works for Thy glory I admit, and I must bear this, but never can I consent that any one should love Thee better." We, of course, would not venture to speak to Our Lord with the liberty which was permissible in a great saint; but in another sense, whilst referring all the glory to God we can, perhaps, affirm that amongst Religious Orders of women it would be difficult to find an Institute that labours more than ours, and is more active in works of zeal for God's glory and the salvation of souls.

Well then, *Come and rest awhile*; I know that prayer, meditation and Holy Communion are rest to you, but there is another repose which is both very desirable and very salutary, that of retreat.

^{*} St Mark vi, 31.

I observe, my dear daughters, that before thinking of it for yourselves, you have taken care that your children of the classes should enjoy this blessed and needful repose, and I see in this a proof that you are true mothers, guided by a spirit of faith and love. Persevere in these sentiments; never begrudge your life of labour; endure fatigue and weariness a little longer, the time will come when you will be amply rewarded.

Entering as you are upon this time of rest, we would engage you to endeavour to gather fresh strength, so that you may take up your work again with renewed vigour. This is what the good Master desired when He spoke to His Apostles these words which to-day He addresses to you: *Come apart into a desert place and rest awhile*. Observe that He does not say rest a year, a month, but rest awhile. "Come and rest awhile." And you also, my dear daughters, to whom I apply these words, rest awhile to acquire new strength spiritually, because labours await you. During these days gather round your Divine Saviour like the happy Apostles, recount to Him all you have done until the present time and place before Him your projects for the future. If you have had the happiness of gaining any victories, lay at His feet the flags thus wrested from the enemy. Bury your faults, infidelities and miseries, in the abyss of His infinite mercy, taking up your abode wholly in His Adorable Heart. Cast yourselves into this beloved Heart confidently as into the pool of Bethsaida; you will be cleansed from all stain of sin and cured of your spiritual infirmities. You know what attracted the sick to the miraculous pool mentioned in the Gospel. They went to it full of infirmities and returned perfectly cured. They went at the appointed

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time with an earnest desire to regain their health; they plunged into its waters and therein were freed from all infirmity. This, my dear daughters, is what should take place in your regard during this retreat. All our spiritual maladies will disappear; all our sins will be pardoned; new graces will be poured out upon us, and if we correspond faithfully to God's inspirations we shall see how marvellous will be His goodness to us.

The great annual retreat is necessary for us, an indispensable duty. Prescribed in the Constitutions of all Religious Orders, in our Congregation it is the title and subject of our twelfth Constitution, which fixes, moreover, eighteen other days of retreat, distributed during various times of the year; three days before the feast of the Presentation to prepare us for the renewal of our holy Vows; three days before the feast of Christmas to awaken our faith and render us less unworthy to receive our new born Saviour; three days before the feast of Pentecost to unite us with the holy apostles and disciples in the Cenacle, praying and preparing ourselves like them to receive the Holy Spirit; three days before the feast of the Holy Heart of Mary, to which our Venerable Father Eudes specially dedicated our Congregation; and finally the six days of Holy Week, a week we should spend in profound recollection and meditation on the great mysteries of the Passion and Death of our Divine Redeemer. The exercises of preparation for death lasting from Ash Wednesday until the following Friday are days which should be passed in perfect recollection.

The manner of making these retreats depends, as you know, on circumstances, on our numbers, and how far you can be freed from your occupa-

tions. Preached retreats made in common are very useful as a source of general edification. Private retreats are also strongly recommended by masters of spiritual life.

Here, in the Mother-House, we enjoy the happiness of having a public retreat every year, and we are fortunately able to follow its exercises during the eight days it lasts. Our German sisters who have had a retreat preached to them in their own language will not follow this one, as it is not customary to make the complete spiritual exercises twice in the year. Our English and Irish sisters who have also had their retreat, will not assist at it either. They will replace our sisters in the classes and different employments, that they, in turn, may be free to make their retreat.*

It is evident, my dear daughters, that this retreat is the principal one in the year. Consequently the various other retreats relate to and depend upon it, and are, so to say, but a commemoration of the great retreat. This gives us to understand the importance of preparing for it in advance by special prayers and a lively desire to profit by it.

Whether the retreat be public or private, we ought to choose some suitable solitude there to dwell in spirit with Our Saviour. Each one may choose the place to which her devotion most attracts her: the desert, Mount Thabor, the grotto of Gethsemane, the Garden of Olives, Calvary, the Sepulchre, the holy Tabernacle, etc. The latter is oftenest preferred. When a soul has chosen one of these solitudes, she should remain there, make it the place of her delight, keeping Our Lord com-

*This paragraph is taken from a conference of Dec. 1, 1865, a year when the general retreat had been deferred till this time. It began the evening of this day.

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pany, watching Him, listening to Him and speaking to Him.

When in retreat we ought to reflect deeply on the end to which we should aspire; our common end as Christians; our special end as religious. We must put our finger on this fundamental point in our meditations, then consider what has retarded us on our road to this end, or what has been any hindrance to our progress. We shall find that this obstacle exists either within us or in creatures around us. When we clearly recognize this, we must direct all our efforts against it that it may be promptly remedied, and on this point our resolutions should be framed.

We have said that retreat is a time of rest. Oh yes! We have seen it is a repose which our Divine Master calls us to enjoy in His company. But it is also true that, in this dear solitude, we must prepare the soil of our souls to receive the seed of the good works which we shall have to perform for our own salvation and that of our neighbour. Therefore, we may say that it is a time of spiritual labour which we have to undertake yearly for our soul's cultivation. I would like you to understand thoroughly, my dear daughters, the comparison I am making use of in saying that during retreat we are required to prepare the soil of our souls to receive the seed of good works, because you will then understand what you are called to do during the retreat, after it and always.

A field where wheat is sown is frequently overgrown with weeds, which have taken more or less deep root. The first thing the owner of the field has to do is to root up these weeds, which would choke the growth of the good seed. This is the first preparatory labour. When the weeds have been taken

up, they are burnt, the more securely to destroy them, and that the ashes which are excellent for the soil may be spread on the field and so produce a good crop.

Does not this seem to you, my dear daughters, a striking image of how we should act during these holy exercises, our first object being to destroy all the faults which over-run our souls destroying the germs of virtue? Silence, mortification, fidelity to all that is prescribed, a review of the faults committed during the year, holy absolution received with sentiments of extraordinary devotion and contrition, this it is that serves to purify and clear the field of our souls, that fertilizes and prepares it to receive the good seed and produce eminent virtues.

Another precaution which a wise agriculturist would certainly not forget is to change the kind of seed or procure fresh, taking care that it be of good quality and quite ready to be put into the earth. He would endeavour to obtain the very best, even if it were to come from other countries. In short, his object would be to procure excellent seed, such as would yield a good return; for a rich harvest depends assuredly on the soil being well prepared and on the quality of the seed sown. For us the instructions, the specially chosen meditations, are the good seed, and the fruit of which will depend on our comprehension and appreciation of them, and our application of them to our needs, but above all on the excellence of our preparation and the disposition of our souls.

After the sowing time comes rain, then heat, that the earth may bring forth the fruit which the hand of the Creator has already sown in it. This is what takes place in the order of nature. In the

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spiritual order Our Lord's grace gives strength and fruitfulness to our souls. Grace works diligently in our souls effecting great things, but it requires our co-operation; without this the source of all blessings is closed, and no virtue can grow within us.

This labour in the order of nature is renewed yearly, my dear children, and even several times each year, according to the different harvests desired. It is precisely the same as regards spiritual labour. Thus we make a complete course of spiritual exercises and several other retreats during the year, following in this an order similar to that of the natural world. Sin having vitiated our souls as it vitiated nature, it has left in them the germs of evil inclinations which it should be our constant endeavour to uproot, sowing good seed in their place.

After the seed has been sown, a good farmer does not lose sight of the field, he does not let it alone, so to say. He waters, weeds and hoes it carefully, otherwise he would find that his trouble had been thrown away. If all that was needful to prepare the ground had been well attended to and at the proper time this fresh labour is fruitful and crowned with success. Otherwise he will water and weed and toil in vain. His labour will avail him nothing if he had not sown and taken care that the seed was good. From this we see that the fruit of the year's labour depends entirely on the autumn's work in preparing the soil and the seed.

By this comparison I wish to animate you to every effort, to prepare yourselves well for the holy exercises of the retreat. During this precious time sow good seed in your hearts and let other hands also cast good seed therein. But do not be satisfied with this alone. Remember you must cultivate the

garden of your soul after the retreat and during the whole year. Then you will be sure of an abundant harvest at the end of your life, which is the reaping time, and you will go to rest for ever from your labours in the bosom of the Heavenly Father.

It is a mistake, my dear daughters, to wish to sow every kind of seed in your field. Choose that best suited to its soil and devote yourself to its cultivation, for otherwise you will have no definite aim and you will run the risk of reaping no harvest. A retreat may be compared to a pathway planted with flowers on every side. In walking along it, we do not gather all the flowers we see, but only those that suit our purpose best, of which we make a bouquet to take away with us. A retreat may also be compared to an arsenal, where each one goes to provide himself only with arms suitable to his size and strength.

If you profit much by this retreat, even the grace attached to Holy Communion may become more efficacious in your regard. By means of frequent Communion you will become more intimately united to Jesus Christ; you will place your resolutions in His Sacred Heart; you will love Him ever more and more, and you will be faithful to Him, I hope, till your last sigh. May God grant you this grace which I earnestly beg for you.

Extract from an Instruction on the Annual Retreat

Our preached retreats impart to us a thorough knowledge of our obligations. The holy discourses delivered during it bring the great truths of salvation vividly before our eyes; they raise our souls

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and animate them to make rapid progress in the path of perfection. I have seen sisters completely changed after following the exercises of a retreat, and they continued ever after to make progress in virtue.

We had not the happiness of preached retreats at Tours, for the simple reason that the great Revolution was but just terminated, the clergy were few in number and the Society of Jesus was hardly re-established. Our first care at Angers was to ask the Jesuit Fathers at Laval to come and give the retreat to the community and to the classes.

Since the establishment of these Reverend Fathers in Angers they have always preached our retreats and been our extraordinary confessors. Fathers Barthès, Gloriot, Fouillot, Chaignon and other eminent members of the Society have assured me that the spirit of union and zeal which reigns in the Congregation is one of the fruits of this first spiritual direction. You know, my dear daughters, that the book of the Exercises of St Ignatius has made more saints than it contains letters.

One of my consolations is that we were able to render some little service to these good Fathers upon their arrival in Angers. Notwithstanding our poverty, we still find means of giving them pleasure from time to time.

MAXIM

To the interior soul, to the soul living alone and hidden in God may be applied these words: *She will be the friend of the Lord.*

CHAPTER XV

The Eve of the Great Retreat

AS *the hart panteth after the fountains of water,** so do you, my beloved daughters, greatly desire the retreat that your souls may be strengthened. This gives me reason to think that you will derive great profit from it, for Our Lord takes pleasure in granting the prayer of souls of good will and in bringing about the accomplishment of all their holy desires. I must tell you that for my part I have, perhaps, never before felt so impelled to urge you to use every means to make these holy exercises in the most perfect dispositions, that is with the dispositions you would wish to be found in at the hour of your death.

Perhaps this retreat will be the last for several amongst us, but even if we have the prospect of many more years it is only an additional inducement to make it as perfectly as possible. You know well that if your life be prolonged, the combat is prolonged also, that your strength constantly diminishes, and that we must renew it if we wish to avoid the risk of being overcome. Besides, whatever may be its length, our life is in truth but a moment, or rather, compared to eternity, we may say it has not the duration of a moment and that it truly passes like a shadow. We are journeying towards our end with appalling swiftness, and it is not in our power to slacken our pace for an instant. With the thought that we are on the border of the

*Ps. xli, 2.

tomb, let us hasten to profit of the time granted us by God's mercy.

Many of our beloved sisters, both here as well as in the Foundations, have already been taken from us by death, and we must expect that others will follow them during the coming year. The greater number of these dear sisters, although they may all be said to have been edifying, experienced anguish at the supreme moment. Notwithstanding their great confidence in God and the holy lives they had led, they were seized with fear in this dread hour, and as such may be our experience also we cannot prepare too carefully for our last passage.

Retreat is the best preparation for death. During this time particularly, we are called upon to think seriously of our last end and to put the affairs of our soul in order. We cannot but acknowledge that God showers His graces upon us, which is the more reason for maintaining ourselves in great fervour and profound humility. How terrible would be our state were God to abandon us for a single instant! If He were to call us to account for what we owe Him from the first moment of our lives to the present, where should we be? Yet we shall certainly some day have to render Him such an account. We shall find ourselves alone with Him with our poor little actions, which will all be examined in detail.

There are some persons who, not content with the confessions already made and the absolution received, wish to repeat their confessions. They fear they have not been understood, that they have not said all, nor given such and such an explanation, that perfect contrition has been wanting. When an enlightened confessor tells you to be at

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peace, you should believe him and rest satisfied. Scruples have the effect of narrowing the soul and destroying its happiness. Why are you always anxious, always tormenting yourselves? Why leave the confessional more troubled than when you entered it? Instead of the Sacrament imparting peace to their souls, some seem to derive from it only trouble, sadness and anxiety. As for you, your souls should be filled with joy and gratitude when you leave the confessional.

Avoid, my dear daughters, direction prolonged beyond your needs, into which many faults ordinarily creep. Do not forget that confession is not a conversation, but an accusation of our own sins. Do you wish for a means that will enable you to be perfectly at peace concerning this act, one of the most important of your life? Then accustom yourself to be simple, straightforward, clear and accurate when you make your confessions. Never speak of others, but only of yourself; be most careful not to wound the beautiful virtue of charity at the very moment in which you are accusing yourself in order to obtain God's pardon for your faults.

St Chantal, who frequently gave this advice to her daughters, used to cite the example of a religious, who having failed in charity in the sacred tribunal, suffered such remorse that she spoke of it to her Superior and could only regain peace by retracting to the confessor what she had said, as in consequence of her exaggerated statements he had conceived an unfavourable opinion of the community to which this religious belonged. Remember then to speak only of your sins in confession, and avoid getting your conscience into a state of confusion.

The devil is very artful, he may ensnare you

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even in the holiest of places, in the most sacred of moments. May this never happen in this retreat nor at any other time. Try to make each confession as if it were your last and you were opening the book of your conscience in the presence of and before the eyes of God.

At the head of the resolutions you will form during the retreat I would ask you to write: "Either overcome myself or die." I would like you to be always cheerful and affable. You see that I am not sad at recreation, and you may sometimes think me even a little childish with the novices, but this does not form part of my confessions: I have no scruple whatever on the point. *Rejoice in the Lord always*, says St Paul.* Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Ghost which the wicked never taste. Let this holy joy of the children of God dwell in your hearts. Enter into retreat with recollection and joy, remain in it with recollection and joy, and you will return to your occupations with recollection and joy. Melancholy, taciturn, sour or hard virtue—one only in name—is not inspired by the spirit of God, nor does it become a Christian soul, much less that of a Religious of the Good Shepherd.

Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, whatsoever lovely, whatsoever of good fame, if there be any virtue, if any praise of discipline, think on these things.† Such are St Paul's words, and I on my part tell you, my dear daughters, to frame your resolutions exactly according to the instruction given here by the holy Apostle. Those called by their vocation to win souls to God should be *holy*, there should be a certain *dignity* in their man-

* Phil. iv, 4. † Phil. iv, 8.

ner ; they should be *affable* with every one ; they should be the *good odour* of Jesus Christ to inspire others with a love of virtue. In order to be worthy of the Master their conduct and actions must be irreproachable. Do not forget the simple yet strong words with which St Paul sets forth the characteristics of true and solid piety. Religious who practise virtue truly gain souls more easily. You must all be such and endeavour during this retreat to form yourselves still more to solid virtue. The more you purify your heart, the greater will be the peace and joy which will always fill your soul. And thus you will honour God more, give greater edification to your neighbour, greater consolation to my heart and add fresh lustre to our Congregation.

With all the fervour of my heart I implore for you from God that holy peace of soul which is the mark of the elect.

May this blessed peace possess you in this life and reign in you throughout all eternity.

“ Go, my people, withdraw into your houses, close your doors and keep yourselves hidden for a time.”

MAXIM

Without prayer, without an interior spirit, our labours are useless and to our sorrow we find that we make no progress.

CHAPTER XVI

Before the Feast of the Presentation

AS we have said to you, my dear daughters, you are about to enter into retreat, to prepare for the beautiful feast of the Presentation, and in order to dispose your hearts for the Renewal of your holy Vows. You are about to present your Vows to the Blessed Virgin, imploring her to be their safeguard and depository. How think you will Mary act? She will watch over them to present them on the Day of Judgement to her beloved Son, begging Him to give you a great reward if you have been faithful to them. Not in trembling, not with regret will you fulfil this duty, but as brave soldiers who fearlessly and with loyal hearts renew with gladness their oath of fidelity to their sovereign. You will come forward nobly and with courage to renew, in God's presence, your oath of inalterable fidelity—you who are the soldiers of the Lord, His chosen company forming His body-guard, the privileged ones, brought up and trained in the shadow of the sanctuary.

But, my dear daughters, you are far more than soldiers of Jesus Christ, you are His chosen spouses, who in order to be more pleasing, more like to your Divine Spouse, have willed to unite yourselves intimately with Him by the holy Vows of poverty, chastity, obedience and of charity. Say often with the Royal Prophet: *I will go into Thy house, O Lord, with burnt offerings: I will pay my vows*

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*which my lips have uttered.** Your Vows are the holocausts which you should offer daily to the Lord. Live in such manner that you may be able also to say with David that you have carefully purified your heart from all attachment to sin.

By choosing poverty you have renounced not only the possession of the goods of this world, but even the desire of them.

Embracing chastity you have bound yourself to lead on earth a life similar to that of the angels in Heaven.

By your Vow of obedience you have consecrated to God your whole will, so that it may be no longer yours but entirely His. You have resolved to imitate your Divine Master, more particularly, in His submission to His Heavenly Father in the garden of Olives and on Calvary. You have laid your liberty at the foot of the altar. Which of you would wish to take back what you have thus given to God? Who would ever dare to say: "I am weary of this life, I wish to be free, I renounce the merit of the sacrifice which I made."

O my beloved daughters, ponder deeply on the sublimity of our sacrifice in consecrating ourselves, by a fourth Vow, to the work of saving souls. This sacrifice raises us to the dignity of co-operators in the work of God's mercy. In many Religious Orders, poverty, chastity and obedience are the only Vows, but with us these three Vows are hardly more than a means of reaching our end; the fulfilment of the fourth Vow, by which we consecrate ourselves to the salvation in our neighbour. This Vow requires that we live in so great holiness that the souls we guide may be attracted by the brightness of our virtues. Let us accustom our-

*Ps. lxxv, 13.

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selves to keep our fourth Vow in view of all that we do, for this Vow it is that keeps us and renders our least actions meritorious.

Our principal end and object, therefore, is charity, that charity which should lead us to follow in the footsteps of the Divine Shepherd and go in search of the poor sheep, who, having strayed from the fold of Jesus Christ are become the outcasts of the world. A priest said to us lately in his sermon: "The world loves sin, but hates the sinner; it despises, abandons, and is merciless towards the poor souls of whose ruin it has been the cause. Only religion opens its arms to the sinners."

Our holy Constitutions begin and end by speaking of charity. Our vocation is a vocation of zeal, an apostolate of charity. If by the grace of God we are faithful to our Vows, to our exercises of piety, we can entertain a well-grounded hope of salvation.

It is terrible to think that, unhappily, religious may be lost; there are some who will be. St John Chrysostom says on this subject: "I know that a great number of religious are saved, but I also know that some will be lost." Only too many are lost of religious who, fervent at first, fall off later, and continue unfaithful to the end; those will be lost who bring forth no fruit, and will, as barren trees, be finally cut down.

A traitor was found amongst the twelve chosen Apostles who formed the sacred college. Our Lord, in His goodness, warned His disciples that one of them would betray Him, and you know how troubled they all were, asking anxiously, "Is it I, Lord?" I repeat it, my dear daughters, I tremble when I think of the evils that one unfaithful member may bring about. Religious, who have been the light and oracle of their Company, whose works

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held a first place, yet have betrayed the Society, which before they had loved and served. Scandals such as these always begin by some infraction of the Vows; it is rare that a soul which has begun to be unfaithful, does not fall away entirely when it encounters even the smallest tests to its constancy; just as it is equally true that a soul faithful in little things is found faithful on greater occasions. My dearest daughters, let each one of you ask herself: Is it possible that I should ever betray my Lord? Is it possible that I should ever deserve to be driven far from Him, punished eternally because of my abuse of the many graces He unceasingly bestows on me?

Oh! how the devil rejoices when, notwithstanding the precautions which the Rule ensures, notwithstanding the means of perfection given to a religious, he succeeds in drawing her to himself, causing her first to become negligent in her duties, and then completely enveloping her in his toils. How terrible will be the punishment of this unhappy soul! What torments she will endure in hell! She will fall into an abyss all the deeper, because of the high degree of glory God had destined for her, but which she renounced. The brighter the heavenly crown prepared for her, the blacker the darkness which will surround her. Oh, my dear daughters, let us hope that no one amongst us will be condemned to curse God in hell, where her sufferings would be increased a hundredfold by the thought that, whilst she is lost, she who was called by her vocation to save so many souls, numbers of them by their sincere repentance and change of life corresponded to the grace which she failed to profit by. And let us bear well in mind that anyone may incur this misfortune, even for

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miserable caprices, for trifles, from a want of a religious spirit, of a spirit of sacrifice, for being unwilling to suffer in any way, for not having corrected in time small faults which, little by little, became great and led to eternal ruin.

The Renewal of Vows should carry with it the perfect renovation of our interior. Sound your hearts and see if anything exists there displeasing to God and which would lead to your ruin. Endeavour from time to time to seriously consider these words: *Man knoweth not if he be worthy of love or hatred*, and *the habit does not make the religious*. All the exercises of piety, all the practices of the Rule, will not sanctify a religious if she only performs them exteriorly. She must put her Vows into practice, she must secure her salvation by means of mortification, self-abnegation and perfect obedience. She must carefully watch over her heart and make it a solitude like the holy tabernacle, the door of which is always closed.

A wall of enclosure surrounds our grounds separating us from the world and speaking to us of recollection. The veil we wear also reminds us that our eyes should observe enclosure, even our habit is a kind of enclosure. Were we to walk in our religious dress in public, we would be laughed at and thought mad. How much more reason there is to ridicule and regard as fools religious who keep no guard over their senses and heart, permitting their minds to wander at large, endeavouring to attract attention, anxiously trying to find out all that is going on, and occupying themselves with what does not concern them in the least.

“The practice of the greatest saints,” says the author of *The Imitation of Christ*, “is to serve God in recollection. In silence and in retreat the devout

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soul finds its profit and discovers the mysteries of the Holy Scriptures."

So great are the advantages that may accrue to a soul from the Renewal that no words can express them. Use every means in your power to reach the degree of perfection to which God calls you, and specially labour for this end during the three days that precede the renewal of our holy Vows.

Imitate Mary, our model, who in the early dawn of her life withdrew into solitude and was wholly recollected in her God. What a beautiful example our beloved Mother here gives us! The Presentation in the Temple was nothing else but her first public consecration to the Lord. She was, we may say, the first Religious, and she has given us a most perfect example for imitation. The feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin was very wisely assigned to us for the yearly Renewal of our Vows, since we are thus reminded that we must copy her admirable example. Prepare yourselves then earnestly to celebrate this glorious day; prepare yourselves for it by a faithful observance of interior solitude, sacrificing all natural satisfactions, even such as are legitimate. Thus you will be intimately united with your God and you will see Him, so to say, face to face. Keep Our Lord company in the sacred solitude of the holy tabernacle, where He gives you the most marvellous example of humility, abasement, sacrifice and abnegation. He remains in the ciborium concealed from all. Impelled by His great charity, He comes forth sometimes to be borne to the sick for their consolation, and to hide Himself in the hearts of those who make it their happiness to live concealed in His Heart.

You also, my dear daughters, remain faithfully in your solitude, never abandon it but when obedi-

ence commands you for the good of your neighbour and the accomplishment of your duties, and even when you find yourselves in the midst of distracting occupations, you should preserve the spirit of recollection and the interior solitude of the heart.

Imitate Mary's life in the Temple. See how many virtues she practised in the silence of those sacred courts. How often did she not renew to the Lord her Vow and the sacrifice of herself. Go with joy then to the foot of the altar you likewise; renew your promises to God, draw still closer the bonds that unite you to Him. Your holy Vows are so many chains of love which unite you for ever to God. Bear this sweet yoke with happiness; frequently renew the consecration you have made of yourselves, uniting it to our Blessed Mother's. *Keep, therefore, the words of this covenant and fulfil them.**

MAXIM

Every moment of the day, whether on your awakening, at your meditation, in your various employments, a seed is sown for the harvest to be reaped in eternity, but all do not sow equally well and all will not reap the same harvest.

* Deut. xxix, 9.

CHAPTER XVII

Preparation for the Renewal of our Holy Vows

OUR holy Constitutions, my dear daughters, prescribe that every year on the feast of St Michael, the Superior shall remind the professed sisters to prepare for the Renewal of their holy Vows. You see the importance our holy Founders attached to this act, since they wished that two months before we should be reminded to prepare for it. In fact the salvation of a religious often depends on the Renewal of the Vows. If during the course of one or even several years, we have sustained spiritual losses, by the bad employment of the time given us by God for good works, the Renovation of Vows affords an opportunity of repairing the past and of resuming with fervour the holy exercises of religion.

It is true that we renew our Vows each month, but this renewal is not preceded by a complete course of spiritual exercises and three days private retreat, such as we make before the feast of the Presentation. This renewal is not made with the same solemnity: it is in a measure a secret act between God and ourselves, with no witness but God Himself. I do not say that it is not most important to make this renewal each time with great fervour, but that still holier dispositions should animate us for it on the feast of the Presentation. The solemnity which the Rule prescribes for the ceremony of Renewal on this day; the memory of the offering

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the Blessed Virgin made of herself in the Temple, with a devoted heart and perfect zeal for God's glory; the special graces of an interior renewal in the spirit of faith and charity which God deigns to grant us on this occasion, all invite us to perform this action with the holy dispositions recommended to us.

The chosen state to which we have been called possesses a certain sublimity which renders it more pleasing in the eyes of God than the common state of the faithful. Virginity permits the soul to belong wholly to God. Such is the teaching of the great Apostle.

It is a great glory for us, and we should recognize that this state is a gift of God's goodness in our regard. God has vouchsafed to choose us out of the multitude. He called us and said to us as formerly to Abraham: *Go out of thy country and from thy kindred and out of thy father's house, and come into the land which I shall show thee.** He then communicated to us light which penetrated the depth of our soul, causing it to see clearly the nothingness, the emptiness of worldly ties. He gave us an attraction for religious life and for works of the most sublime charity, and He accompanied this great favour of a religious vocation, with those special graces which conquer the obstacles frequently encountered by a soul who desires to follow God's call. The blessing of a vocation is, therefore, a gift from God, and to Him all the glory of it must be rendered. Let us unite in thanking Him for the marvels of grace which He has wrought in us.

Mary, who was always faithful to grace, humbles herself, and we who are so frequently unfaithful,

* Gen. xii, 1.

have we not much more reason to humble ourselves? Can we go through this ceremony, which brings our obligations before us, without being reminded of a multitude of infidelities? The Rule violated on many points, the Vows observed, it is true, but not with the promptitude and perfection required of us. It is, indeed, our duty to humble ourselves in order to obtain pardon from God for our faults.

The religious profession once undertaken binds irrevocably; therefore this renewal is not made for the purpose of contracting a new engagement. Our baptismal Vows are also renewed from time to time by devout souls, in order to recall the obligations they impose. By so doing they bind themselves anew, not undertaking new duties, but recalling those already existing, and reproaching themselves for not having always fulfilled them faithfully.

“ I confirm and renew with my whole heart,” are the words which we pronounce aloud on the feast of the Presentation, in union with Mary’s offering of herself. This ceremony does not consist simply of words; it is an act of the heart, sincere and truthful, an unreserved offering, by which we intend to confirm the obligations we contracted when we consecrated ourselves wholly to God. Therefore, my children, bring all the fervour of your soul to this act which is of so great service to you in recalling to your mind your obligations engraving the memory of them still deeper in your heart; so efficacious in confirming your good resolutions and in effacing, by the ardour of charity which animates it, a multitude of faults committed through thoughtlessness and inadvertence.

As regards the monthly renewal of our Vows, my

beloved daughters, though it is not made in public yet, remember Who it is that is present as witness of the act. What are the words of the formula assigned to us, of which we each have a copy written and signed by her own hand: *O Heavens, hearken to what I say, may the earth listen to the words of my mouth.** Is there need then to call the attention of Heaven in these terms to what we are about to do, as if Heaven would otherwise not observe the act? Does it not appear, first of all, unseemly to call on God to listen to us, as if our thoughts and most hidden intimate feelings were not always manifest to Him? Is it necessary that we should address Him in this emphatic manner, lest He would not attend to us? Certainly not. But our Founder used these words, borrowed from the Canticle of Moses, to excite in us, as Moses did in the people of Israel, a remembrance of the great benefits granted us by the Lord. In a word, we employ these terms to awaken our soul and fix its attention upon the great act it is about to perform. So important, so sublime is the act, that we invite the attention of Heaven and earth to it. We call Heaven to be witness to the words we are about to pronounce—that Heaven which ought to be the object of all our desires—we call upon earth to be witness, obliging it, as it were, to testify that we have neither desired, nor esteemed, any of the goods it offers to the votaries of the world, and that we accepted from it only what would procure the glory of its Creator. After invoking Heaven and earth as witnesses of our act, we go on to say: “It is to Thee, O Jesus my Saviour, that my heart speaks, though I am but dust and ashes”; words full of confidence

* Deut. xxxii.

and humility which are added to the preceding as a preface to the act of renewal.

However great in itself and pleasing to God the act of religious profession and consequently that of the renewal of vows, they would have little merit unless accompanied with profound humility. And, in fact, what have we offered to God, what do we offer to Him, that did not already belong to Him? What do we possess that we do not hold from His royal munificence? What have we of our own but misery and sin, the wretched inheritance of our first parents? Is it not becoming for us to recognize that we are but "dust and ashes"?

I should like you to form the habit of renewing your Vows each time you communicate. I believe this is the most efficacious means of preserving them pure and intact. Several saints made this a practice. St Arsenius renewed his daily and God made known to him that this was very pleasing to Him. Yearly, on the anniversary of his profession, he gathered his disciples about him, gladdened them with little gifts, and himself cooked the food for them that day.

When this fidelity to the Vows exists, religious are always happy and obedient; Superiors do not look on anything as belonging to themselves individually; the Vows of poverty and obedience are observed with the greatest exactitude. As for myself, I assure you, that I feel nothing in religion can belong to me more than to others, and that on the day I cease to be a Superior I shall not dispose of even a farthing.

The gift of a religious vocation is so great a blessing that while in this miserable life we can never really comprehend it. St John Chrysostom says that religious choose a manner of life which is

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truly heavenly, and in no way inferior even to the condition of the angels, for this reason, that amongst truly spiritual religious there reigns the same state of common joyfulness and general peace which the angels enjoy amongst themselves. And I am glad to be able to say, my dear daughters, as I look around, that a similar spirit seems to animate you also, and my heart rejoices at it. It ought to be thus, because as St Basil writes, by the virtue of obedience every individual will is contained and absorbed in the will of God; hence a community becomes an image of paradise and this is why you, my dear daughters, are so happy in your holy state. Rejoice then on the day of your profession, rejoice on the day of the Renewal of your Vows, rejoice every day, live joyfully, for the thought that the everlasting arms of God are around you is a source of the sweetest consolation.

Live joyfully with your God, love Him, think only of Him, seek nothing out of Him, occupy yourselves with Him alone, live, breathe for Him alone, let Him be your souls' atmosphere; give yourselves unreservedly to God, and the day will come when you will fall asleep on His Heart to awaken in His glory.

MAXIM

Let us renew ourselves in the spirit of our Vows, my dear daughters, in order that we may become worthy of the grace of this retreat. We know not whether we shall see another year, whether we are not even now on the borders of eternity.

CHAPTER XVIII

After a Retreat—On Humility

DURING the retreat, my beloved daughters, you have been fed with very delicate food, only the most exquisite nourishment has been offered to you. By this I mean that your souls have been fed with the sweetest and most precious consolations, without meeting with any hindrance or contradiction from anyone.

But your souls would suffer if this sweet nourishment were to continue always, just as it would not benefit your health if sweetmeats were always served you in the refectory instead of bread and other solid wholesome food.

Therefore return with ardour to your occupations, ready to endure all the weariness, all the troubles and humiliations that you will not fail to meet in the exercise of your duties. Were you to remain several days without drinking, you would be parched with fever and would suffer a burning thirst. In the same way, were you never contradicted, if you had only consolations and praise, the fever of your imperfections would soon consume you.

The principal fruit which I desire to see you derive from these holy exercises, and which we recommend you to carefully preserve, is the virtue of humility, which is sovereignly pleasing to Our Lord, being the basis of all our spiritual perfection. Use every means in your power that this great virtue should take deep root in your hearts, for without it

none other can exist, unless in your imagination. To try and practise virtue and attain perfection without beginning with humility is like endeavouring to construct an edifice in the air with no foundation. This is the reason why we unfortunately see but little solid virtue and so seldom find true piety. Often say: "My God, do not permit me to pass twenty-four hours without being humbled," and when a day has gone by without a humiliation, say with St Teresa: "My God, I have done nothing for Thee to-day, and my day is lost for eternity." Always follow in the path which leads to humiliation, and when you do not meet with any seek them for yourselves.

A person consecrated to God who does not humble herself, who does not become little in her own eyes, can never be solidly virtuous; she will always remain tepid and immersed in the misery of her imperfections. And why? Because Our Lord rejects the proud, and a wall of separation rises between His Divine Majesty and such souls, because the Lord refuses His grace to the proud, and on the contrary draws the humble to Himself, overwhelming them with blessings and favours.

Humility is the key which opens all the treasures of God, no one being dearer to Him than the humble soul entirely despoiled of self-love. Yet nothing is more rare than to find this virtue really existing in a soul, so opposite is it to our nature, in which pride is, so to say, engrained from its origin. It is this that caused to be written in Holy Scripture, *Pride is the beginning of all sin.**

Pride brought about the fall of the angels and of our first parents, and it is also pride which causes the loss of multitudes of Christians, as well as of

* Eccles x, 15.

religious, both men and women. This happens because pride is a subtle poison, which sometimes finds food even in the exercises of piety and in the apparent practice of virtue. Only too many deceive themselves on this point and blind on this all-important subject, finish by incurring terrible punishments.

Let him who thinketh himself to stand take heed lest he fall, says St Paul. Remember Solomon, Tertullian; could they have had better beginnings, yet what did they not become through pride?

Let us pray for humility, my dear daughters, let us ask it for ourselves, let us ask it for those who have the first offices in the community, for the devil knows so well how to take advantage of such positions. He uses all sorts of means to destroy through pride those, especially, who fill a somewhat important post. I entreat you to labour to become humble. Not by humiliations alone will you obtain humility; but above all by prayer and by attaining to self-knowledge. How it grieves me, my dear daughters, that we are not what we are thought to be. Were we worthy to be called to religious life, and now shall we allow ourselves to be attached to honours, to employments? The Gospel and Holy Scripture are full of terrible threats regarding pride. Here are some which particularly strike me: *God withdraws His grace from the proud and gives it to the humble. Pride raises a wall between the proud man and God. The prayer of the humble pierceth the clouds. God rejects that of the proud.* I assure you that I would much rather see devils walking about our enclosure than proud religious. We should at least recognize the devils as such.

Pride advances with great strides and makes

terrible havoc. You know how rapidly the dog-weed spreads all over the fields and gardens; it is the same with pride. Two or three proud religious in a community suffice to sow discord all around. *Amongst the proud there are always contentions.**

It is impossible to describe the extent to which pride blinds poor mortals, and at times renders them ridiculous. A certain person being corrected for a fault by his Superior replied, "I cover myself with the mantle of my humility," to which the Superior answered, "I think you can wear that mantle of yours always; even in midsummer you would not find it oppressive!"

I beg and conjure you, my dear daughters, labour to become humble. *Be not wise in thy own conceit, for pride precedes the ruin of a soul.†*

A hermit of the Thebaid, proud of his virtue, went one day to visit St Palemon. He was talking with him and his disciples of spiritual things, when perceiving a large fire which had been kindled for the use of the solitaries, he suddenly rose and said to Palemon: "If you and your disciples possess lively faith, give me a proof of it by walking barefooted on this brasier." The saint reproved him with much wisdom, warning him not to allow himself to be deceived by the enemy; but, carried away by presumption and pride, he sprang into the midst of the fire. Unhappily for him, God permitted the devil to preserve him unharmed, and the deluded soul, turning towards Palemon and his disciples, cried out mockingly, "Where is your faith?" and departed. But the punishment of his pride was not long delayed. He had not proceeded any distance, when the devil, who had followed him in the guise of a wild beast, attacked and pursued him over the

* Prov. xiii, 10.

† Prov. iii, 7.

mountains, until, exhausted and distracted with terror, he threw himself into a burning furnace where he perished miserably.

It is necessary to establish yourselves in true humility, for the proud fall like dry leaves, and our Divine Saviour tells us: *Whoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.**

If we are humble, what great things we shall accomplish! Do not vacillate between one side and another but give up all self-seeking. Love to be hidden in God. For those who seek themselves I predict many crosses, tears and aridities. She who relies on herself, who believes herself capable of undertaking works in her own strength, will be the scourge of the Congregation.

God one day showed St Anthony the whole surface of the earth, so covered with the snares of the devil that it seemed almost impossible to avoid them. The saint, filled with fear, cried out, "O Lord, who then can avoid such numberless perils?" A voice replied, "Those who are truly humble."

The words of our Constitution on humility should be written, my dear daughters, in letters of gold in our Chapter-room. If we faithfully observe them, we shall have nothing to fear in the Valley of Josaphat. I would it were given to me to speak to God as did the Royal Prophet, who said, "Lord, my heart is not puffed up by the success Thou hast granted me; nor are my eyes haughty."

Our Rule does not exact great austerities from us, but it requires us to be profoundly humble. But when, for example, you show sadness, coldness, bad temper, when your Superior has had to reprove you, does that seem to you humility?

* St Matt. xxiii, 12.

A holy person asked another one day if, in the course of his quest for alms for his works of charity, he had ever received a blow? He replied he had never been subjected to an insult of the kind. Whereupon the holy soul said: "I thought you a man of God, but you are still a child in spiritual matters without experience. For my part, I consider it one of the greatest blessings of my life that God once permitted me to be driven from a house with blows and insults of all kinds."

One extremely cold night, in a heavy snow-storm, St Francis Borgia arrived at the door of a house of the Society, and knocked and rang in vain for entrance; no one heard him. The saint rejoiced at the delay. Finally the porter came, offering a thousand excuses. They made a good fire to warm him, and paid him great attentions. "Ah," said St Francis, "see how you spoil God's work; I believed I was about to merit somewhat, and here I have lost it all." Let us imitate the humility of the one and the charity of the other.

Another time when he was travelling, he had to sleep on straw as well as his companion, an infirm old man suffering from a severe affection of the chest, which caused him to cough and expectorate incessantly. Moreover, imagining that he was turned to the wall, instead of the side on which the saint lay, St Francis received the expectoration the whole night. In the morning, when his companion discovered his mistake, he was filled with confusion and could not find words with which to apologize. St Francis laughingly replied that in truth he had given him pleasure, that he had no cause for an apology, for, on the contrary, he could not have found in the whole room a more suitable receptacle, as he was the vilest object in it.

If anyone amongst you is capable of entertaining so low an opinion of herself, I should be glad if she would come and tell me. . . . But if you are offended and disturbed at the least inconvenience or contradiction, what would you do under similar circumstances?

I beseech of you with all my heart to take care not to become touchy saints, who have to be treated with extraordinary circumspection. The proud build their houses on quicksands; it might happen that proud religious, in order to defend their precious reputation, would not hesitate to compromise the honour of their Mother-House, of their holy Congregation, differing in this from one of your sisters now enduring calumny and persecution, who writes to me thus: "Oh, Mother, I am ready to be set aside, to be sacrificed, provided the works of the Congregation prosper. That suffices for my happiness." Do not fear to be too humble. Look at our Lord Jesus Christ at the feet of Judas!

*Who can say: My heart is clean, I am pure from sin.** No one can while he remains in this world. Let us sound our hearts, and we shall find they are subject to every fault.

The Venerable Mother Anne of St Bartholomew, companion and coadjutrix of St Teresa, one of God's privileged souls from her tenderest years, believed herself a wretched sinner and sighed bitterly, looking on herself as the cause of all the calamities which befell the town in which she was staying. Her spiritual daughters said to her: "But, Mother, you must know well there are many greater sinners than you in the world. Why, therefore, do you put to your own account all these sad events?" "I know," she replied, "that there are

*Prov. xx, 9.

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many greater sinners, but that does not prevent each one of us having to carry their sins before God's tribunal, as a bundle of faggots to be burned, and our own may be found much more displeasing to Him than those of others."

Take great care not to esteem yourself better than another. Is it not due to God's goodness alone, that we are not amongst the impious? Has He not preserved us from the dangers of the world, kept us and hidden us under the shelter of His wing? If we had been plunged in misery, had we been born of bad parents, we might have been as wicked as many others. Our Lord Jesus Christ has vouchsafed to shower His graces and blessings upon us, which is a reason to thank Him and humble ourselves, not to take pride in it. Moreover, the uncertainty of our final perseverance should always keep us in holy fear.

How often, unhappily, have we not seen religious, both men and women, after spending a great part of their lives in austerities and religious exercises, abandon themselves to pride and fall into the greatest sins. May not what has happened to others befall us also? Thoroughly penetrated with the sense of his own nothingness, St Philip daily addressed this prayer to God: "Lord, keep Thy hand on me, for if Thou dost abandon me for a single instant I am capable of committing the greatest crimes." We also should say this prayer every morning, for, assuredly, we have no more reason to trust in our virtue than had this great saint.

Had Our Lord known a surer way to Heaven than that of humility no doubt He would have taught it to us. Who amongst you was cradled in a manger? Who amongst you has been calumniated

as He was? Who has borne the ignominy of the cross? *The disciple is not greater than the Master.* As we have already told you, my dear daughters, with humility alone and no other austerities than those prescribed by the Rule you can make great progress in virtue.

Observe well that I do not speak of a weak humility which should rather be called cowardice, which shrinks back from holy undertakings, and under the pretence of avoiding pride assumes an indifference to everything. We can easily, if we want, be a useless member of the community. The Sisters, Refectorians, *Robières*, do not inquire whether you have worked before giving out what you need. They distribute to each what is necessary, and this is as it should be. But you must remember that God knows all, and knows, too, how to punish those who neglect their duties and who do not accomplish all the good they could. A truly humble religious is convinced that she is possessed of no merit, because she knows that of herself she can do nothing, but with God's help she can do all things. She, therefore, devotes herself with all her heart to the works confided to her care without allowing herself to be discouraged, whatever may happen.

Oh, my dear daughters, if you were truly humble, you would be precious religious; vessels of gold and silver. By humility you will prepare yourselves to go to the conquest of souls. The acquisition of this virtue will render you worthy to be some day so many missionaries. Those amongst you who appear to have only moderate abilities, are, if humble, capable of all things with God's assistance. Therefore, love humility; love to be unimportant, to be forgotten. Unite to the

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realization of your own misery an unbounded confidence in the goodness of God, then all will come easy to you in religious life. Humility will be, as it were, an anchor which will keep you firm in the midst of the tempest. You will not be disheartened by contradictions, by weariness, nor even by the faults into which you may fall; for you will be strong in the very strength of God, and your intimate union with Him will daily increase. Let this be, as I have already said to you, the principal fruit of the retreat you have just made, and thus you will walk without fear of going astray in the path which leads to Heaven.

MAXIM

The more humble you are, the more will the Institute be blessed; by humility you will, I assure you, offer a holy violence to Heaven.

Without humility there can be no interior spirit.

If you are not humble, you will never possess the true spirit of charity.

CHAPTER XIX

After the Retreat—Exhortation to Recollection and Silence

WHILST you were in retreat I thought with joy of the graces that you were drawing down upon the Congregation, and I rejoiced the more as I said to myself, if ten just souls sufficed with God to save Sodom what will not be obtained from Him by this beloved flock, praying all day at the foot of the altar? Now that you have drunk deep draughts from the ocean of His grace you should be full of holy thoughts and good desires, so that the words of St Augustine could be applied to you: "I have seen souls laden with merits as are vessels laden with gold from the Indies." But take care that the treasure of your fervour does not evaporate like some exquisite perfume left uncovered. Your heart would soon be dried up and your retreat useless to you. Just as by silence and recollection you would continue to draw profit from your retreat, so dissipation and useless words will cause the loss of all your good dispositions. Do not think that your occupations will be the obstacle we have described as a danger to the interior life. A religious who would assert that a class of penitents, or any employment whatever assigned to her by obedience, hinders her applying to prayer and recollection, reminds me of a carp that would say it could not live in a pond because it was too full of water. As a proof of this,

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my dear daughters, I would ask you to notice who are the most interior religious here; those who are most occupied or such as are less so? In my opinion a portress, a cook, a sister in the bakehouse who works hard, only speaking when necessary, is far more virtuous than those who would like to spend the whole day in prayer. In our chapel in Rome we came across a picture which made a deep impression on us. It represented St Teresa, who, continually interrupted whilst at prayer, had left it each time she was needed, and beside her was an angel recording her promptitude and resignation in the Book of Life. Therefore, my dear daughters, be quite sure that you will be more pleasing to God in your classes, in your occupations, than in leading an idle life, which by a mistaken opinion you might consider more suited to the acquisition of perfection. Great virtue is not needed to make a retreat, to meditate, but our actions prove how much profit we draw from prayer, what virtue we have acquired by it. The only dangers I fear for you are dissipation, breaches of silence, want of modesty in your looks, in your demeanour, and not keeping in due bounds at recreation. Remember your good purposes, those solemn resolutions which you placed on the altar so that they should be the more sacred, and which you felt yourselves called upon to make, chiefly as regards the guard over your senses, and that religious modesty so strongly recommended to you in the retreat as a sure guarantee of the interior life. I will answer for your perfection and your holiness if you are faithful on these points, and my hopes in your regard will be realized. In this life of silence and recollection you will pray much; you will pray above all for the Institute, that God may bless our labours,

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and you will see this dear Institute advance to its
full perfection.

MAXIM

When praying for you all, my dear daughters,
my fervent petition is that you may learn to speak
little to creatures, so as to be better able to speak
to the Creator.

CHAPTER XX

After a Year of Crosses and Trials

THE year that has just passed has indeed been for us, my dear daughters, one of suffering; but it has also been a salutary time. Like the cedars of Lebanon we have been pruned and tried, that we might put forth fresh growth and be renewed in strength. It is well for a Religious Order to be tried in this way, from time to time, in order that it may be reanimated and maintained in its first fervour.

St Vincent de Paul looked on it as a great misfortune when a soul or a Congregation had nothing to suffer. St Ignatius thought the same. On one occasion this saint seemed to be extremely troubled, and upon being asked why he was so sad, replied: "I fear that in one of our provinces we have rendered ourselves unworthy, through some infidelity, to share in the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ, as so far no cross has come to us there."

Another time, when he appeared more than usually cheerful, he was questioned as to the cause and answered, "I rejoice because Our Lord has deigned to appear to me and promised, after I had besought it of Him, that the Company should never be without the precious inheritance of His cross, by meeting everywhere with contradictions and persecutions." If you were to cease to suffer, you would cease to be fervent. In the same way, the Institute will never flourish so much as in the midst of persecutions. Should persecution cease, its fervour

might die out. It would be the presage of a fearful storm from which we must pray God to preserve us.

Observe, my dear daughters, that from its origin our holy Order has been tried in numberless ways. Our first Mothers remained novices ten years, and during that period they were certainly not fed on milk, butter and honey, for even then they had very heavy crosses to bear. You see, too, that from time to time the Father of the family comes and sows seeds of suffering amongst ourselves also. He does more. Not content with these occasional visitations to His beloved children, He takes care that we be firmly planted in the soil of persecutions and calumnies, in order that, humility taking deeper root amongst us, our good works may grow and extend, bringing forth more abundantly the fruits of our holy vocation. God has great designs on our Institute, but we shall accomplish them only by the way of the Cross.

Happy the souls who live and die on the cross. Provided that we do not merit the privation of God's favours by our infidelities, and above all by infractions of the Rule, we must not be anxious on account of the troubles we feel. St John had less merit in reposing on Our Saviour's breast than he had when at the foot of the Cross on Calvary. We must therefore live in God and for God, wholly consecrated to Him, which for us is an easy and indispensable duty. That it be easy we can readily understand when we consider that all our actions, even the smallest, tend in virtue of our holy Rules and by their intention to lead us to God. You understand better than I can explain it, and many of you have been taught by experience that it is also a necessary duty. You see how these works, which

cost us so many anxieties and labours, to which we devote our whole life, are severely criticized, opposed, and sometimes blackened in the eyes of the world. Until their success is evident, we are usually reproached as imprudent, accused of acting without reflection, in fine, our enemies turn us into ridicule. Is it not evident, therefore, that we should be indeed foolish were we to act for any motive but that of pleasing God? Let us live in such a manner that we may be able to say confidently, "I live in God, I act only for God," as did a young religious whose heart was filled with these sentiments. She composed, in the transport of her love, a poem of twenty-four verses expressive of the holy joy of her beautiful soul, with the following refrain:

I live in God, I live for God,
O what bliss!
I find Heaven everywhere.

You are established on Mount Calvary, my dear daughters, and upon its summit you must learn fortitude to endure calmly the injustice of men. Oh, how hard this is to bear! Not infrequently it is a cause of sin to holy souls. Do not wonder if you are crucified; you snatch so many souls from hell that the devil is sure to raise enemies against you. Nor are these enemies always worldlings, for your vocation is too sublime not to win their respect. Sometimes persons consecrated to God will injure you, and all the more that they will misunderstand your intentions, and their opinion will carry more weight.

Upright, grateful hearts are not always to be found! There are some, however, and amongst others I will single out a man of the world to whom I rendered some service a few years ago, and who was so deeply touched by it that he tried to show

his gratitude to me in a thousand ways. Only recently, when the state of public affairs threatened us with great dangers, he came to encourage us, assuring us he would keep us informed of all that was going on, and that he would defend us as far as possible. But I repeat, gratitude is very rare, and we must accustom ourselves to live only for God, looking for our reward from Him alone.

Courage! Go forth to the salvation of souls! Go forth to multiply the number of tabernacles in which Our Lord resides on this earth; this will increase your confidence at the end of your life, for it will be a title to mercy before the Sovereign Judge. Let this hope burn brightly in your hearts, it will console you in your labours and stimulate your courage in striving to render yourselves, more and more, worthy of your holy vocation.

A holy ecclesiastic, who was asked on his death-bed which of the Religious Orders he thought approached nearest in its spirit to that of the Society of Jesus, answered, the Congregation of the Good Shepherd, because its special mission most closely resembles that which Our Divine Saviour came on earth to accomplish. There are vocations whose particular object is the good of children, such as *Salles d'Asile*, and in general all educational establishments; but as for us, we must not only labour for the souls of children; our zeal must be specially directed for the salvation of the poor souls who, but for our aid, would be perhaps eternally lost. Oh! how dear these souls should be to us! There should be no limit to our zeal and generosity in assisting them.

You, my dear daughters, are destined to fight hand to hand with the most terrible enemies. I would almost say that you are in the first ranks of

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the army which combats against the bad inclinations of perverse nature. Let your arms be always in your hands, for you have to deal with an enemy who never sleeps, and who unceasingly lays snares for you. If you meet with troubles and crosses, remember that Our Lord said to His Apostles when He sent them to convert the world: *You will be persecuted, and suffer much for My name's sake.* We ought, my dear daughters, to accept punishments as well as consolations from the hand of God, Whose Heart lovingly disposes everything. Let us humble ourselves under His Fatherly hand; those troubles will be followed by great graces, and then, after all He has done for us can we doubt what He wills to effect for us in the future?

What trials, what sufferings does not the conquest of a single soul sometimes cost you? But God Who has enriched you with special graces, Who communicates so many lights to you for the exercise of our fourth Vow, also promises you that you will be victorious in the combat. He only requires that you walk faithfully in the path traced out for you by His Paternal Providence. Look for assistance from God alone, for vain is all hope in man. He will fall who leaneth on an arm of flesh.

And, in truth, what reliance can be placed on men? To-day for us, to-morrow they are our enemies. Moreover observe, that when you are in trouble, far from sympathizing, almost every one adds to it in some way or other, were it only by doubting your prudence. Then when success is assured they hasten to rejoice with you, and declare that they had sought and desired this end, and had foreseen it from the first. Had we listened to the prudent of this world, this House of Angers would never have been established; they repre-

sented the project as hopeless. We ought not, they said, to admit orphans, nor even Magdalens. Later, when everything was completed, they came from all parts to beg us to take some, and vied with one another in repeating, "Oh! I knew that this establishment would be a great public benefit!"

Generally speaking, we should fear prosperity more than adversity. Our Institute enrages hell, hence the furious war it wages against us. See how at Perpignan when, by dint of perseverance, we had succeeded in establishing a convent, the new house took fire just as the sisters had finished the grating in the parlour and other requirements prescribed by the Rule. Prayer saved them; it was manifestly the special protection of the Blessed Virgin that the flames did not spread to the convent.

According to St Clement there is no more perfect image of the Deity than a soul which, whether in prosperity or in adversity, always maintains its interior peace. Let us remember that here below everything is passing away, consequently nothing should really afflict us but sin, which offends God.

I again recommend you not to wish to be placed in those of our convents which are the most flourishing. Nevertheless, you certainly may hope for means to enlarge our Houses and classes, so as to increase the number of our children. This is not only permissible, but is a very laudable desire. The essential point is to have no fear of poverty, nor of the obstacles you may encounter. Go straight on. Be like a fisherman who keeps casting his net, always hoping to catch fish. Then leave God to do the rest; He knows better than we do what is for our good. Besides, we are only feeble instruments

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in His hands, which He deigns to use for the accomplishment of His designs.

Do not seek for consolations, do not depend upon your own strength. Never yield to discouragement nor to your repugnance. You ought not to say: "I am not capable of such a charge; I am not capable of doing that." But with the strong faith and strength which come from obedience, take up the work, and whether you succeed according to your wishes or not, Our Lord will know how to draw profit from it for your soul and for the glory of His Holy Name.

Whilst speaking on this subject I will relate to you, my children, what happened to me when leaving Tours for Angers. I had gone to the Ursuline Community, of which Madame de Lignac was Superior, where I was to take the *diligence*, when suddenly I felt overwhelmed with discouragement and doubt. It seemed to me that I should do no good, that I should even hinder that which others might effect. I was on the verge of retracing my steps, when I was told that a priest (M. Pasquier) asked to see me in the parlour. Immediately I entered, the holy man said, as if inspired: "Mother, you are under temptation; Our Lord has just made this known to me in prayer. Woe to you, if you yield! It is not humility that causes your hesitation, but a weakness of nature. Have courage, go to Angers, and you will see that, through your means, God wills to do great works for His glory."

Take notice, my dear daughters, of what I am going to say. When you are in the classes, you will often have sufferings of mind or meet with troubles from the children. I speak from experience, because I was for several years in that state. This life of struggle is easily explained. The very nature of

our vocation causes it. If you wrest souls from the devil, you cannot be surprised that it infuriates him and leads him to wage war against you. You may even measure the extent of your conquests by the rage with which he attacks you. In your laborious life, my dear daughters, you are like Jesus Christ on the cross; each of you has received her mission from the Incarnate Word, and all your sufferings are, so to say, a co-operation in the mystery of the Redemption.

Make an entire sacrifice, therefore, of all that concerns you; seek yourselves in nothing, let no difficulty conquer you. When your soul is in darkness, wait patiently until light returns. Let us suffer all for God, let us lose all for God, and we shall find all in God.

MAXIM

The devil will sift you, he will try to deceive you by his artifices, he will excite creatures to rise up against you, but do not allow this to frighten you.

Nothing should make you love your vocation more than being nailed to the Cross.

CHAPTER XXI

*Letter from the Bishop of Nantes—The
Salvation of Souls*

WE will begin this conference, my dear daughters, by reading the letter addressed by the Bishop of Nantes to our French novices. We have also one written specially to the dear novices of England, Germany and Italy,* which we will give them for their own perusal.

Meanwhile we will read this, addressed—

“ To the beloved French novices of the Congregation of the Good Shepherd of Angers.

“ What have I done, my beloved daughters, to deserve so kind a letter from you? I visit you in spirit, whilst I remember the great edification which your piety afforded me, and how deeply touched I felt at the sight of your whole-hearted devotedness. Happy shall I be if Our Lord hears my prayers by bestowing upon you all the blessings His unworthy servant asks for you. Each day at the holy altar I specially recommend this fervent novitiate, this holy Congregation, whose sole desire is to convert erring souls. When giving the blessing at the end of Mass, I think with great affection of the Good Shepherd and of England. That

*Mgr de Herc , Bishop of Nantes, spoke and wrote English, German and Italian with great facility, and our venerated Mother-foundress frequently invited him to the Clothings and Professions of the novices of these nations. His Lordship also knew Arabic; he it was who instructed and baptized our first nesses.

which I am unworthy to earn for you, my beloved daughters, you will yourselves obtain, please God, by your piety, your simplicity and your devotedness to the good cause.

“Truly, I rejoice in having for compatriots so many chosen souls who edify me by the example of their virtues, and whose holy zeal causes them to fly to distant shores in search of souls who need their care. My affection includes the English as well as all the others, for, as you know, Heaven is our common country.

“If I ever find myself in your midst again, it will indeed be a feast day for me, and I am very much inclined to keep the anniversary of the happy day which I spent with you, but I do not feel justified in giving myself this satisfaction. Our Divine Lord will be the judge. He will direct everything, and I shall rejoice if it be His will that we meet again. Were I a missionary bishop, not obliged by duty to reside in my diocese, I should be free to visit you, to converse with you, hear you speak of God, and admire the solicitude with which you watch over those poor sin-stricken souls. In doing this I should be following a natural attraction, in which I fear the inspirations of grace might have too small a part.

“In the Divine Hearts of Jesus and Mary I am gratefully and with respectful affection, my beloved daughters,

“Your most devoted servant,

“✠ J. FRANCIS, Bishop of Nantes.”

Let us appreciate, my dear daughters, the holy affection which the good bishop bears us, and which is certainly inspired by his great zeal and ardent charity. “Madame,” he said to me the last

time he was here, " I should not have returned if you had not written, and I acknowledge that I should have been disappointed had you not invited me; your Institute is so dear to me, and I take so deep an interest in your English religious.* Moreover, my dear Mother, I may say the piety, joy and happiness visible in the countenances of your daughters make it evident that God dwells in their hearts."

What light did I not receive during the few moments in which I had the consolation of conversing with this worthy prelate! His beautiful soul seems a furnace of love and zeal. " My one desire is," he said, " to overcome all obstacles, and would it were in my power to undertake even the greatest labours for the glory of God. My heart is not worth much, but such as it is I wish to give it unreservedly to God. It would be unworthy of a Christian not to be consumed by an ardent desire to gain souls to God."

St Anthony, after seeing St Paul, said to his religious, " We are hermits in name only." And may we not say also, after meeting this zealous prelate, we are Religious of the Good Shepherd but in name. The desire to do good to others and to add to the glory of God raises the soul to heavenly thoughts. When a soul is filled with true charity, nothing appears difficult, because this charity becomes the principle of all its operations, and it acts only under this influence. It is said in Holy Scripture: *God is charity, and he who abideth in charity abideth in God, and God in him.*

Learn, my dear daughters, to labour for the salvation of souls in a true spirit of charity. Hence-

*The Bishop had emigrated to England where he had met with generous hospitality.

forth, have in view rather to prevent sin than to occupy your minds with the reward awaiting you. Thus you will be labouring purely for the glory of God. Learn to forget yourselves, and remember that even had you scarcely time to breathe you might become saints, provided your work be done for the glory of God. We see proofs of this amongst our sisters in the Foundations, who become more and more virtuous and interior as their labours are multiplied.

Look at the lives of missionaries, my dear daughters; what privations, what sufferings they endure; but, they feel, as they say, the eternal salvation of souls is indeed worth a few years of suffering. Some have been seen walking day and night, climbing mountains covered with ice and snow, taking no rest for months, often going barefoot when their shoes were worn out. Many die of fatigue, never having realized their longing for missionary work, while others are devoured by the very savages to whom they were endeavouring to bring the light of Faith and of civilization. There are great sacrifices to be made for our missions; unless you are full of love and generosity for the end you have in view, it will be useless for you to attempt such work. A cowardly religious who seeks her ease and flies from fatigue and contradiction is not a fitting instrument for the conquest of souls. She is too little, too small, in every way.

You will have to suffer for souls, my dear daughters, but keep constantly before your mind these consoling words, *They that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity.** The greater the number of souls you have gained to God, the greater will be your reward in Heaven.

*Dan. xii, 3.

“What a martyrdom our vocation is!” said a fervent zealous religious, whose soul was as innocent as that of a child. When still very young, she was placed over a class of penitents whose hearts she won to God. One young girl alone, who was very hardened, resisted grace and went so far as to entreat the mistress not to pray for her, saying that each time she did so she was tormented by her conscience and that she did not wish to be different; needless to add, this fervent religious only redoubled her prayers. One day, after receiving Holy Communion, she felt so inflamed with zeal for this soul that she offered to accept all the temptations this poor child endured, and give her the consolations she enjoyed. The young penitent immediately experienced the effect of this generous prayer, and kneeling beside the religious touched her mantle, saying, “Mother, what are you doing? You are praying for me and you know I do not wish it.” But the poor child was henceforth so completely changed that she watered the ground with her tears of contrition, and was never from that moment known to commit a wilful fault. But the soul of the generous religious was enveloped in darkness, and became a prey to such terrible temptations that she no longer felt the same person. Sometimes before Holy Communion she would go to her Superior and ask her what she ought to do, and obedience alone enabled her to approach the Holy Table. This habitual state of interior trial and anguish continued until she was seized with the serious illness which caused her death. Only shortly before her end was her soul restored to its former calm, and she exclaimed, “Oh, how much it costs to save a soul!” Then leaving her Superior free to speak of what had

taken place, she intoned the psalm *Laudate* and expired.

I have not cited this example, my dear daughters, that you should imitate it. On the contrary, I think that this dear mistress of penitents was rather imprudent in making herself the victim of these temptations. I only wish to show you how far she carried the love of her fourth Vow, and to exhort you to cherish it more and more. I acknowledge, my dear daughters, that I am consumed by a burning desire to save souls. When I consider the labours of physicians to save the life of the body, the years of study which they devote to that end, I reproach myself that I do not work as much for the infinitely more precious life of the soul. For this purpose we must learn to suffer, and to bear many troubles and privations; we must be very patient with these poor children.

The physician who attended one of our Houses made the following remarks: "People admire the Sisters of Charity, their unbounded devotedness to duty astonishes them, and what ought not to be said of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd! With them the corporal well-being of the persons confided to their care is second only to one which is more sacred and more precious, that of the mind. When a poor girl is brought to them, they receive and encourage her, but they do much more. They clothe and console her; then they go on to endeavour by instruction and moral training to bring a new life before the eyes of her soul, introducing her into another world of thought." Again, we may quote the words of a Jesuit Father, who said: "We religious who seek to save souls are only able to afford them spiritual assistance, but the Religious of the Good Shepherd, besides good

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advice, give them a mother's care, and devote themselves with tender solicitude to the corporal welfare of these poor children."

Certainly, my dear daughters, we have grave obligations, and in order to discharge them worthily we need great unselfishness and courage; but from an earnest desire to do good to our neighbour springs strength to rise above our own weaknesses, and when we truly love God we can endure all things to promote His glory.

Strive to form yourselves thoroughly in the spirit of your Institute, that you may attain the degree of perfection to which you are called. For this end you must pray much. Ask Our Lord to give you grace to correspond to the sublimity of your vocation; the more elevated it is, the greater the need to seek help from on high. Labour earnestly and generously to accomplish the work assigned to you, and by so doing you will deserve to hear one day from the lips of God Himself: Faithful servant, come and receive the reward you have merited by your labours and by your virtues.

MAXIM

Cling to your vocation as the ivy to the elm; let nothing separate you from it.

CHAPTER XXII

On Advent

ADVENT, my dear daughters, is a time of recollection, of salvation; it is a season of grace of which we must profit. From December 17 the anthems of the Office begin with, "O," to express adoration and love. Such were the sentiments in which our Blessed Lady passed the days preceding the birth of Our Lord. How ardently must she have desired to see this little Child Who was Himself the author of her days. She was in continual contemplation.

Jesus is born again in our hearts; let us adore Him as Mary did. I always look forward to this holy season and see it pass with regret. It suggests so many holy thoughts which nourish our souls; we may unite with the Patriarchs and Prophets in asking for the coming of the Messiah, that is to say, His coming into our souls. Let us listen to David praying for his coming one thousand years before His birth, and speaking to Him as if his eyes already rested on Him, and Isaiah, who seven hundred years previously, said of Him: *He shall eat butter and honey, and from His mouth shall flow sweetness and goodness.* Elsewhere it is said of the Messiah: *Neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets.* Religious should follow His example in everything. Never should we speak loud in the novitiate nor in the regular places.

During this holy time, my dear daughters, we ought to meditate continually on the self-abase-

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ment of our God, we ought to excite in ourselves the same ardent desire for Holy Communion, that the Patriarchs felt for the coming of the Messiah, preparing ourselves for it by frequent and ardent ejaculations. In your different employments, and in the midst of all your labours you may occupy your minds with these thoughts. Those who are employed in washing the linen may longingly sigh after Our Lord, uniting the suffering they have to bear from the cold with that which He endured in the manger, where He had neither roof nor covering. I am sure, my poor children, that those amongst you who were washing the whole of yesterday in this bitter cold must have suffered much; but I am quite sure also that such a day, offered to God, will have been most meritorious, and I feel very certain that all our sisters who work so hard will escape a long purgatory if they are careful to do all with the intention of pleasing God.

Now is the time to choose with whom we will visit the stable of Bethlehem. You can select whom you will; some will ask the Shepherds to be their companions, others the Magi; for my part I confess that I always seek the company of the Shepherds; I dare not aspire higher. I dearly love those poor Shepherds who, immediately they were called, threw down their crooks and hastened to Jesus. They did not say, "Who will take care of our flocks? The wolves will devour them, besides we know not where we have to go." This is how you ought to act, my dear children, that you may find God Who calls you by the voice of your Superiors. We must obey without hesitation or delay. Ah! I much prefer little shepherdesses to queens who are not obedient.

MAXIM

You ought to make humility and poverty your chief study. These virtues belong particularly to the God of the Manger and the Cross.

CHAPTER XXIII

Christmas and the Epiphany—Do well all that you do

THESE words, my beloved daughters, contain one of the most important counsels to be found in Holy Scripture, and I gladly recall them in a particular manner to you all, who are a pleasing picture to me of Jerusalem.

The days that have just passed carried us in spirit to the City of God, to the City of David and of Solomon. Hymns and chants succeeded each other, feast followed upon feast. Midnight Mass, the Crib, the lights and decorations, New Year's Day, the feast of the Epiphany—in a word, the sweetest memories of our holy Religion have come in turn to console us. The House resembled a glad Jerusalem, and truly your innocent enjoyment afforded me much pleasure. Our dear penitents also were delighted with your devout hymns of the shepherds, and said to one another, "If our Mothers sing such beautiful canticles here below, what will it be in Heaven?"

Now, in order to continue to do all things well, we must of necessity apply ourselves more and more to recollection.

Let us consider how, at this time, thousands upon thousands of angels descended from Heaven to adore Our Lord. The Shepherds hastened to worship Him in the manger, and the Kings, following the star, came to offer their homage to the Divine Saviour. Your star, my dear daughters, is

your Rules, your Constitutions, the will of your Superiors. To whatever place they lead you, there you will find God; never halt elsewhere. The meditations on the mysteries of this holy season should excite us to offer fervent acts of love and adoration to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament. Remember, my dear daughters, the Cherubim and Seraphim surround the altar, and that you take your place amongst them when you go to hold converse with Our Lord. Therefore in this holy place your bearing ought to be that of a queen before her king, since you have the honour of being the spouse of the King of kings. In the choir, more than anywhere, you should endeavour to do all things well.

What efforts should you not make to become perfect in the exercises of the interior life; prayer, Holy Communion, spiritual reading, the Office, examen of conscience—in a word, in all your spiritual duties. Prepare for them by continual recollection, and be careful to avoid distraction by the repression of your wandering imagination.

Do not forget this maxim of the saints which I have several times quoted to you: “If you neglect prayer, if you do not practise it assiduously, you will not succeed in accomplishing in a whole day that which you could have done in an hour, and, moreover, your work will be but imperfect.” It seems to me that prayer is as a strong ladder by which a Religious of the Good Shepherd ascends to Heaven; a support when well made, but if not, it gives way and she has no means of ascent.

Give your whole attention to the recital of the Office. Recollect that during it you speak to God Himself, that you sing the praises of Him Whose greatness and majesty fill Heaven and earth. Oh! were we thoroughly penetrated with this truth we

should be so many angels on earth by our union with God. Do not be satisfied with merely pronouncing the words, but accompany the movement of your lips with the affections of your hearts, and let the remembrance of the presence of God keep you in an attitude of respect and adoration before His infinite Majesty. Avoid all that can occasion you distractions; if they occur against your will, complain to Our Lord about them, but without anxiety. They are consequent on human frailty, and, without a singular privilege of divine grace, we cannot be entirely exempt from them.

Do all things well; especially hear Mass well, particularly on the days you receive Holy Communion. Be penetrated with the thought of the holiness of the sacrifice that is offered to God. Consider how important is the action you perform when you approach the altar; take your place at the Holy Table with love, and enter into the sentiments of your nothingness when you have had the happiness of being fed with the Bread of angels.

We recommend great attention to your spiritual reading. Our Lord will instruct you by its means in your duties, and enlighten you regarding your faults. Apply to yourself what you read or hear read; keep it well in mind, so as to put it in practice when an occasion presents itself. Spiritual reading, well made, is a powerful support in the interior life. I have experienced this myself. As I had no aptitude for manual labour, my only occupation during several years, when a young religious, was to dust the stalls in the choir. I spoke of my trouble to our Mother; she always replied by telling me to employ my time in reading the Holy Scripture and the lives of the Saints, which would be of great use to me, as a time would come when I should be

overwhelmed with work of all kinds. I can truly say that the more I have read of the Holy Scripture the more I have appreciated its beauty.

At the end of the day make your examen of conscience carefully. If you are faithful to this practice recommended by the Rule, you may be sure that you will avoid a number of faults, and it will be almost impossible to neglect your duties. Make your particular examen also and your examen of foresight, and you will recognize the great practical advantage of these exercises. You must never, never neglect this important duty of examen of conscience.

We can draw down a treasure of blessings on our Congregation by the faithful observance of Rule. You must, my dear daughters, redouble your zeal and efforts to attain perfection because your labours are increasing. I assure you what has been effected in the past is nothing compared to the work which is before you.

Each member of the community should propose to attain the highest perfection by discharging in the best manner possible the employment entrusted to her. For example, the sister who has to ring for the different exercises may acquire great merit by punctuality and exactitude in this duty; whilst, on the contrary, if she be negligent, she might have to expiate her fault in purgatory. By shortening the time of prayer she would grieve Our Lord's Sacred Heart. Again, she might cause the silence to be broken during the hours appointed for recollection, and although these may appear slight faults, we must remember that in religious life nothing whatever should be neglected.

Let each one do well what is prescribed; let her who works, work; let her who prays, pray; let

her who teaches, teach. If you have no other occupation but that of dusting the stalls of the choir, sweeping the house, or washing the dishes, all ought to be done with purity of intention and a holy assiduity. It often happens in a religious house that one who is faithful in the discharge of a humble employment is of greater service than another with more mind and capabilities who is less faithful. Rest assured, moreover, that if you are careful and faithful, there is no one amongst you who cannot be most useful in the office assigned to her. Each member of the Congregation should devote herself to the general good of the Institute.

Selfish persons may sometimes be found who think only of themselves, and take so little interest in the community that were they to see the House falling in ruins it would not disturb them; for nothing seems of consequence to such characters but what specially concerns themselves. Others, from a want of reflection, take everything lightly and amuse themselves with trifles, even when the gravest matters are pending.

I also urge you strongly to observe the following recommendations. Do not run here and there trying to find out what is going on, talking uselessly of what others are doing, thus wasting your time, failing in your duties, and perhaps sinning against charity. I hope these words of St Paul may never be applied to you: *There are some amongst you who walk disorderly, working not at all, but enviously meddling.*

Occupy yourselves with God, with our Foundations, with your employments, and do not trouble about what others are doing. If you have charge of the garden, cultivate it; if you are cook, look after the kitchen; if mistress of the class, take care of

the children. Some day these latter will testify their gratitude to you for the good you have done them. They will tell you that they owe their happiness to you, and how your watchfulness over them has guided them to life eternal. If you converse with a Sister of Charity, you will find that her mind is full of the sick to be cured, of wounds to be healed. A Carmelite will talk of St Teresa, with whom her thoughts are taken up, and our only thought should be the salvation of souls.

Notice how in the world each one seeks to become perfect in their own calling. Men of letters, merchants, artisans, all endeavour to excel in their special line of work. And you, my dear daughters, take care not to perform your duties merely to get through them.

To lead a slothful life is to make yourself a burden to others as well as to yourself. In fact what can a poor Superior do, for example, with six religious, four of whom take no interest in anything?

Apply yourselves earnestly to your employments, but do not forget to frequently recall your interior union with God. I should be very sorry if your work caused you to neglect study, or that study made you careless about work. Perform your duties faithfully and at the hour appointed for each: there is a time for everything, and you should know how to pass from one duty to another, giving to each the prescribed time.

Go straight to the class when it is your hour to do so, without turning to the right or to the left. Do not be like some people who never reach their destination except through endless by-ways. When you come to recreation, do so readily and cheerfully. Converse together holily and joyfully, remembering that the angels who preside assist,

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in an especial manner, those who contribute to the recreation of others. Do well, therefore, all you do. In this consists the perfection of your state and in particular that of obedience.

You should not aspire to performing brilliant actions, to having ecstasies, visions, to shine by your talents and capacity, but to faithfully observe all that obedience requires of you. Mary herself, the Mother of God, did nothing extraordinary, nothing which attracted the admiration of the world. But she did perfectly what she had to do. And indeed to do all things well, whether great or small, requires great control over the movements of our own will and the inclinations of our heart. To this must be united profound self-abnegation and a generous determination to follow the leadings of grace, which is the end we must strive to attain in order to accomplish the work of our perfection.

Therefore, my dear daughters, let this maxim regulate your conduct: "Do well all that you do." If you observe this rule you may rest assured you will become perfect.

She did all things well. This is the eulogium you will merit. This will be a source of consolation to you at death, and each of you should merit that this epitaph might be inscribed on your tombstone.

MAXIMS

If you lead an idle life, you will be a burden to others as well as to yourself.

We have two stars to guide us: the light of our conscience and our Rules and Constitutions.

CHAPTER XXIV

Before Lent

LENT is approaching, my dear daughters, and with it fresh streams of grace, of spiritual life and of means of perfection. Prepare yourselves beforehand to spend it well. According to the mind of the Church, the time between Septuagesima Sunday and Ash Wednesday should be spent in preparing for the blessed forty days, and in several Religious Orders the fast begins from Septuagesima week.

It is evident that Lent was instituted by the Apostles in memory of Our Lord's fast in the desert. In the first ages of the Church this holy fast was observed very rigorously. They ate but once in the day, towards evening, and then partook only of vegetables, herbs and fruit, a little fish being allowed on rare occasions. Moreover, the fast extended to Sundays; later they were omitted because of certain erroneous opinions held by heretics. A few days in Quinquagesima week were added to make up for the Sundays, and thus preserve the number of forty days.

At the present day the Church has mitigated the fast of Lent. It is a concession made to the needs of the times and because of the weakness of constitutions. But we must not, on this account, suppose that the Church has dispensed us from the obligation of doing penance; on the contrary, during these holy days she unceasingly exhorts all the faithful to the exercise of severe mortification by

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the solemnity of her rites, the mournfulness of her chants, by frequent sermons, etc.

Therefore, those amongst you who are not strong enough to fast must remember, nevertheless, that they ought to redouble their self-denials, their assiduity and zeal in the accomplishment of their duties; pray with more fervour, and practise greater charity and more exact obedience.

Lent is a propitious season for every one. It is propitious for souls seeking to overcome the evil inclinations of nature; for those who desire to enter deeply into the delights of an interior life, and for all of us who wish to devote ourselves to works of zeal, by labouring to restore souls to God.

In fact, how could we think that Our Lord would be deaf to the entreaties of His beloved spouses when He sees them humbled and prostrate between the vestibule and the altar, as victims for sinners, forgetting themselves to seek His glory in all things?

Let us not allow this season of mercy and grace to pass without fruit, remembering that it is a time of salvation; we should know how to profit by it. You can all become saints during these forty days of penance and benediction.

A sister may not be able to fast—but she can abstain; another cannot abstain, but she can very well deprive herself in the refectory of something which is not necessary. Our Lent is not rendered very severe by our austerities, but we should be more silent during these holy days; we are recommended to observe longer intervals of silence than we do usually.

I wish it to be remembered that the bell for the morning silence rings at half-past eight, and it should be kept till the recreation hour. I recom-

mend you to observe it perfectly. We should not only keep silence in words, we should also refrain from wandering and useless thoughts, and avoid noise in opening and shutting doors. I remember when visiting a Carmelite convent the Superior called my attention to the latch of the door which had wool round it. "It is to prevent noise," she said, "our holy Mother recommended silence so strongly."

You will tell me, my dear daughters, that I never cease speaking to you of the necessity of silence. It is true, but time is so precious that those who lose a single moment of it in useless words do themselves and others a very great injury without perceiving it. The practice of silence will be a powerful aid in accomplishing all the objects which our zeal has in view. It is in silence that we hear the secret intimations of divine Providence, and by it we shall soon reach that perfection which is so necessary to each if they are to contribute efficaciously to the works of the Institute. In our holy Congregation prayer, an interior life, solitude, should be our chief though not our only end; but the one will lead to the other, for no labour will bear fruit for the salvation of souls unless the necessary light for conducting souls to God has been first gained in prayer and silence.

A career of labour opens before us; I see a multitude of paths which we are called upon to tread; we must, therefore, set to work with energy without losing a moment. Meanwhile, let us thank God for granting us these few days of recollection and solitude, because by recollecting ourselves we shall redouble our strength, to employ it afterwards in God's service and for His honour. Yes, our labours, our arduous duties are increasing;

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works are proposed to us, our convents ask for subjects, several bishops are renewing their entreaties; they earnestly desire to have our holy Congregation in their dioceses. You would be grieved were I to tell you all the good works which we are obliged to defer for want of subjects.

Once more then I say, recollect yourselves during these holy days in order to pray much; prepare for labour, because we have great works before us; enter more than ever into the spirit of your holy vocation, give up all self-seeking, avoid speaking of yourselves, forget yourselves and let others forget you; this will be the best penance you can perform. Carefully repress a spirit of levity, endeavour to become interior religious, souls hidden in God, and do nothing except to glorify Him and give Him pleasure. Only in solitude and in silence can God make His voice heard in your heart. It is of absolute necessity in our vocation that self-sacrifice and the practice of an interior life should be a habit.

The Royal Prophet says: *Thy law is my meditation, night and day*, and we ought all to be able to say this, my dear daughters, that is we should be interior and silent. Silence constitutes the delight and peace of a community. Observe that our works flourish most in those of our Houses where regularity and silence are best practised. Oh, if we understood what it is to disturb a servant of God, occupied in fighting for God in prayer. It is then that the words of the Canticle of Canticles may well be applied: *Wake not my beloved*, because prayer is a combat or sleep, and those who speak in a loud tone in the cloisters, who make a noise in the choir, interrupt this union of God with His creature. In silence great thoughts are conceived

and great things accomplished. Oh! how I love those souls who in silence and in prayer bring about the perfection of their works. Great will be their reward.

Pray for the souls confided to your care, that they may be converted and become worthy to approach the Banquet of the Paschal Lamb prepared for them by the Church.

MAXIM

Silence and a spirit of prayer will give us the prudence and gravity which are so suitable to us in our vocation.

CHAPTER XXV

The First Day of Lent

WE have reached the first day of Lent, my dear daughters. How are we going to spend this holy time? Certainly in union with the adorable will of God. Those who are strong enough, as most of you are, will fast; others too weak to do so will be dispensed. Yet all, without exception, should more specially lead a mortified life during these days. Assuredly, for those able to observe the fast, it is a happiness to do so, since they thus conform to the spirit of the Church, but those who are prevented by some good reason must not be troubled, nor discouraged. They also can acquire much merit. They should be fervent in the practice of humility, charity and of all the virtues. As far as they can, let them be of help to the sisters who fast. Oh, how greatly they will thus please God! Opportunities of practising acts of these virtues will not be wanting; they have only to profit by them. Thus, each one may have the means of spending a holy Lent.

We renew the recommendation we have already made for a most scrupulous observance of silence, and from this no one is exempt; we wish that the mistresses of the classes, and the sisters placed over the different employments, should enforce this point firmly. Remember that silence is prescribed for the whole morning and no one is permitted to say a single useless word. Lent is a time for sacrifices; be ready, therefore, to cheerfully accept all that come to you.

Our dear penitents also feel the sacrifices of these days consecrated to fasting and mortification. Be indulgent to them in order to win them to Jesus Christ. When in the world they probably had not, in this respect, the struggles to endure that they encounter here. The evil one certainly torments them all the more because they desire to be converted. They go through indescribable struggles to fast and in the observance of silence; therefore, compassionate them. These poor children, slaves of their passions, look for deliverance to your prayers and mortifications; for Our Lord says: *There is a devil that is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.*

How these words should encourage us to spend this holy time well! By your fervour you can effect the conversion of very many souls. These are days of salvation and benediction, and a time when ordinarily the most precious works are accomplished in the Institute for the glory of God. Yes, my dear children, I hope the Lent we are beginning will be for us a period of grace, of resurrection and of life.

Looking around, I see that the greater number of you seem more or less cast down, weary; some perhaps from the effects of excessive labour, others from the injustice they frequently meet with which tries them, from the difficulties they encounter in their classes, which incline them to feel disheartened; lastly, there are those oppressed with their own special crosses, their interior trials. In a word, we all have need to recollect ourselves, repose in God, unite ourselves more closely to Him, and the time for this is at hand.

This morning, as I saw you at meditation, I imagined an angel coming and addressing to each

of you the words he spoke to Elias: " Rise and eat, for you have yet a great way to go."

The Prophet under the tree, abandoned for a moment to his own strength, lost courage and asked to die. You must take great care not to yield to a similar discouragement, which, very reprehensible even in Elias, would certainly not be at all worthy of a Religious of the Good Shepherd.

This great Elias, who had made himself a terror to kings, was frightened by a woman's threats; and flying from the anger of Jezebel walked a whole day in the desert, until exhausted by fatigue, he cast himself on the ground and fell asleep under the shade of a tree. Twice the angel of the Lord awakened him, saying, *Arise and eat*. The first time Elias only looked around him, and seeing a hearth-cake and a vessel of water, he ate and drank and fell asleep again. Then the angel awakened him anew, saying to him again: *Arise and eat; for thou hast yet a great way to go*. Elias arose, ate, drank, and, thus strengthened, walked forty days and forty nights, going hither and thither to avoid his persecutors, until he arrived at the Mount of Horeb, called also the Mount of God and where he hid himself in a cave.*

The bread presented to the Prophet by the angel was a figure of the Holy Eucharist, and foreshadowed the salutary effects of this adorable Sacrament, for during that long journey of forty days and forty nights Elias felt no need of food. The embers on which the cake had been baked were an image of the afflictions and humiliations assigned to us by divine Providence to test our virtue; whilst the water signified the mortification and purity necessary in God's servants, in

* 3 Kings xix, 5.

the souls who desire to procure the glory of His holy Name.

You also, my dear daughters, must rise and eat, for you have a great way to go. I should not be surprised to find that some one amongst you have, as it were, laid down under the shade of a tree, feeling that she has little else to do but die. But, on the contrary, God opens a long career before you, for which you will need fresh strength. Some of you are called to England, others to Africa and America, others to Germany, and certainly several will leave shortly for Lyons.* Therefore the angel of the Lord says to you: *Arise, eat and drink*. And what is the refreshment of which He desires you to partake? It is prayer, it is Holy Communion. Happy will those be who between now and Easter will make good meditations, and not omit any communion of Rule. Their soul will truly have eaten and drank; they will really have reposed in God. Then, filled with fresh energy, they will march courageously to their destination. They will not lay down discouraged, they will not hide themselves, but will labour with ardour, according to the spirit of their holy vocation.

Shortly after Elias had retired into the cave, the Lord, as if to reproach him for not doing his duty, called him, saying: "What dost thou here, Elias? Why dost thou keep thyself hidden in this cave? Go forth and stand upon the Mount. . . . Go and return on thy way through the desert." Such, my dear daughters, will be Our Lord's reproaches if He see that your zeal for the missions disappears, if He perceives that you are too afraid of disappointments and sufferings, and are discouraged at the prospect of persecution from the world. In a word,

* Our House at Lyons was founded June 29, 1842.

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if He see that, through negligence, you abandon the works of your Institute.

Those who have unhappily fallen must rise again by the help of the Sacraments. Approach the sacred tribunal that the wounds of your soul may be healed and do not abandon Holy Communion. Behold at your side God's angel who brings you this Divine Food. We must not be too much afraid when we have committed some fault. Confession has been instituted to purify us from our stains; we have but to own our faults with humility and sorrow, and our good God pardons them. Provided He sees we have a good will, He Himself extends His hand to raise us when we have fallen.

Remember the athletes of old. They led a hard abstemious life, as you know, that they might not become degenerate, nor be vanquished in the great combats in which they took part. Sometimes, however, they were overthrown, but their courage did not fail; they rose at once and fought with fresh vigour.

How did Elias behave when the Lord reproached him for his weakness? He left the cave without delay, although it might have cost him much to do God's will. As he walked along, he met Eliseus tilling the earth, following a plough drawn by oxen. Inspired to take him as an associate in his mission, he cast his mantle upon him with the intention of communicating the spirit of prophecy to him in investing him with the habit of a prophet. Eliseus immediately determined to follow him, only asking to go and embrace his father and mother. Elias, not displeased with this request prompted by filial affection, answered: *Go and return back; for that which was my part I have done to thee.* You must now correspond to the grace you

have just received. I have made known to you God's will; you know now that God wishes you to be consecrated to His service. Take care not to forget the great grace you have received.

Might I not, my dear daughters, apply to each one of you these same words? You have all been called to the service of God. You have all been solemnly clothed with the holy habit which is, as it were, the pledge of special favours. You have been instructed in your duties and told what the Lord asks of you. Now it is for you to correspond to so many benefits.

Eliseus, who wished that his family and all the people should know that the day on which he renounced his worldly possessions was one of great happiness to him, killed a yoke of oxen, boiled them on a fire kindled with the wood of his plough, and had a joyful feast with them all. Then rising up he followed Elias and ministered to him, abandoning his family and property to answer the call of God, to which he remained ever faithful.

Each one of you, my dear daughters, has experienced a joy similar to that of the Prophet. Our young novices have their first participation of it on the day of their clothing. Our dear professed, young and old, were at the height of their happiness on the day they pronounced their Vows. You have all made the sacrifice of your relations and of your possessions. God grant that His Spirit may never depart from you, and that you may remain constantly faithful to His call.

This morning ashes were sprinkled on your heads; by this holy ceremony the Church recalls to us that we are dust and unto dust we shall return; an important memento of death which was the special subject of your meditations to-day.

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You will remember, how on the day of your profession, after receiving the image of Mary and of the Good Shepherd, to be worn day and night on your breast, after the black veil had been put on your head as a mark of your death to the world, the officiating priest addressed to you these words in the name of the Church: " My Sister, you are now dead to the world and yourself, to live only in God in solitude as in a tomb." Then to signify your assent to these words you prostrated yourselves on the ground in the form of a cross, and you were covered with a pall. The psalm *Libera me Domine* was sung, and you were sprinkled with holy water, as is the custom with the dead. At the end the officiating priest changing his tone calls you, saying: " Arise, my Sister, come forth from the shades of death, clothe yourself with the light of life, which is Jesus Christ, etc."

There are two kinds of death, the death of the body and a spiritual death, as there are also two kinds of life, the life of grace and that of nature, or the human life we lead and the life we lead in God.

We do not ask the death of the body for you, because you are necessary, each one of you, for the works of the Institute. But I pray God, with all my heart, to bring about that spiritual death which consists in dying to yourselves to live for Him alone. Oh, yes! die this death which will give you life, die to your senses, to your affections, to your own judgements, to your will, in a word, die to all that is not God. Use your utmost endeavours to extinguish the life of nature that you may live the life of grace. Notice, my children, that the saints have constantly striven to put nature to death by going always against their passions. Listen to the words of the Apostle St Paul, *I die daily*, and as if

that was not sufficient, he adds: *I die at each moment*, wishing to teach us by this that we must die continually to self, to live only in God. A soul who dies to herself is hindered by no repugnance, she even does not experience any, nature having so little hold over her. It is to be remarked that those who are most attached to their own will are the very ones to oppose that of others.

What are the means you must use to attain to this death, which should be the object of all your endeavours and desires? The great secret of dying to oneself is to place no obstacle to the workings of God's grace, allowing Him to govern us in all things. Now, my dear daughters, it is God Who takes us by the hand and guides us like little children, by our holy Rule and by the voice of our Superiors. Therefore, allow yourselves to be led by this kind and beneficent hand, offering no resistance; be obedient to the inspirations of divine grace, and rest assured you will reach the port of a happy eternity.

St Francis de Sales says that we shall certainly die to self if we accomplish God's will in everything. Therefore it is not necessary, as perhaps you imagine, to undertake great austerities. There are a thousand other ways that are constantly at hand, which are sometimes more meritorious, because they cost nature more. For example, you are inclined at recreation to laugh immoderately—control yourself. Instead of applying steadily to work during the day the fancy takes you to interrupt it needlessly—remain quietly at your post. Do not deprive yourselves of food in the refectory; on the contrary, take all that is given you, but leave a last mouthful that you specially like. Or again, take only half if fruit is given for desert.

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Coarse linen falls to your share, do not complain. In these ways and in a hundred others you can die to self. Perhaps you may say to yourselves, we desire to be despoiled of self and to die to self; it is true, but if we examine ourselves carefully we shall see that we wish it to be done in our own way rather than according to God's will. And He, in His infinite mercy, lays His hand upon us, strikes and chisels us, removes whatever hinders our living for Him alone. Let us humbly submit to His operations.

If you are generous enough, my dear daughters, to allow yourselves to be crucified after the example of our Divine Saviour, to die with Him so as to bury your poor human nature in the tomb, you will rise gloriously from the sepulchre, as He did, to be born again in a divine life which, begun here below in the mysterious obscurity of Faith, will have its completion in the splendours of eternal glory, when we shall be able to say with truth: *I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me.*

MAXIM

Apply yourselves above all to the practice of interior mortification. When it is cold, do not complain. We may be quite certain that it is not so cold here as it will be hot in purgatory.

CHAPTER XXVI

Eve of the Feast of the Annunciation

THE feast we are about to celebrate to-morrow, my dear daughters, is the one which, of all others, should rejoice your hearts, since on this happy day the holy Virgin, in becoming Mother of God, became our Mother also. When we contemplate the infinite abasement of the Word, Who on that day descended from Heaven into the womb of His Mother, what sentiments of admiration does not this feast excite in our hearts. This mystery was accomplished at midnight whilst Mary was in prayer, and in memory of this wondrous hour the Carmelites make every year an hour's prayer at this time. Those who lament that they cannot meditate must ask for the gift of prayer and they will receive it.

Now, my dear daughters, I am going to greatly rejoice your hearts and incite them, more and more, to love for Mary and gratitude to her. To-morrow, March 25, Feast of the Annunciation, our convent of London actually opens. To-morrow our sisters take possession of a house and will receive penitents and children. We may say that the object of our ardent desires is at last fulfilled, but for every reason we must continue to watch over it. A child still unborn, or who has only just entered this world, is far enough from being able to walk alone. I cannot express my great joy that the news of this happy event should come to us on so beautiful a feast. The Blessed Virgin is truly the

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foundress of our London House. Good St Joseph has also contributed much on his side to this great work; we have not prayed to him in vain. But he wanted to leave all the honour of it to his spouse, and to-morrow he will present it to her as a bouquet. I quite believe that St Euphrasia has also taken up the matter, and feel sure she has spoken to our good God about London, and we owe the accomplishment of our desires to this chorus of prayer. In order to draw down upon us, more and more, the protection of our Blessed Mother, we shall begin to-morrow a novena of processions to our Lady of Dolours, which will end exactly on the feast. We should count no cost where there is question of so glorious a mission as that of London, and I must own that all the sacrifices we have made for its success seem trifling compared to the results we look for. What victory more joyful than the establishment of a convent in a Protestant country and erring souls brought back to the bosom of the Church!

MAXIM

Confide in our Blessed Mother, she is the Superior of the Institute. Be very devout to the Immaculate Conception and to the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin.

CHAPTER XXVII

The African Missions begun May, 1843

MORE than 1,400 years ago, my dear daughters, our Father St Augustine composed the Rule we follow which commands the admiration of the whole Church. It is centuries since any cloistered Order entered Africa; and during this period the chanting of the holy Office has never been heard there; it is granted to us to restore it once more in this land so celebrated in former times.

The daughters of St Vincent de Paul and the religious of Christian doctrine have preceded you to these distant shores, but these communities, admirable in themselves, are not cloistered, and do not chant the holy Office. You, therefore, my dear daughters, have the most glorious share in the work there. We are all filled with joy at your departure for this country.

Four Latin Doctors have enriched the Church with their works, and of the four St Augustine has written most and best. What sweetness, what strength are contained in his words. There is nothing to be compared to the beauty of his writings. Read our holy Rule and remark the unction of its every line. Note the very first chapter: "Before all things love God and then the neighbour." This great saint loved God so ardently. How he will rejoice now at our mission. I have no doubt that his powerful prayers have contributed much to bring about this great enterprise. The Africans, half

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barbarians as they are, still cherish the memory of the saint, particularly his great love for souls. We read in his life that, desiring to establish a community at Hippo, he spoke of the project to his people, adding: "Do my people wish it?" And as they clapped their hands in approval, he said: "I am satisfied; the voice of the people is the voice of God." Hippo no longer exists but the place of his tomb is preserved with veneration, and recently Mgr Dupuch built a little chapel over the spot which has become a pilgrimage not only for Catholics but also for Arabs. You will see these places, my beloved daughters, as also the spot where that admirable book was written, *The Confessions of St Augustine*. You will recall to mind that fourth century, when a large number of religious combated under the Rule of this celebrated saint. The thought struck me last night, still more forcibly this morning, that our age is to revive the primitive fervour of the Church in Africa.

We know, my dear daughters, that you will be well received, on the whole, in Algeria. The Arabs and Bedouins like white, and they will respect your religious dress. You will have many penitents, many souls to save.

What remarkable circumstances are connected with this Foundation. Mgr Dupuch, Bishop of Algiers, by whose invitation we are going, tells us that when celebrating Holy Mass in our chapel at the altar of St Philomena, the saint told him that he would find virgins in our Congregation suited to the works he wished to establish in Africa. These words have always haunted him, and assuredly it is to the protection of St Philomena that we owe the accomplishment of his desire, despite the efforts of hell. Another singular circumstance

is that the Bishop of Angers felt himself impelled, almost against his will, to hasten the Foundation. A trustworthy person went to the bishop's house yesterday morning for an answer to a question we had asked his Lordship: "Say to the good Mother," he replied, "I have not time to write even a line, but tell her to set about the nominations, and I will go and confirm everything this evening."

Then, again, yesterday we found five hundred francs more were needed for our sisters' journey. We knew not how to procure the sum when suddenly it came to us from an unexpected quarter. Do you wish, my dear daughters, to obtain more and more of these signal favours? Observe the holy Rule in all things, chant the Office according to our Directory, and remember these words of St Augustine: "Do not mar the beauty of your canticles by the false tones of your life." Be humble as was our Father St Augustine. When, before his conversion, he went to confer with St Ambrose, he was sometimes kept waiting; but far from being offended, he considered himself unworthy to disturb this venerated prelate. It was this humility that caused St Ambrose to predict that Augustine would become a great saint. These two lights of the Church now shine with a joint splendour.

Later, St Augustine received letters from St Jerome who, in the heart of the desert, had allowed himself to be prejudiced against him and wrote as follows: "Because you are a priest, because you have talent, because you are a bishop, you think to prevail over the ancients; but know that old oxen walk all the stronger as they are older." St Augustine replied: "Would that I had the wings of a dove and I would fly to you, who are my Father in the Faith!" Such is the humility of

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the saints; they vie with one another in humbling themselves. St Peter saluted St Paul in these words: "I salute thee, Apostle of nations," and St Paul answered him: "I salute thee, thou who art the foundation stone of the Church and the Father of all the people,"

Be obedient, my dear daughters, remember you were addressed in these words when you were appointed to set out: "Daughters of obedience, go to Africa, go there through obedience, remain there by obedience." I beseech you, do not grow weary of this mission, whatever its difficulties. Be sure, moreover, that the Africans will respect you and Heaven's blessing will attend you. But once more, I urge you to be humble and obedient after the example of St Augustine.

MAXIM

Strive to increase in love and zeal for your vocation. Besides being religious, my dear daughters, you are missionaries and you should be animated with an apostolic spirit.

CHAPTER XXVIII

After the Second Journey to Rome—Departure from Angers, April 18, 1843—Return to Angers, August 11 of the Same Year

I AM happy to tell you, my dear daughters, that from the time we left this Mother House for Rome we received continual favours from divine Providence.

We broke our journey at Mans, where we stayed in the Visitation Convent, meeting with a sisterly reception. During recreation, which we were enjoying with the community, an ancient Mother entered, and coming straight up to me said, "Mother, you have accomplished many works already but you are only half-way through the career traced out for you." I looked at her amazed, as indeed did all the religious.

We wrote you from Paris, relating all the graces showered upon us. We looked on it as a special blessing from Heaven that we met his Excellency the Pope's Nuncio; had it not been so, our affairs would not have progressed so well in Rome. We were erroneously informed that the Bishop of Nice was in Paris; we therefore wrote to him begging for an audience, which was granted, and we started at once to see his Lordship. When we reached the address given, we asked in vain for the Bishop of Nice; no one knew him, no one had seen nor heard of him. However, they told us that the Bishop of Nicea, the Pope's Nuncio, resided at

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the college near. On hearing the name Nicea we perceived there had been a mistake. Without saying anything we asked to be admitted to the Nuncio, who was then expecting us, having received the letter meant for the Bishop of Nice which he quite believed was intended for him.

He received us as his children. We did not allude to our mistake and spoke to him of our sisters in Rome, as well as of several other important matters in which he interested himself. His Excellency was just leaving for the Eternal City, where he arrived before us and assisted us by his influence and protection.

Some days after we were to start for Rome; our places were taken in the *diligence*, but at the moment of departure I felt so ill that it was impossible to continue the journey. The Superior at Paris took my place as far as Marseilles, and almost at the same moment the visit of Mgr de Forbin-Janson, formerly Bishop of Nancy, was announced. His Lordship wished to speak to us of an important mission, that of founding a House of the Good Shepherd in China. He wanted a promise of no less than five religious for the work, and all our sisters at Paris vied with one another in offering themselves.

At last we started for Rome. In crossing the sea we happily found ourselves in the company of several holy persons, four of whom were Jesuit Fathers on their way to India and perhaps to martyrdom. We had delightful conversations with them: each seemed to excel the others in zeal when speaking of gaining souls to God. You know that M. Eugene Boré* did not leave us till we reached Rome. We cannot describe the piety of this young man.

*Later Superior-General of the Lazarist Fathers.

When we landed at Civita-Vecchia, the French and Austrian Consuls met us, and so overwhelmed us with kindness and attentions that we were quite confused. The Austrian Consul was particularly kind; there was nothing he would not have done for us, as also M. Bussière*, who took us in his carriage to Rome—Rome, the end and object of all our thoughts, of all our desires.

We could hardly enumerate all the favours granted us in the Holy City. What precious audiences with His Holiness, Gregory XVI! What abundant blessings we obtained for the whole Congregation! Oh, how greatly the Head of the Church loves our Congregation, how dear you are to his heart, my dear daughters!

When praying in the principal churches of Rome I thought of you all, and asked for you all, boundless zeal and tender charity for the penitents; in a word, every virtue necessary in your holy vocation. But most specially I prayed for you in St Peter's, entreating the Chief Pastor of the Church to protect you and the whole Congregation. Nothing can equal the devotion one feels on entering St Peter's. Those are indeed happy who live in this Holy City, in this land watered by the blood of so many martyrs and where their sacred bones rest.

What shall I say to you of our House at Rome where I found our Institute so greatly loved! Our sisters are consumed with zeal for the salvation of souls. The pious Princess Doria, foundress of our Convent of the Lauretana, can refuse nothing to Mother Prioress. We said jokingly to the latter that we were surprised to find the House so small, adding also in jest, that the choir of the sisters was not

*M. Bussière it was who gave the medal of our Lady to M. Ratisbon.

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as handsome as the kitchens even of the Doria palace. This touched her to the quick, and she immediately mentioned the matter to the Princess, with the result that the following day workmen arrived to enlarge the choir and build dormitories.

Would I were able to recount to you all the graces our good God bestowed upon us, but for this a single day would not suffice. Our recreations, our conversations, our chapters will be a perpetual remembrance of them, for my soul and my mind are lost in this ocean of mercy. Remember all your life long, my beloved daughters, that you are the privileged children of God and of the Church, and that you must put your whole heart into corresponding to the designs of divine Providence over our holy Congregation.

On leaving Rome we found ourselves travelling in company with several members of the illustrious Doria family; Prince Borghese and the dear little Princess Agnes, a charming child, were with us on the boat.

MAXIM

Let us esteem our vocation more and more, and look forward with joy and gratitude to all the good which God means us to accomplish.

CHAPTER XXIX

After Visiting our Convents when Returning from Rome

WHEREVER I went I reminded our beloved sisters of those words of our Venerable Father Eudes: " They should employ their minds and hearts, their care and industry, in rendering themselves worthy coadjutors and co-operators with Jesus Christ Our Lord, in the work of the salvation of souls whom He has redeemed at the price of His Blood." We must fathom the meaning of these words, my dear daughters, and put them in practice. -

I can never thank God sufficiently for the grace which He granted me in being able to visit our southern Houses. I now ask Him the favour of visiting, when winter is over, those of the north. On my return I shall willingly sing my *Nunc dimittis*, if God so wills. I found the most perfect docility in all our Houses.

There were several things that needed to be reformed but a want of experience was the cause in this case. Some said to me: " We were so young when sent here. But we are quite ready to do all you wish, all that you tell us." In fact, everything was put right.

Religious perfection does not consist in having no failings, in never committing a fault, but in correcting our faults as soon as they are pointed out to us.

We must be on our guard against forming un-

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favourable opinions, or being prejudiced against any of our monasteries or against any country.

Wherever you go, do not fail to do your very best to preserve the customs and practices of the Mother House. Nevertheless, use discretion, and be quite sure that in certain things you must adapt yourselves to circumstances, doing the best you can, remembering that the spirit of our vocation is to make ourselves all to all. I will give you an example that will show you the necessity of putting this advice in practice. In one of our Houses in Rome they kept to the French kind of food and to several other customs contrary to Italian usages. The consequence was the penitents could not accustom themselves to it and it was very difficult to effect any good amongst them. In the other House Italian food was given, and I found the penitents happy and attached to their Mothers, who in this way won them much more easily to God.

In fine, your Rule should be your guide above all, your star, and as for the customs which prevail here, let it be your delight to carry them out as far as you can.

We wish the seal used for letters should be similar in all our Houses to that of the Mother House. I also desire that our refectories should be alike, that the plates and dishes should be of pewter as far as possible. One of our good Mothers remarked: "Silver dishes are suitable to grand people, but pewter to religious. Let us leave new fashions to the world." St Augustine, however, permits silver spoons for greater cleanliness.

We must endeavour, more than ever, to console and encourage our sisters in the Foundations. They are so really good. Take care not to say a single

word which could grieve them in the least. A letter ought never to be sent from here which could give them any pain whatever, and if this should unfortunately happen, I publicly declare that such a letter has never been read by me. The Mother House cannot do too much for the happiness of our fervent sisters. We will send to their aid religious filled with zeal and good mistresses of penitents, which is a matter of the greatest importance in a House of the Good Shepherd.

Remember this, my dear daughters, when a House possesses a good Superior, a devoted Assistant who is a help to her in everything, a capable mistress of penitents seconded by another who is clever about work, that House prospers. To make yourselves useful in the convents where you will be sent, you must each perfect yourselves in your special work. For instance, she who has no aptitude for study should devote herself to needlework, to embroidery, mending, ironing, etc., and learn how to prepare and superintend the needlework. Whatever may be your occupation, do it perfectly. Our Lord has plenty of good reserved for each one of you to do. Rejoice and thank Him for it, and be full of courage.

This morning at meditation I thought of St Vincent de Paul presenting a foundling to the ladies, who assisted him in his charities, but who had become discouraged. "Oh surely, ladies," he exclaimed, "you will not let this poor child die! Are you going to leave this poor little creature without help and unbaptized?" And all the ladies filled with fresh zeal, promised to support his work even at the cost of their lives.

I present our thirty Houses to you, my dear daughters.* Without your zeal, your self-sacrifice,

*In 1843 there were only thirty Houses of the Congregation.

your devotedness, they cannot be supported. You see then what you have to do. . . . That our Houses will not want for the necessities of life I have no doubt, that they enjoy the protection of Heaven I feel certain, but I cannot believe that they will be maintained without wholly devoted religious. In fact I look upon it as an impossibility, just as there can be no perfect devotedness when there is not the spirit of the cross and a love of it. Remember that we are established on Mount Calvary.

If your works had been in the hands of the Paris ladies to whom St Vincent de Paul spoke, what would they have said? what have done? Try to form, if you can, some estimate of the immense good you are called upon to do. You can hardly have any conception of it.

When we close the eyes of our poor penitents after death, what a consolation it is for us to think that in eternity they will open them to the ineffable beauty of Heaven. They usually depart this life in the most edifying manner and with much resignation. You, my dear daughters, who have the merit of helping them to save their souls will be rewarded in a never-ending eternity.

MAXIM

Love the Mother House and let your love be such that you never lose sight of it. Remember Joseph in the midst of honours and riches always kept his own country in mind.

Love the Mother House above all; it is your nurse, the cradle of your spiritual infancy. When the Mother is suffering, her children, if well brought up, do not forsake her; on the contrary, they show their love for her by every means in their power.

CHAPTER XXX

After the Visitation of Various Convents

OH, my dear daughters! what a consolation it has been to me during my late journey to see the perfect order which reigns in our Houses, to find our holy Rule maintained in its full vigour, and charity and union of hearts existing, as well as great affection for the dear House of Angers, which the sisters gladly recognize as the principle and support of the Foundations. Oh, how much the Foundations love the Mother House! Until I saw it myself, I did not realize it. I return bringing you a thousand affectionate wishes from your sisters, who feel fresh courage in their labours when thinking of your tender charity in their regard. We may say that their communications with the Mother House and the affectionate letters they receive from you are their life. A special blessing to those whose charge it is to give them this consolation! Oh, my beloved daughters, never cease to maintain the most delicate and cordial relations with the Houses of the Institute, above all with the poorest, assisting them in every possible way. By the practice of this tender charity you will make continual progress in holiness.

When you write to our dear sisters do not be satisfied with a few insignificant lines which are disappointing, but show your interest in everything by entering into little details. In writing to the Houses that have much to suffer express your sympathy and endeavour to encourage them.

Still more tender and more affectionate should be your charity towards our humbler Foundations; we should go to them with the same joy as we should to the larger Houses. However, when we are about to found a House we should take care not to shut ourselves up in a far corner, so to say, where it is impossible to do good. We must be guided in all things by a humble prudence, and by a spirit of perfect submission to those who speak to us in God's name.

I confess, my dear daughters, that one of the thoughts that preoccupies me night and day is the maintenance of our poor Houses. When I hear that one of our dear communities is suffering privations, I could say willingly with Mother de Chantal, " My heart is so touched at the thought of our sisters' great need that I wish I were able to sell myself to procure them assistance."

The love this great saint bore to her daughters was truly extraordinary; and this Our Lord was pleased to manifest even by miracles. Thus when the heart of this illustrious foundress, translated from Moulins to Lyons, was brought into the presence of the community it was seen to throb several times, which was looked upon as a mark of the love the holy Mother bore her religious family.

Above all, be charitable to our sisters who are travelling; receive them most cordially. Listen to the Apostle St Paul instilling into the early Christians the practice of fraternal hospitality: *I commend you to Phebe, our sister, who is in the ministry of the Church that is in Cenchrea, that you receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that you assist her in whatsoever business she shall have need of you: for she also hath assisted many, and myself also.**

*Rom. xvi, 1, 2.

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The same Apostle, writing to the faithful at Corinth, says: *I exhort you that you be subject to such and to every one that worketh with us and laboureth:* and again he says, *they have refreshed both my spirit and yours.* Truly, my dear daughters, you also console me much when I see you receive our sisters so kindly.

Exercise hospitality one towards another. These words may well be addressed to us for charity is the essence of our vocation. We may say that the Mother House is the home of an affectionate grandmother, where children and grandchildren, who come to visit it, are tenderly caressed. When our sisters arrive we ought to pay them every attention, ministering to their slightest wants, making them rest, comforting them, washing their linen, showing them the utmost cordiality accompanied with humility and charity.

Meet our sisters who come to visit us so joyfully with holy freedom, cordially showing them the pleasure their visit gives. Our conduct in their regard must be such that it may be said of us as is written in Holy Scripture: *The multitude of believers had but one heart and one soul, neither did any one of them say that, of the things which he possessed, anything was his own; but all the things were common to them.*

The spirit of the ancient Patriarchs still lives in the customs of the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon. They treat travellers, particularly priests and religious, with so much respect that it is impossible to describe the delicate attentions they bestow upon them. Amongst other things they present them with perfumes in abundance, fresh milk, the best fruit, the sweetest cream, the most delicious cheese and the most luscious fruit; they

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kiss their hands and call the whole family and the children to salute them and ask their blessing. They consider it an honour to assist them to mount their horses, they touch their garments with respect, and continue to salute and bless their departing guests until they are out of sight.

Let it not be said of you, my dear daughters, that the inhabitants of Mount Lebanon surpass you in the practice of fraternal charity.

The Abbot Apollo, Superior of several convents of the Thebaid, frequently told his religious that when their brethren came to visit them they should treat them with respect. I always read with renewed pleasure what is related in the life of St Anthony on this subject. As his disciples frequently visited him, he cultivated a few vegetables wherewith to better entertain those who came to see him. It was a great feast for the saint when his sons visited him and they always left him happy, whilst he himself rejoiced that he had cheered and comforted them. Thus do the saints act. Let us learn to imitate them. We should remember that there ought to be but one heart and one soul amongst us.

It is generally imagined by persons in the world that religious are unhappy and discontented, and that they live together without love for one another. No, no, my dear daughters, you can bear witness to the contrary. Gathered together, as we are here, from all countries, we are so many affectionate sisters and we know well what it costs us when we have to separate. And no one will blame us if we shed tears at the moment of separation: for the soul of St Paul himself was moved, to its very depths, by the tears shed at his departure by the faithful—that great Apostle who endured with

so much courage, bonds, stripes and imprisonment. In spite of the detachment and submission of the daughters of St Teresa, they also wept when obliged to separate. And St Bernard, when once on a journey, receiving letters from his brethren, in which they bewailed his absence, replied: " You tell me that you are much grieved by my absence, but pray consider how painful and sad it must be for me to be at a distance from you: moreover, the trial of separation is not the same for you and for me, because it is a very different thing for a whole community to be deprived of the presence of one, to one being deprived of the presence of the whole community."

My dear daughters, always preserve a deep affection for your sisters and for your Mother House. Is not Angers the cradle of your religious infancy? Ought it not, therefore, to be the centre of your affections? Yes, certainly, and nothing should be able to efface its memory from your hearts. Of course, it is not the walls that I exhort you to love, but the spirit of regularity, zeal, piety, charity and obedience which reign in this House, which you ought to imitate wherever you go. You are now animated with the best dispositions: let them not degenerate after a few years, nor give place to a spirit of selfishness, which will rob you of your first fervour. If you swerve from this path you will go astray.

MAXIM

You greatly love your holy vocation, my dear daughters, you love its works, you love prayer, but it is in human nature to fall away. You ought, therefore, constantly to renew your first fervour and avoid everything that could be an obstacle to divine grace.

CHAPTER XXXI

After the Journey in Bavaria

MY dear daughters, we have frequently repeated to you those words of the Royal Prophet: *How admirable is God in His Saints and in His works.* To-day we have still more reason to exclaim: *O my God, how admirable art Thou in Thy works.* In the different Foundations which we visited we saw so much virtue, devotedness and regularity that we were ravished with joy in the Lord. If it is a pleasure to speak to you of the magnificent churches raised to the glory of the thrice-holy God,* with how much greater pleasure do we speak to you of souls, those living and invisible temples of the Divinity. We have seen the attachment borne by our dear sisters to the Mother House, whose least recommendations are looked upon as orders never to be violated. We have seen their numerous families, who are fervent and blessed by God, amongst whom we found sixty souls newly regenerated in the holy waters of baptism. Finally, I do not hesitate to say that each one of our Houses is a chosen spot of predilection upon which God sheds the dew of His most choice and fruitful graces. Oh who can enumerate all the favours God has bestowed upon us! His benefits to us are unceasing and therefore it is our duty to thank Him continually; our hearts ought to melt with gratitude and love towards

*Our Mother visited the Cathedrals of Munich, of Cologne, Aix-la-Chapelle and of Strasburg.

Him. For my part, for a long time past, I have found it only possible to meditate upon the graces God vouchsafes to bestow on our Congregation. And may we not reflect on the individual care His Paternal goodness bestows on us? A canticle of thanksgiving should resound constantly from our lips. Oh, never let it happen that you receive a favour from Him without thanking Him for it. It will be a means of obtaining fresh favours because God loves and blesses grateful hearts.

Frequently thank Him for the inestimable grace of your vocation. Why have we not the tongues of all nations that we may proclaim aloud so great a benefit. Truly, how precious and magnificent is the portion which has fallen to your share. God has made Himself our inheritance in this life; nevertheless, it is not sufficient to admire the sublimity of your vocation, you must render yourselves worthy of it, because, as the Apostle says: *We exhort you that you receive not the grace of God in vain.*

You should endeavour to rise to the height of the vocation which God has given you. Your thoughts, your sentiments, your affections, ought to be the thoughts, sentiments and affections of the saints and of Jesus Christ Himself. Your virtue ought not to be an ordinary and common virtue, but you ought to endeavour to attain the highest degree of perfection. Does it seem enough to you if you fulfil exactly the charge that is confided to you, avoiding grave faults, and remaining always in the same state, without advancing or falling back in any notable way? No, no; this languid kind of life without progress very much resembles a state of sleep. Look at a vessel in mid-ocean: if a favourable wind cease, its progress becomes difficult and even impossible. Thus it is with

our souls, when we allow ourselves to sink into a state of apathy, therefore we must keep in motion, in action—that is to say, the wind of fervour and charity must always waft us onwards and bear us towards Our Lord. Never let us pause nor even slacken our pace, but let us ever keep alive in our memory that commandment of Our Divine Saviour: *He that is just, let him be justified still : and he that is holy, let him be sanctified still. Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.* It is certain, my dear daughters, that we can never attain to the perfection of God for He is infinite in His perfections; but Our Divine Saviour would have us understand, by these words, that we ought to endeavour constantly to attain to a still higher perfection that we may draw nearer to God, and this, I am glad to say, is the spirit of our fervent sisters whom I have just seen upon the battlefield. The zeal with which they labour for the works of God and for their own sanctification has greatly consoled my heart, and has animated me to work myself with greater ardour. By this recent visit I have acquired more experience than a residence of ten years here could have taught me. I should never have believed that the progress of our Foundations had been so rapid, nor that our Institute was already so far advanced that it appears to go forward, so to say, with giant strides, accompanied by a heavenly light which guides it. What must we infer from all this? We ought to conclude that we are on the way of salvation and perfection, we venture to say, of sanctity.

You wrote to me that our sisters, lately deceased, died saintly deaths and went to join the ranks of the Church Triumphant. Let us hope that we, who still combat in the Church Militant, may

one day rejoin them at the haven to which they have attained. In the meantime let us continue our journey with courage, profiting by the great advantages which the eminently religious life of our Institute offers to us. Oh, may our beloved Congregation be always the place of our rest! There let us pass the night of our exile until the sun of our true country rises.

MAXIM

By our fidelity to grace we must renew the youth of the Institute and raise up a noble edifice of zeal and fervour.

CHAPTER XXXII

Arrival of the First Negresses

ON our way to Rome, my dear daughters, we had to leave the *diligence* to lighten it as we ascended a hill. We met a shepherd boy taking care of his flock of sheep of which some were black and others white. "How happy you are, little shepherd," I exclaimed, "for you have both white and black sheep. I have many white but no black ones." These black sheep, my dear daughters, for whom I have longed many, many years, are the poor negresses barbarously stolen from their parents, or even sometimes sold by them for a few pieces of silver. These cruel slave dealers carry them off in chains to Cairo, Alexandria, or other places, where these poor little creatures are exposed in the market places to be sold to the highest bidder. Numbers amongst them fall ill on the way, or are too weak to follow the others, and then are abandoned in a wood or ravine. There they die of hunger or become the prey of wild beasts. How often in our native Island of Noirmoutier have we not heard this odious traffic and cruel treatment of the negroes spoken of. How frequently those heart-rending scenes have been described, which are to be seen in the slave ships where these poor negroes are crowded together, with scarcely sufficient food to prevent their dying of starvation, and beaten with a cane for the smallest faults by their cruel masters. Such recitals used to break my heart. What a joy for us to be

able to assist in delivering these unfortunate captives from a double slavery. At least we shall have the happiness, I hope, of saving some of them.

Father Olivieri, a priest of Genoa, has written to announce his approaching arrival; he says that his servant, old Nina, who has taken charge of the poor little blacks during the journey will accompany them to Angers. . . . What care we shall take of them! What pains we shall take to instruct them! My heart bounds with joy when I think that Ethiopians, Nubians and Abyssinians, will receive the white robe of baptism here. Who knows but that some day the Good Shepherd may pitch its tent upon the shores of the Nile and amongst these uncivilized tribes. Oh, my dear daughters, it will be a glorious day for us when the waters of baptism flow upon these young negresses, and what consolation we shall feel when the truths of faith begin to dawn upon their souls. We shall participate in the feast kept in Heaven and in the joy of the Church, whose gladness is so great when the number of her children is increased. With what tenderness does she receive all who come to her, with what goodness she welcomes infidels when they cast themselves into her arms. Lately some Japanese arrived in Rome, and the Pope baptized them with his own hand, not yielding the privilege even to a Cardinal. We are, indeed, happy to belong to Holy Church and that for ever. Let us thank God unceasingly for so great a grace.

MAXIM

Be very kind to the sheep confided to your care; never reprove them sharply.

CHAPTER XXXIII

*Letter from His Eminence Cardinal Mastai,
Archbishop of Imola, raised to the Ponti-
ficate under the Name of Pius IX, June 17,
1846*

I AM going to read a letter to you, my dear daughters, which I received this morning and which will give you great pleasure. It is written by his Eminence, Cardinal Mastai Ferretti, Archbishop of Imola, to tell us of the arrival of our dear sisters in that town.

“ Very Reverend Mother General,

“ Your Reverence must have already received from your dear children the particulars of their safe arrival at Imola; but I feel that I also should inform you of it, and at the same time express the great consolation I experienced in finding my diocese enriched by the little flock of consecrated Virgins, who in a few days will undertake the mission of saving so many lost sheep. I have no doubt that, with the assistance of God’s grace, they will lead them to the fold of the Prince of Shepherds, Jesus Christ. Praised for ever be the God of mercies! I beg your Reverence also to receive the assurance of my deep gratitude.

“ It is a consolation that they are with me in my palace. I have reason to thank God, Who holds the hearts of men in His hands; it seems to me that He has placed those of your daughters in His Own Heart.

“ I shall not fail to assist them in their needs, and assuring you that I shall keep this intention in view, I am happy to remain, with deep esteem,

“ Your very affectionate servant,

“ J. M. CARDINAL MASTAI,

“ Archbishop.

“ Imola, September 14, 1845.”

We may truly say, my dear daughters, that Our Lord rains down overwhelming proofs of His grace and love, by the blessings He bestows upon our labours on behalf of poor souls whom we have endeavoured to bring back to God, reserving for Heaven that torrent of celestial delights with which all who have laboured for His glory will be satiated. Is it not true that, although we have often to suffer humiliations, not one of us would have received in the world the honour paid to us as religious? Ought we not for this reason to keep ourselves very humble and little interiorly? God vouchsafes to place the great ones of the world in their exalted position, to inspire them with zeal and benevolence in behalf of our establishments. He has heard our prayers for subjects according to His Own Heart, of whom He has sent a large number. In gratitude for so many graces we must endeavour, more earnestly than ever, to do all that is pleasing to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, endeavouring to grow in perfection and to accomplish all our duties lovingly and fervently.

Let us pray for the salvation of souls; let us labour for the salvation of souls. We must never forget that our lives must be entirely consecrated to this end, and were we to have anything else in view we should be wanting in the spirit of our vocation, we should fail to understand its subli-

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mity, and have neither the love nor the spirit belonging to it.

MAXIM

Abandon yourselves completely to divine Providence, but at the same time labour as if you had not this same Providence to depend on.

CHAPTER XXXIV

The Young Prisoners

I AM glad to find myself in your midst again, my dear daughters, I would have liked to have had you all at Nazareth to receive the last arrival of Reformatory children.* The *diligence* of Rennes being late they only arrived about ten o'clock at night. At first they seemed in low spirits and afraid; but when brought before the large wood fire that blazed in the kitchen our little birds began to chirp. We gave them hot soup, meat, wine, etc. Then their poor hearts expanded: it was long since such a feast had been spread before them.

Another surprise awaited them the next day; their prison clothes were changed for the garments you had taken such pleasure in charitably preparing for them. They looked at one another, unable to understand this transformation. It was a wonder to them when they were allowed to run about in part of the gardens and they asked, "Are we no longer in prison?" "My children, you are in the Good Shepherd," we answered, "to learn in it to love and serve God, and to be taught to work so that you may be of use later to your families." "Thank you, sister," replied one of them. Whereupon an older girl immediately corrected her energetically, saying: "You must not call them *sisters*, they are *mothers* here."

Well then, my dear daughters, let us be true

*Seventy-five Reformatory children were transferred in two sets from Rennes to our House at Nazareth (at Angers) May 2 and 3, 1853. A hundred were transferred there from Clairvaux, May 1, 1854.

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mothers, watchful shepherds of this new flock. The task is difficult but the reward will be magnificent. The work is one in which the whole town is interested. His Lordship has promised to go to say Mass at Nazareth.*

For a long time past we have remarked, my dear daughters, that each feast of the Good Shepherd brings us new treasures of grace. We have found by experience the truth of these words that our good Mothers of Tours used to say at the Assembly: "Grace is a fruit of the cross; only those who climb to the summit of the tree can gather it." Great crosses were our portion last week but consolation has followed. I will tell you, first of all, that his Lordship our Bishop went to our House of Nazareth yesterday, where he celebrated the holy Sacrifice, and a good number of our children had the happiness of receiving at the hands of their pastor the God Who for the first time visited their young hearts.

Confirmation followed and over one hundred souls were fortified with arms to resist the assaults of the evil one. The good dispositions of this dear flock are a joy to us. The generality are pious and industrious children; sometimes one comes across charming features in their characters. The only reward many ask for their good conduct is to be allowed to visit the Blessed Sacrament. Is not this a real consolation? Pray more and more, my dear daughters, that our good God may touch, still more deeply, the hearts of these little prisoners who are confided to our care.

MAXIM

I repeat it, my dear daughters, be full of love and charity for souls.

*Mgr Angebault, Bishop of Angers.

CHAPTER XXXV

Development of our Institute

BLESSED are they that have seen what you have seen. Blessed are they that have heard what you have heard.

Does it not seem, my beloved daughters, as if these words were in some measure addressed to you, when you consider the works of our holy Institute and the special manner in which God has deigned to shed abundant blessings on our feeble efforts?

A charming picture has been presented to us by the circular letters which we have just received, that of a family whose members scattered over various and distant countries, are yet closely united amongst themselves in most perfect charity, and all are striving for the same end—the spiritual regeneration of the sheep who have strayed from the fold of the Good Shepherd.

And here, my dear daughters, I gladly point out to you that the rapid growth of our Institute in so short a time is due only to the special blessing bestowed upon it by holy Church. In the Brief establishing the Generalate our Holy Father, Gregory XVI, deigned to use the following words: “We support it with all the weight of Our authority.” The little grain of mustard seed which he had first sown in the soil of France, and which had sprung up in a few parts only, has developed, grown rapidly, and from a little shrub has become a great tree extending its branches in every quarter of the globe, gathering souls by thousands

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under its protecting shade. His Holiness Pope Pius IX, after his accession to the Papal throne, repeatedly said to our sisters: "The work of the Good Shepherd is a work after my own heart." And this venerable Pontiff has given us a proof of his fatherly interest in the Institute by the Brief of July 21, 1855, which established provinces in the Congregation.

It has been, as you see, the blessing of the Church and of its Head which causes us to advance, enabling us to make fresh progress every day. Just as the general of an army, to excite the courage of his soldiers, recalls to their minds the laurels they have won, shows them the cities to be conquered and the battles to be gained, so I recall to you all that the Institute has already accomplished, place before your eyes the works proposed to you—the souls which claim your help. Yes, my dear daughters, fight for the good cause; forget self so as to become entirely devoted to your Congregation, which should be everything to you. You are well aware that, without sacrifice, without self-abnegation, you can do no good; but, on the contrary, with zeal and devotedness you will succeed in accomplishing the most difficult works.

We see with joy that the progress of the Mother House is, so to say, reflected by a proportionate advance in each of the Houses. Do you not recognize the progress our monasteries are making day by day? Oh! admire this work of divine Providence and thank God fervently for it. Let this increase and strengthen your confidence in Him. We should make a return of still greater gratitude to God for His goodness, in vouchsafing to thus bless our efforts and crown them with constant success.

There is one thought, my dear daughters, that

should ever predominate in your minds, and it is this: As each of you should continually concur to the general good of the Institute and to its glory, so each ought to apply herself to fulfil, with all possible perfection, the particular office assigned to her. Remember, my dear daughters, that you are the instruments chosen by God to co-operate in the great work of the salvation of souls; that to you it is given to cultivate the grain of mustard seed, destined to become a great tree in the field of the Church. Your efforts must all be directed to this end. By your means souls who have strayed into the ways of sin must be brought to the grateful shade of this tree, there to recover strength and vigour. Now, how can you best effect this? It will be by the faithful accomplishment of your duties from whence will result all the beauty of God's House.

Consider these words of Jesus Christ: *It is not you who have chosen Me, but I Who have chosen you.* And why has He chosen us? What a subject for profound gratitude! Our state is much more to be envied than is that of earthly monarchs. They may win battles, but we gain souls to God. From the moment you recognize God's designs over you hasten to correspond to them. Our arms are our Rules and Constitutions. Live then according to the spirit of our holy Constitutions; let them be the rule of your thoughts, sentiments and actions, in fine, of your whole conduct. Conceive great esteem for your vocation. Is it not the highest, the most sublime? Yes, my dear daughters, if you remain faithful to the mission God has entrusted to you, if you love it sincerely, you can do much good, for great works are only accomplished by love.

Everything in you must concur to your progress in the ways of perfection; faith by its lights, hope

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by its strength, purity by its sweet perfume, charity by the warmth of its influence, and obedience by the fruits of benediction. You will attain the perfection of your vocation and the sanctity God demands from you, only by carefully preserving these fundamental virtues in your soul. By the practice of these virtues alone can you become like the evergreen trees planted by running waters, the leaves of which never fall off, and which bring forth fruit in due season.

Now, my dear daughters, we are going to tell you with great pleasure of the consolation we have had, which will show you how much reason there is to exhort you unceasingly to be grateful to God, to pray for the Institute, and to devote yourselves to it whole-heartedly. St Paul, writing to the Romans, says: "I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual grace to strengthen you." And I also, my beloved daughters, may say that I have a longing desire to impart to you all that God has done for us, in order to console you and excite your zeal more and more.

Yesterday, a letter from Modena told us that everything was ready for the Religious of the Good Shepherd. Even the expenses of the journey were defrayed. By the same post came a request for a Foundation in another large town. This is not all. A sister at Bristol writes us news which is both a surprise and a joy. Her brother, who holds an important government post in England, was so impressed by our work for young prisoners that he induced the government to entrust the Catholic Reformatory girls to the care of our sisters at Bristol.*

*The first Reformatory school which had been placed under Catholic supervision in England.

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Our little colony of missionaries who left us to found a house at Santiago (Chile) is now far on their way across the ocean.* The sisters who are to open one at Suben, Austria,† will reach their destination for the feast of the Presentation. Truly, our works succeed each other without intermission. They are like Jacob's ladder upon which the angels ascended and descended. You know of the generosity of the Minister Plenipotentiary of Chile, and of the repeated proofs he has given us of his kindness.

Our sisters write from India: "Oh, dear mother, what a glorious mission is ours! We have pagans to instruct, idolaters to convert. This thought inflames our zeal and fills our souls with indescribable peace and heavenly delights."

Let us continue our prayers, my dear daughters, and never cease thanking God.

If anyone amongst you does not possess a love for the works of her vocation, it is a sign that self-love has gained the mastery. As for myself, I acknowledge I feel transported with holy joy when new Houses are founded. Count de Neuville, our pious founder, experienced the same happiness; he was overjoyed at the opening of new folds and often contributed generously to them. He gave three thousand francs when our sisters left us to found the first House of the Congregation in America. Inspired with the same sentiments the Countess d'Andigné supplied the sacred vessels, the Church furniture, and many other things for the beginning of that House.‡ What would these

*Our Sisters left Angers November 2, 1856.

†The House at Suben, which was transferred to Baumgarten berg, dates from November, 1856.

‡The House at Louisville, founded 1843.

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pious benefactors say now? What joy would they not feel!

O my God, I cannot understand how it is that so many convents have sprung from this poor House of Angers. . . . A holy priest said to me recently: "The prayers and ardent desires of abandoned souls, who, in far-off lands, await with longing the advent of those who are to be their mothers in the order of grace, must contribute largely to the success of your missions; because the prayer of these souls are favourably received at the throne of the Divine Mercy. All who are animated with the spirit of God love the work of the Good Shepherd. Your Congregation becomes as necessary as the air we breathe. Were it in my power, I would establish a House of the Good Shepherd in every large town, if even only two penitents were to be saved."

In truth, my dear daughters, after converting souls, missionaries have no means of ensuring their perseverance in good without the assistance of Houses of the Good Shepherd. A great sinner returns sincerely to God with the firm resolution of avoiding the occasions of sin, and then finds herself without an asylum, without help or even work, what is to become of her? She has to choose between misery and death, or the continuation of her evil life.

Remember that many souls are still outside the way of salvation. We must earnestly beg of our Divine Master that they may hear His voice, that according to His words there may be *but one fold and one Shepherd*.

This will be probably the last Conference before the departure of our sisters for Modena.* They are about to leave us because the venerated Cardinal

*Our sisters left February 11, 1857.

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Patrizi, Protector of our Congregation, and His Highness the Archduke Maximilian, founder of the work, urge us to hasten their arrival in Italy. I ask you again, why are they so anxiously desired? Because of the poor souls who need their help. The kindness evinced towards us by the court of Modena is only because souls are concerned. Oh, my dear daughters, we can never tire of speaking of our fourth Vow.

MAXIM

Our Congregation, like Mount Sion, must never be sterile.

CHAPTER XXXVI

*Purity of Intention—The Glory of God—
Salvation of Souls*

WHEN St Ignatius, my dear daughters, was inspired to found his Religious Order, which is one of the most beautiful ornaments of the Church, he chose as his standard the celebrated motto: *All for the greater glory of God*. This was the sole end of all his undertakings, never had he anything else in view. The glory of God and the salvation of souls has been the foundation which has sustained his Society, in spite of the storms which have arisen to overthrow it.

All founders of Religious Orders had the same end, and certainly with any other motive they would not have succeeded. St Paul himself says: *We speak not as pleasing men but God, who proveth our hearts*. And he also said: *I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may dwell in me*.

Seek for happiness, my dear daughters, in God alone; but do not fail to refer to His glory and to the salvation of souls all that you are doing or may do. Yes, be assured that when your actions are actuated with this spirit they will be of great value and merit, and will bear in some way the stamp of sanctity, although they may appear to be very, very little, very indifferent, and very lowly. If a soul called to religion had any other end, she would grievously deceive herself. For this reason I unceasingly recommend to you great purity of intention in all you do; purity of intention in prayer, in

work, in the practice of our Rules and Observances, purity of intention in everything. The soul that keeps this in view never experiences the trouble, discouragement and sadness which, but too often, are caused by our self-love. She sees in all things only the good pleasure of God; her one thought is the faithful accomplishment of His holy will; she considers only His glory and the salvation of souls, and is, therefore, always content whatever happens. But another, on the contrary, who is self-seeking, who in a thousand ways is attached to self and who neglects purity of intention, usually meets only disappointment and trouble. She trusts to her own strength, and God abandons her to it, for it is His good pleasure to grant His help and consolation only to souls who distrust themselves, and place all their hope in the assistance of His grace.

Do not conceal from yourselves that the vocation you have chosen calls for entire self-abnegation. You desire to break the chains by which souls are bound to the devil, therefore you must expect to feel the effects of his anger. You thwart the powers of darkness, so they attack you with greater fury than other religious. Hence, you need great strength. How will you acquire it? By devoting yourselves solely to the promotion of God's glory and the salvation of souls. This will be your only sure support. You will be attacked, be made the subject of calumny and slander; you will meet with trials and afflictions in a thousand ways, but in the midst of your greatest sufferings your soul will preserve its peace.

Now, my dear daughters, never let yourselves be discouraged. God is the Master of trial and consolation. He sometimes permits the enemy of all good

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to make us feel the effects of His anger, and to harass us, but He never withdraws from us the aid of His powerful hand. Let us always lean on this strong support and endeavour, more and more, to acquire the virtue of purity of intention. The glory of God, the salvation of souls must be the end of all our actions.

MAXIM

Be very faithful to grace. God is exceedingly jealous of a soul whom He has chosen for Himself.

CHAPTER XXXVII

"Let there be Light"

WE read in the first chapter of the Book of Genesis that when the earth was created out of nothing it was enveloped in thick darkness, shapeless and devoid of all the beauty which afterwards adorned it. Then God began to create in detail the different works which we admire in the universe, saying, "Let there be light," and light was made.

The Apostle St Paul applies these words to another species of creation, to the light which enlightens our souls in the work of our justification and sanctification. *God, he says, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, Himself hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

And is it not true, my dear daughters, that we frequently see this creation of God Almighty's power renewed in our souls. Have we not often heard in the depth of our hearts, *Let there be light*, when it has pleased God to enlighten our minds by showing us the nothingness of created things, and the happiness of serving His Divine Majesty, in such sort that a supernatural light illuminated all our actions, vivifying and animating them. Every good impulse, every holy desire which we feel in our souls, are so many effects of this divine light. Happy they who know how to profit by them.

* 2 Cor. iv, 6.

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We have seen poor souls who, after ten, fifteen or twenty years of mortal languor, in a state of infidelity caused by their neglect of grace, suddenly completely changed by prompt correspondence to an extraordinary light which God gave them during the exercises of a retreat, or in a fervent Communion, or in a good meditation. This happened to that relaxed religious of whom Father —— speaks, who after an instruction exclaimed: “ I will be a saint and that without delay ”; and this resolution she carried out.

Just as the natural light which illuminates the world was the first of the works of Creation, so the spiritual light with which God enlightens us may be said to be the first of all graces. This light penetrates into the depths of our souls, drives out and completely dispels interior darkness. It was this light that, shining upon the Magi and the Shepherds, guided them miraculously to the grotto of Bethlehem. It was this same light which, by its brilliancy, dazzled the eyes of St Paul on the road to Damascus, which gave sight to St Augustine in the garden of Tagaste, and which enlightened St Francis Xavier when St Ignatius recalled to his memory the memorable sentence: *What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?*

These great saints knew how to profit by this grace, and with the divine help they went on from light to light.

Be faithful then, my dear daughters, in following the interior light which God deigns to grant to each of you. May it ever enlighten and accompany you! . . . The more faithfully you follow the light of grace, the greater will be your enjoyment of that delightful peace which constitutes our happiness

here below. With the assistance of this light you will walk with a firm step in the way of obedience, the paths of which are blessed by God, and your obedience will not consist of an exterior submission, but of a sincere conformity of your judgement and will to the orders of your Superior. We must own with all sincerity, my dear daughters, that we obey it is true, but is it not sometimes with a certain repugnance, an unwillingness to do what is contrary to our liking? Woe to us if we heed these bad inclinations of our soul; they increase and as a mist obscure our minds, and prevent the clear sight of God's light. If, on the contrary, we at once sacrifice our judgement, we render our obedience more agreeable to God and we advance in the ways of perfection.

This light from on high will become a brilliant beacon which will enlighten us in the exercise of our vocation. This was manifested in a particular manner in our first novices whose fervour was really admirable. I could cite many of them to you as examples. I will confine myself to recalling to your memory our dear Sister Mary of St Basil (Joubert). What piety, what humility, what devotedness she possessed! When she was only a novice, we could trust her with the important employments that we would give to the oldest professed sisters, feeling sure that she would discharge them perfectly and conscientiously. At the end of a day given up to incessant labour her amiability was the charm of our recreations. Her virtue was sweet, cordial and affectionate, not austere. She won the love of every one without seeking it, referring even her least actions to the glory of God. Having reason to think that she would perhaps be named Superior of a new House (Lille), she begged

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of God in earnest prayer, which was but too surely heard, that she might rather die than be named to an office which she believed was so far above her strength. The very day on which she was elected Superior fever set in and in a few days she was taken from us.*

I certainly do not refer to this instance of a prayer for death that you may imitate it, my dear daughters. On the contrary, I forbid such a prayer being made; but what I do recommend you to imitate is the fervour of our dear Sister Mary of St Basil, her abnegation, her charity, her love for the works of the Institute. Without love we are as it were frozen and lifeless, incapable of anything; but attachment to our vocation, to our Mother House, inflames and inspires us with an ardour that enables us to surmount all obstacles. The purity of such an affection, which has only God's glory in view, enlightens our souls, renders them fruitful, and causes all virtues to spring up within them, because the light with which our Divine Saviour illuminates us in this sanctuary of religion produces the same results in us as the sun's rays in nature. Under its beneficent influence faith becomes more lively, hope firmer, humility greater. It enkindles in our souls the fire of charity, establishing between God and us a holy intercourse of love, which the angels contemplate with admiration, and which, so to say, makes a monastery another Thabor, a living image of Heaven.

Some Carmelite Religious one day asked the Mother Antoinette of Jesus what means they should use to keep themselves constantly in the presence of God. The only answer made by the servant of God were these words of Scripture: *Let*

* She made her profession in 1833, dying August 27, 1836.

there be light, and for a long time the Mother, in her Chapters and Conferences, explained to them the effects of divine light in souls that receive it with docility; effects, the chief of which is to destroy our self-love and purify our souls from the imperfections which hinder our union with God. It is written of Our Lord that He appeared in the midst of the darkness of this world like a brilliant light, and that the darkness did not comprehend Him.

It sometimes happens that religious imagine themselves less fervent since their entrance into religion than they were in the world. Do you know whence arises this conviction? It springs from the fact that as religious they were conscious of certain faults of which they thought nothing in the world. In the splendour of this new light the depth of their nothingness is revealed to them; they can almost count their imperfections, one by one, and thus they recognize how great is their misery.

Blessed Agnes of Jesus said that she prayed for an ecclesiastic, fasted, wore hair-cloth, and shed many tears, because she saw by a light from Our Lord that this soul retained some imperfections of which he was unconscious, but which, nevertheless, prevented him from receiving the special graces destined for him. And observe, that this worthy priest himself fasted, wore instruments of penance, and daily spent several hours in meditation. Oh, how often it happens that we do not see ourselves!

Let us look into ourselves, my beloved daughters. Is it not truly our own fault if sometimes we find our souls filled with darkness, and we feel that Our Lord does not speak to our hearts? . . . Have we not reason to fear that there are stains in the depths of our souls which offend His divine eyes,

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and cause Him to withdraw from us? Nevertheless, we must in no wise lose courage; on the contrary, we must seek God anew and approach Him humbly, hoping to receive His light. Say to Him with the Prophet: *Thou lightest my lamp, O Lord: O my God, enlighten my darkness.** He will open the eyes of our souls, will show us our faults and will inspire us with greater ardour in working to attain perfection. Even if He hide Himself for our trial, let us submit to His holy will, not ceasing on that account to seek Him, being persuaded that He will not fail some day to restore to us His divine light.

But where will you most surely find your God again, my beloved daughters? You will find Him in the recollection of prayer and above all in Holy Communion. *O my God*, cries out the Royal Prophet, *with Thee is the fountain of life: and in Thy light we shall see light.*† Yes, in prayer and in Holy Communion we shall acquire the twofold knowledge of God and of ourselves, the knowledge of God to learn to love Him, the knowledge of ourselves to learn to despise ourselves.

In Holy Communion good desires expand like flowers and the soul prepares herself for the pruning time, which means the correction of her faults.

MAXIM

Let us often ask God's help and take care that our lesser faults place no obstacle to grace.

*Ps. xvii, 29. †Ps. xxxv, 10.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

On the Necessity of Watching over Ourselves

I HAVE the consoling conviction, my dear daughters, that many generous souls of all nations will come here, called by God to serve Him in our Institute, and that, consequently, the Mother House of Angers will become a model and rule for the Houses of our holy Order which will be established in various parts of the world. They will assemble in this dear Novitiate from all parts, to set out again later to spread the spirit of the Good Shepherd and its works of charity on every side. Therefore, in order to prepare themselves for their apostolic missions, the novices should begin by first accustoming themselves to watch over a flock, which is a very dangerous and difficult one to govern; in other words, they must watch over their own passions, excited by the disturbing influences of the capricious imagination which unhappily predominates, only too strongly, in us all. To gain the upper hand of our inclinations and imagination is of the utmost importance, I would almost say it is hardly possible, unless by a special grace, to bring them under subjection when we have once allowed them to gain the mastery.

Perhaps some of you, alarmed at the sight of your faults, believe that they are an insurmountable obstacle to the practice of virtue, and realizing the interior struggles they give rise to, lose courage and despair of being able to tread the path of perfection. Those who think thus are much mistaken,

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and only do themselves serious harm by the discouragement which greatly weakens their spiritual energy.

Observe, my dear daughters, that, generally speaking, we call passion any affection of the soul which tends to excite violent emotions, or destroys the usual calm and tranquillity of our minds; as for example, an inordinate affection for another person, a fit of partiality, excessive grief, or a too ardent desire for anything whatever. Now all these affections, all these emotions of the soul, may turn to good if we control them by reason, and if, with the assistance of divine grace, we direct them to a right end by purifying them and seeking our satisfaction only in doing the will of God, and in working for His greater glory. When these sentiments and affections arise in your soul, turn them to good account by referring them to Our Lord Who is your Master. It may be that you are very witty and clever, your affections are easily won, you have a kind heart, are of a cheerful disposition, with a frank, open manner, and you possess a lively imagination; make use of all these qualities as so many means which, wisely governed, will be of great assistance to you in procuring the salvation of your neighbour. God has bestowed His gifts upon you; make use of them to gain souls to Him.

Keep alive within you and bring under wise control that courage which makes you long to undertake great works, and the intrepidity that would lead you to overcome all obstacles; because under God's inspiration they will be a powerful help in establishing new Foundations, raising churches and undertaking what others might consider it folly to attempt.

Nevertheless, my dear daughters, be on your

guard and watch continually over yourselves, remembering that, as the Apostle says, we bear always within us the inclination to evil, the unhappy fruit of original sin. And we must wage continual war against this evil inclination by turning to good account those impulses which would otherwise lead to our ruin. This was the practice of the saints who laboured unceasingly to overcome their evil inclinations, resisting and conquering them, and diverting them from lower things to direct them to God. Thus we find St Francis of Sales, born with a violent temper, became a model of meekness and gentleness. We also know that St Augustine had an unfortunate propensity to the love of creatures, but he triumphed over himself, turned his affections to Our Lord, and to him we owe these beautiful words, "God is my love, my centre; I wish to live but for Jesus Christ. This is my passion, my one desire." Again, we know that St Ignatius was a vessel of pride and vanity, but once he recognized the nothingness of the things of this life his whole care was to humble himself, and procure in all things God's glory, so that he took for his motto, "All for the greater glory for God."

There may be likewise amongst us some who would be naturally proud, impatient, impulsive; others disobedient, capricious and difficult; and in fine, there may be some who would be unjust, full of underhand ways, inclined to deceit, and, of these last named I have the greatest dread, because it is rare for such persons to enter seriously into themselves, and still more rare to be able to fathom such characters. Well, my dear daughters, all these bad inclinations can and ought to be corrected, and for this reason we do not allow any of you to follow your inclinations and fancies.

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Do not be discouraged, my dear novices, the efforts we make to overcome our evil inclinations do not last long; nature is finally brought into subjection to the spirit, good habits are formed, and we walk straight on without very much difficulty.

Since there is no one who has not a predominant passion, it is important that we should discover our own, be on our guard against it and resist it; otherwise it will tyrannize over us and vitiate all our actions. But one of the most difficult things is to know and to acknowledge our weak point. We are only too much inclined to flatter and deceive ourselves. "It even sometimes happens," writes a Benedictine Religious, "that we have some fault or imperfection that may be called our favourite fault, evident to every one but ourselves; but even if we do perceive it, we have the unfortunate talent of excusing or concealing it from ourselves, forgetting the evils and great punishments it may bring upon us, or, at least, the infinite treasures of grace of which we are thereby deprived. Let us learn to skilfully draw good out of what would otherwise cause our ruin.

How is it, my dear daughters, that you have not yet attained perfection? Believe me, it is solely because you have not, so far, laboured seriously to overcome your predominant fault.

Those who are influenced by fear usually commit only small faults, but one generally detects a certain indefinable hardness in their character, whilst those who have an affectionate disposition more easily fall into greater faults, though they are generally of a grateful and sensitive nature.

Watch then, with all possible care, over that poor heart which by nature is so weak and so easily moved. Guard it jealously that no affection may

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ever find entrance therein which would displease Him to whom you have solemnly consecrated it.

The perfect union which has hitherto reigned in our community is a great comfort to me. The professed have a great love for one another and much love for the novices; and the novices also love each other and love the professed. Oh, never show any partiality. When there is but one heart and soul amongst you, it is indeed delightful; therefore love your sisters, and they will love you.

Just as the three young Hebrews remained free and untouched in the midst of the flames, so should you preserve a holy liberty of spirit, and specially so here in the Mother House. God wishes that the fountain head should remain unsullied, because you know that, however clear and beautiful the waters of a fountain if they be agitated and dimmed, the streams flowing from it also lose their clearness. And it is on this account we guard you so carefully here, watching that no breath of evil may reach you.

In order that you may triumph in the struggle with your imperfections, invoke the assistance of the Principalities and Powers who will certainly help you to gain the victory, for, *God hath given His angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways.* Place your souls under the protection of the Heavenly Spirits and do not doubt their help. With all possible earnestness I recommend devotion to the angels, the princes of the heavenly court. You will find that abundant consolations will accrue to you from it. By means of the holy angels you will win glorious victories in your spiritual combats, and you will overthrow your most terrible enemies, those especially that strive cunningly to lay snares to entrap you.

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And then we recommend you to communicate frequently and never to omit the Communion of Rule. In this intimate union with Our Lord we find our greatest strength. Jesus Christ, Who enters within us constitutes Himself the Guardian of our souls. With so great a help and the co-operation of your good will, you have no reason to fear that you will remain enslaved to your faults, but, on the contrary, you will succeed in transforming your natural inclinations into virtues.

MAXIM

It is human to fall but angelic to rise again. There is much more virtue in repairing a fault committed than in never needing correction.

CHAPTER XXXIX

On Faults of Character and on Prudence

IT is our intention, my dear daughters, to destroy, as much as possible, all the weaknesses and defects which may impede the progress of our dear Institute. To this end I beg of you not to let a single day pass on which you have not overcome one of your imperfections or evil inclinations; I assure you that if you give a little time to this practice you will succeed eventually in uprooting all your faults. We must not allow weeds time to shoot up, or they will spread all over.

My words convey an exhortation to you, assuredly, but I am glad to be able to say that they are not at all of the nature of correction or reproof, for, thank God, no one amongst you has given me cause to condemn or censure her conduct.

Let me tell you then that you must carefully substitute good seed, for the evil seed and weeds which you endeavour to eradicate from your hearts. I refer to the fundamental virtues which we must cultivate in our souls, to be worthy of being true Religious of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd.

My first recommendation is that you carefully endeavour, in a spirit of charity, to correct your faults of character; faults which are, so to say, born in us, are the most difficult to recognize and, therefore, the most difficult to correct.

Here, in this large House of Angers, we might

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almost say that such faults are scarcely perceptible and cannot cause serious annoyance in the community. In fact, is it likely that, in a large number of good religious, the bad humour and uncordial manner of one sister would attract much attention? There are so many, too, who make up for it by their fraternal charity, which makes the conversation pleasant, and thus things are overlooked. But can you imagine the trouble occasioned in a small Foundation or family, where the few persons who compose it are necessarily always coming in contact with each other, when one member does not overcome herself or control her faults of character? It not unfrequently happens that such a trial becomes insupportable.

There are some persons of so jealous a disposition that they always imagine others are preferred to them, and they are disturbed and complain of it so that it is difficult to know how to treat them. There are others who habitually speak in a harsh and impatient tone, and who never act with the kindness and consideration which belong to a religious. They give one the impression that they are always angry, and yet, in their eyes, these faults seem so slight and pardonable that they make no account of them and scarcely think of correcting them.

It is precisely these bad habits, called *faults of character*, that make it so difficult to deal with persons who allow themselves to be governed by them. We know that the pagan philosophers sought and even paid occasions of practising patience. We, therefore, who fight under the standard of the Cross should not find them above our strength.

You know how much the mistresses have to

suffer when amongst the penitents or children of the different classes, they meet with these characters which are so difficult to manage. For my own part I acknowledge that I have never suffered more than when my intentions have been misinterpreted and dissension sown for trifles. I remember having a penitent who was really industrious, devoted and faithful, but, unfortunately, so jealous that if she imagined that I preferred one of her companions to her she left her work and upset the whole house. You will probably encounter such characters, pious and good perhaps, but unreasonable and crooked and quite blind to their faults.

Observe, moreover, that persons are more easily brought to recognize and correct what is sinful, than to correct their faults of character which they do not look upon as sins. For example, a person who was abrupt and rude in her family rarely changes her character when she enters religion: her faults will reappear particularly after her novitiate. Sent to one of our Houses, she disturbs the peace of the community, gives disedification in the classes, and is an obstacle to good on a thousand occasions. Just as when one of its wheels does not move, the whole carriage is affected by it. Oh, what a terrible responsibility she incurs who is the cause of such a disorder!

Amongst Trappistines, Franciscans, Cistercians, a sister with the faults of which we speak would not perhaps do so much harm, as by their vocation these good religious are called to a life of solitude. They live alone; but we, on the contrary, live in constant intercourse with each other. The young persons in our Houses watch and pass judgement on us, and the world in its turn examines and judges us.

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You see then how necessary it is that the conduct of each of us should be such as to give edification, to cause our holy Order to be esteemed, and to give no reason for censure. Our Congregation ought to be so well organized that not one of its members should disgrace it.

Let us suppose that our Houses are, as it were, of glass through which all that occurs in them can be seen by the world, which is ready to blame us for everything even for that which otherwise meets its approval. It is essential, then, that we observe in all things a holy and religious prudence; interior and exterior prudence, the prudence of the serpent recommended by the Gospel, prudence in acting, prudence in words, prudence in giving our confidence, and prudence even in our relations and communications with one another.

In appearance as well as in reality we should behave with perfect candour and perfect regularity; otherwise, we may be sure that, sooner or later, very unfortunate consequences will follow. St Ignatius said: "The malice of our adversaries has made me more prudent than the counsels of our friends." As for us, let us not give the world reason to say that the imprudence of our own members enlightened us, and that experience is our guide.

✓ If prudence and discretion did not oblige me to great reserve I could give you some examples which would astonish you, and show the sad consequences that might arise from this want of prudence. I may say that inconsiderateness and imprudence in those who govern are capable of ruining us and endangering the whole Congregation. And, as you know well, I am not now speaking here of a person acting through evil motives. No, no; I

am speaking of one who, only through levity or want of reflection, allows herself to be led from the path of prudence—a fatal levity, a thoughtlessness disastrous in its consequences, which leads imperceptibly into an abyss of misfortunes.

St Basil says, and with him all the Doctors of the Church, that prudence consists in a just discernment of what we ought, or ought not to do, according to the various circumstances in which we are placed. The wise man says : *Let thy eyes look straight on: and let thy eyelids go before thy steps. Make straight the path for thy feet.** Do nothing without reflection and without an upright and pure intention. Those who in all things act with levity and without considering what they are about, end by falling over a precipice. There is a saying that he who would live wisely must lead a life of reflection.

+ Be prudent, above all, in your intercourse with our dear penitents and others under your care. For example, if one of you is appointed to leave a class to go elsewhere it would certainly not be prudent of her to go and take leave of the children expressing regret at her departure, appearing amongst them with tearful swollen eyes and quite disconsolate, saying, with a sigh, “I will do the will of God. I abandon myself to His providence,” and similar things. What might be the result of this? Perhaps a disturbance, an excitement in the class.

+ Never allow yourselves to be carried away by your imagination; it might lead you to commit one fault after another, and thus a single member might be the means of injuring the reputation of the whole community and preventing the success of its works; for acts of imprudence nearly always

*Proverbs iv, 25, 26.

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come, sooner or later, to be publicly known. It might even happen that the fable of the wolf and the lamb would be repeated in our own case, and people might say: "If you were not guilty of this folly, it was one of your sisters."

Take care that your dealings in the parlour be marked by great wisdom, by extreme prudence; let your bearing be dignified and religious and your way of acting serious but affable. Carefully avoid saying a single word that savours of haughtiness or rudeness, as this would give disedification, increase the hatred of the wicked against Religious Orders and cause endless evil to be said of us. *end*

Go promptly to the parlour when you are summoned so as not to cause impatience or grumbling. A poor workman will sometimes deprive himself of food to visit his daughter in one of our classes. If kept waiting, he will perhaps lose the money he would otherwise have gained, and then who will provide bread for his children at night? We ought to be kind, extremely kind, to working people.

We recommend you also never to mention in the parlour what takes place in the house, unless it were something that would interest and edify those to whom you speak, or be for the good of the House. St Ignatius was very strict on this point.

The Holy Spirit tells us: *By wisdom the house shall be built: and by prudence it shall be strengthened.**

At the time when we were applying to Rome for the erection of a Generalate in our Congregation, we were advised to refute by letter various accusations brought against us. We have since learnt that, had we done so, it might have been the means

*Prov. xxiv, 3.

of preventing the Holy See from granting what we asked. Another time I was urged to write certain things to a certain person; I hesitated a long time before complying but at last concluded it was necessary. Fortunately, it was confession day, and I confided the matter to the confessor who said to me: "Oh, my child, what have you done? If your letter has not been actually sent off do all you possibly can to get it back." Thank God, we succeeded; nothing would have been too much to give for this end. But you know, my dear daughters, it is easier to avert a danger than to remedy it. Remember to be *wise as serpents and simple as doves*.*

Do not imagine that thoughtfulness and prudence will prevent you from being bright and pleasant at recreation; on the contrary, they bring with them peace of conscience, and this fills the soul with joy, rendering it attentive and docile to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

A young religious, who died at the age of twenty, and was conspicuous for her modesty and great regularity, watched over her every movement that she might be faithful to each recommendation; nevertheless, she was the life of her companions by her unaffected and affable manner. The most serious fault against the Rule she had to reproach herself with was to have broken the great silence by letting something fall by accident. Hence, this chosen soul was able, when dying, to exclaim, full of faith and confidence, "I am about to climb the heights of Heaven that I may rest on the bosom of my Saviour." In order to enjoy so happy and peaceful a death imitate her earnest and regular life.

Avoid all that can wound the charity you owe

*St Matt. x, 16.

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your neighbour. Neither say nor listen to anything that can in the smallest degree tarnish the reputation of another. When any difficulty arises, condemn no one, defend the absent, and, above all, take the side of your Superior, saying that all you have to do is to obey, otherwise you may experience the truth of these words of Holy Scripture: *There is a way which seemeth just to a man: but the ends thereof lead to death.**

Be prudent in giving your confidence, resolve not to open your mind to every one, but only to those whom God has appointed to guide you—and who, consequently, have the light to give you wise advice in your doubts and difficulties. You can scarcely realize the evils which might result from opening your mind and giving your confidence to those who have no right to receive it.

The professed sisters have their Superior and her Assistant; the novices have their mistresses, who neglect nothing to further their advancement and are always ready to listen to them, to instruct and to advise them. Therefore, never go to others for advice and counsel, otherwise you will wander from the right path. *By what, says the Royal Prophet, doth a young man correct his ways? By observing Thy words, O Lord.* Now, who can make known Our Lord's words to you if not those whom He Himself has chosen to be the interpreters of His holy will in your regard.

Therefore, avoid giving your confidence to those who are not appointed by God to guide you, and who, with the best intention, may mislead you. Never have recourse to artifice and deceit. For example, do not say, "Let us keep what we have said secret from our Mother;" for Superiors have a

*Prov. xiv, 12.

special gift by which they seem to know intuitively where something is going wrong. For my part, I assure you, that when a religious, either here or in a foundation, is not faithful to her duty or is failing in obedience, although nothing may have been said to me on the subject, I feel a certain anxiety concerning her which seems to pursue me, and, as it were warns me that she is wanting in that uprightness which belongs to a good religious.

Look at our ancient sisters who are so faithful to the observances of religious life; you never see them having secret conversations among themselves nor showing preference for any particular person; they are beloved by all and they love you all equally in God.

Dear novices, you have not as yet had, nor could you have, much experience, but if you are docile and consequently prudent you will perceive what is evil and know how to avoid it. But, if you are thoughtless and imprudent, you will make mistakes, you will act foolishly, and reap painful consequences.

From all I have said, I draw these conclusions: first, that each one should carefully watch over herself in order to avoid the faults and peculiarities of character which we have pointed out. In the second place, if it be necessary that you should be very discreet and prudent amongst yourselves, with still greater reason ought this to be observed in the class, in your intercourse with our penitents and our children, as well as in the relations the mistresses have with one another. Above all, your dealings with persons of the world should be characterized by the utmost prudence.

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MAXIM

Let us rid ourselves of this and that little fault. It would, indeed, be sad, if some imperfection were to prevent us from attaining the perfection to which God calls us.

CHAPTER XL

Of Certain Defects to be avoided

I INTEND to speak to you to-day, my dear daughters, of certain defects and weak points which may easily creep in and take root amongst us, thus seriously injuring the perfection of our Institute.

And first, here are two defects which I wish to point out to you, showing you clearly that they are totally contrary to the spirit of our holy Order.

The first of these, one into which it is easy to fall, is that of thinking too much of self, of our health, of being continually engrossed with our own concerns so as to be indifferent to those of others, taking care that we want for nothing, securing the best clothing and leaving to others what is inferior; in a word, being always occupied with self and oblivious of our neighbours, from which, as you may see, a most culpable form of selfishness would result. For example, a mistress of a class who, entirely taken up with herself, forgetful of those entrusted to her care, neglecting the poor sick, and indifferent to the others, would forfeit the blessings those religious may expect from Our Lord who sacrifice themselves.

Another defect against which I would warn you springs from an opposite feeling to the one of which I have just spoken; still it is not less pernicious and contrary to the spirit of the Congregation. This snare consists in an idea which a religious conceives that in order to be perfect,

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she must utterly neglect her health and mortify herself in everything, forgetting that, unhappily, even mortifications may engender pride and particularly faults of disobedience. Under the pretext that they had received no express prohibition such persons undertake austerities without permission, and in consequence they lose their strength, and render themselves incapable of working as, however, they are bound to do for the salvation of souls. They say they desire to do penance. Let them do it, yes; but not according to their caprice, seeking extraordinary means instead of simply using the ordinary means and occasions for practising mortifications, which do not fail to be very pleasing to God. Let them observe their Rule faithfully, keep strict silence, avoid raising their eyes in the refectory, accept the food offered them whatever it may be, renounce their own will, be prompt in rendering services to others, and practise on all occasions modesty, obedience, charity and gentleness. Let them be humble and submissive to God's will in everything never seeking themselves. By observing these points well they will find, without the least doubt, opportunities for the fruitful practice of penance and mortification.

It would be impossible to send delicate, infirm sisters to the arduous missions of Africa or America. Some one may say she feels the need of mortification to overcome temptations. My reply to this is the example of St Jerome, who, finding that penances and austerities did not banish worldly thoughts from his mind, undertook the study of Hebrew, a very difficult language, and he thus succeeded in captivating his imagination, ridding it of the recollection of worldly vanities and of creatures.

I am quite sure that one of the best means I can suggest by which you can subjugate your imagination is to keep yourselves busily occupied either in your employments, by study, or in manual labour.

Another excellent way of practising mortification for those amongst you who are mistresses of the classes, is to remain assiduously occupied in the midst of your flocks without leaving them for trifling pretexts. You may be sure the penitents will be restless when they see a religious constantly going and coming. They then realize, to the full, how hard it is to remain seated in one place; and when the mistresses find it necessary to urge them to be quiet and attentive to their work, such words are ineffectual, even irritating, because not enforced by example. On the contrary, a mistress who spends long hours in her class, who makes it evident she does so willingly, wins the heart of her children and often succeeds in conquering the most difficult characters.

You must be on your guard against an excessive attachment to your own employment at the expense of the affection you should entertain for the community in general, and all its various offices. Perhaps a sister may be a good mistress of a class, a clever mistress of work, a good sacristan, etc., yet not trouble herself about the community as a whole. It is well to love our employment, the house in which we live, the office confided to us, but it should not interfere with the sentiment of charity and justice, which binds us to each of our sisters and to the whole Institute.

In speaking to you of the faults which might creep into a Congregation, I must recommend you to avoid repeating uncharitable remarks to one another, for tale-bearing, it may be truly said, is

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the pest of a community and of society in general. *The words of a tale-bearer, says Solomon, are as it were simple, but they reach to the innermost parts.**

When there is a tale-bearer in a house, peace is impossible; no one can feel safe. A word uttered quite harmlessly, or something similar; immediately it is repeated by the informer who invariably exaggerates and puts a bad construction upon it; hence arise sources of pain, disunion; hence follow a thousand sins and all this is the result of tale-bearing. To avoid so dangerous a fault bear in mind these words of the Wise Man: *Six things there are which the Lord hateth and the seventh His soul detesteth; him that soweth discord among brethren.†*

Another deplorable weakness is the desire to be praised and noticed. I have a painful recollection of an instance of this kind in one of my journeys, when some religious (strangers to us) thought to amuse their fellow travellers by playing at certain little games. Well! every one did talk about them, but you may imagine in what way. Oh, how reserved we should be particularly when travelling. Let us remember that Our Lord has special blessings in store for souls who love solitude and the interior life, whose only thought is to please Him.

Let us keep to that charming simplicity which so well becomes a person consecrated to God. Moreover recollect, my dear daughters, that all the glory of a Religious of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd consists in having no glory in this world, and in remaining unknown and hidden.

*Prov. xxvi, 22.

†Prov. xvi, 19.

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Oh, how beautiful are the three following lines that were written by one of our dear sisters:

“ My glory is to have no glory,
My honour is to have no honour,
My dignity is to be the last amongst the
daughters of the Good Shepherd.”

Be very much on your guard against that frivolity of manner which so greatly interferes with the edification you are bound to give your neighbour. Endeavour by your gentleness and modesty and by your serious religious deportment, to edify those with whom you come in contact. This modesty of demeanour is all the more necessary as you pass your lives, so to say, with persons devoid of sense. An air of modesty, prudence and gravity gives the utmost edification in religion. “ Be cheerful, pleasant, accessible to all,” said St Francis Xavier to young religious; “ banish from your manner anything that savours of gloominess, melancholy or haughtiness. Affability and courtesy are the first germs of Christian charity.”

We should avoid all affectation in speaking; our words should be like drops of clear water.

To pay exaggerated attentions to your Superior is another weakness you must avoid. Spare your Superiors, my dear daughters, be charitable to their souls, and remember that it is better to please them by your obedience than in any other way. Try to lighten their burden of authority; beware of adding to its weight by a want of submission and of a religious spirit. This is the greatest charity you can practise towards your Superiors. I rejoice to see that it exists here and trust that it will ever be perpetuated amongst us. I love to see that you share my troubles and anxieties when I com-

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municate them to you, and this is a great consolation to my heart, for I think had I to bear so many difficulties and daily solitudes alone, the burden would be insupportable. But more than that I would not tolerate.

Religious ought certainly to behave with great respect to their Superiors, but there must be no affectation, such as answering, " Yes, my very honoured Mother," and using other such phrases.

I conclude, my dear daughters, by exhorting you to act always in a manner becoming true religious, having in view only God's good pleasure and His greater glory. By so doing, you will render yourselves, more and more, worthy of your holy vocation, and you will peacefully reach that happy end to which you should aspire when you will enter upon perfect and unending bliss.

MAXIM

The spirit of our Institute is also a spirit of simplicity; it requires us to go straightforwardly and frankly to our Superior as to our Mother.

CHAPTER XLI

*On the Acknowledgement of Faults—
Curiosity—Indiscretion*

I HAVE several times said to you, my dear daughters, that there are faults which you should own to your Superiors rather than in confession. For example, you break a pane of glass, you lose something of value; you have not committed the least sin by these accidents of pure inadvertence, nevertheless, as these objects do not belong to you but are the property of the community, your Superior should know of their loss. By not speaking you are guilty of dissimulation and are thus the cause, perhaps, of others being accused; and I add that a religious whom the devil can accustom to these kind of evasions is in great danger of going wrong. Generally speaking, do not be afraid of exposing your weaknesses, every one has them, but every one has not the courage to admit this. Two qualities contribute to perpetuate the spirit of fervour in a community. The first is openness; the second is love for Superiors. When every one is frank and open, all feel in peace, no one fearing to be accused of faults she has not committed. Where there is respect and love for Superiors, they are never judged rashly; all they do is taken in the right light: thus they are saved a deal of trouble and the souls of their subjects remain in peace. Were you to see your Superior purchasing property, negotiating, undertaking, from morning till night, you should not put any

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bad interpretation on her actions. You know how carefully the Jesuits preserve the primitive spirit of their founder; yet St Francis Borgia, who was but their third General, even then told his children that they were as nothing compared to the disciples of Ignatius, who, by their religious virtues, shone as suns; so true is it that almost insensibly we always degenerate. Let us take care not to fall into so unhappy a state; a want of straightforwardness, a want of respect and deference, lead to it imperceptedly.

Curiosity and indiscretion are other evil spirits found in communities and which disturb spiritual life. Those who have mind and intelligence are very often curious, but as they are not stupid they would be soon corrected of the fault if they did not come across indiscreet persons. What good would it be, in fact, to know the news, if there was no one to relate it to? It would soon become wearisome to be always on the watch and a quieter life desirable, because a curious person plies a very fatiguing trade. The curious are not at peace in prayer any more than at recreation; they are for ever imagining that they miss hearing something they might know, and those who question them add greatly to this fear. I beg of you, be not of the number of these newsmongers. Either you allow your mind to be taken up with nothings, or, which is still worse, you fail in charity, for certainly it is always about others that you busy yourself and this can only prejudice your soul. Nothing can do so much harm to a soul as to let itself be engrossed by things foreign to its vocation, while nothing dilates it more than to hear of the things which are its very life. Thus, if I entertain you about our Houses in Paris, London, Rome, Strasburg; if I announce the

arrival of postulants, or a penitent; very far from distracting you, all this leads you to God, and I look on it as a duty and a pleasure to inform you of such matters. But if serious faults had been committed in the community or in the classes, I would not speak of it to you, for it would be quite unnecessary that you should know of it, and I could not tell you without failing in charity. Notice further, my dear daughters, that gossips give occasion for jealousy. From what they say, our Mother might have confided everything to them whilst often not a word has been said to them. Sensitive minds are thus led to imagine that these persons are preferred to others, and then jealousy and sometimes discord is the consequence.

A religious of Tours was so tormented by this weakness that no one could be spoken to before her without causing her to change colour; she thought no one was so despised as herself and shed tears continually.

One of the consequences of the ascetic life they lead is to render Carmelites, Poor Clares, and all contemplative Orders more susceptible of jealousy; and religious are sometimes found amongst them who are constantly taken up with trying to find out whether others are not preferred to them. This passion can exist here also; perhaps several of you are under its influence unconsciously, or perhaps you do not venture to own to it yourselves; but the countenance betrays it, and I can assure you that I can judge without fear of mistake when anyone is inclined to this unhappy failing, the greatest torment of life. The heart of man is an impenetrable abyss. The little we know of it makes us blush; what would it be if we saw it as God sees it?

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Humility, which is truth, never says: Another is preferred to me; I am not esteemed, I am not honoured enough. Let us then be humble, my children, and we shall not know what jealousy is. Let us die to ourselves and we shall not be annoyed if we are forgotten, if we are despised. Willing or not, we must die, for if we do not put ourselves to death God will do it for us. He loves to bring about this death and well He knows the best means to take for this end.

However, I do not by this mean the death of the body. I only wish to make you understand that, of necessity, you must die to your faults, above all to your self-love. Examine yourselves seriously, and see if you are not curious, indiscreet, jealous; if you do not say: I love our Mother far more when she praises and shows me affection than when she scolds me. Ask yourselves, if you never wound charity, if you do not commit constant infidelities by speaking during the time of silence, raising the eyes in the refectory, etc. Remember this, such faults are more serious than you think, because the Rule prescribes these Observances just as it does that of fasting; and she who cannot fast can at least refrain from looking from one side to another in the refectory. Further, see if you patiently bear with certain characters; by this mutual support you will acquire infinite merit.

MAXIM

Souls who never see their faults will never make any progress.

CHAPTER XLII

Exhortation to the Practice of Charity


“**G**OD is love.” May the spirit of charity ever reign in the Institute! Our Congregation is founded on charity, that beautiful virtue without which all the others have no lustre; let us endeavour our utmost to perpetuate it amongst us. What is more lovely and even more desirable than this charity, this cordial love one for another! We should have but one heart amongst us. Just as when one tries to pour grains through a very small funnel, they escape on all sides, in the same way, if we are not united amongst ourselves, we shall not be so with God and we shall never do any good. Charity and zeal should be universal, that is to say, they should extend to all and everything, and as long as this universal charity does not exist amongst us we are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death.

Let this maxim, “Do not to others what you would not they should do to you,” be written for ever in your hearts. Never listen to anything which could tarnish the reputation of your neighbour. Never have the least dispute amongst you. Where there is no union, there is no prosperity. Take care not to reproach anyone with their natural defects, with poverty, want of mind or of education. Think well of every one; avoid rash judgements.

Have great respect, my dear daughters, one for another. Do not be selfish; nothing is more opposed to a tender, cordial charity than cold selfish-

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ness. Let the very greatest cordiality reign amongst you. St Teresa wrote to Mother Mary of St Joseph: " I cannot get accustomed to your cold manner; I enjoy the society of your daughters just as I dread yours! " Above all avoid abruptness. Every one has their moments of sadness; then say nothing; never act in times of trouble. If you see some one committing a fault, quietly call her attention to it; never mention a fault you have seen committed by a sister or a Superior in a Foundation. Be considerate for one another. If it happen that one amongst you commit a rather serious fault, surely seculars need not be informed of it, would it even be of any advantage that members of the clergy should hear of it? Oh, what harm can be done by an indiscreet person! By speaking of a thoughtless act committed by an excellent subject, she might prevent the latter from doing good later. Would she not, therefore, have to render a stricter account than her sister, and she it is who should lose your esteem. Perhaps at the very moment that she thus fails in charity, the person who committed the fault conceives so lively a sorrow for it that she is infinitely above the other in the sight of God.

Never lessen what is said in favour of another. When one of your sisters is praised, add to it all you know of good, and this charity will cover many of the faults that may be noticed in you. St Teresa during her time of laxity spent long hours in the parlour, but the religious used to remark: " Teresa will certainly only say what is good of us and of every one; never has she been heard to fail in charity; " accordingly all her sisters loved her. 

May this beautiful virtue of charity, my dear daughters, bear you on its wings to God; its flight will carry you far in the way of perfection. Should

you be well off, may it inspire you to help poor Foundations, for remember that the goods you administer are not yours; they belong equally to the poorest of the religious. We live in community; do not then let your sisters be in distress when you are prospering. If, according to the Christian law, the rich are obliged to give out of their superfluity, how much more reason there is for a religious, who has made a Vow of poverty, to give out of hers. It is far better to die poor, in a poor infirmary, because you had practised true charity, than die in the midst of abundance. From the infirmary to Heaven is but a very short distance for the religious of the Institute. I happened to be at the death-bed of one of our good Mothers who had been professed forty-two years, and she said to me: "My child, I wish to tell you something which may be of use to you later. I have never yielded to an uncharitable thought, therefore I have always been in peace, I have never had a moment's chagrin, and I die as happy as I was on my clothing day." This good Mother never lost the sense of God's presence for a single instant; her sweetness, her graciousness, were charming.

✠ Have this spirit of charity towards your penitents also; imitate the good Superior who spoke to them as to her children and treated them as such. She entered into all their troubles and let them share her own, and as soon as she received some assistance in her poverty she hastened to make up to them for the privations which her poverty had imposed on them. Therefore, love your penitents. We are naturally inclined to love those who love us, and we can thus do more good. Watch how a little child clings to those who take care of it and fondle it. We are all little children on this

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point; it is a tendency which is, so to say, born in us.

In your dealings with the penitents imitate the eagle. At first it takes its young but a short distance from the nest, then it leads them to a higher flight; after this it lets them remain quiet for some days to rest from these first efforts in order to recommence with fresh courage. In this the eagle is a model for Superiors, all of whom owe this condescending charity to the needs and strength of each. They should teach by example far more than by word.

A last motive which ought to lead you to love this spirit of charity is the conviction you should all have that this virtue is the essence of your vocation.

Let our conclusion then be, my dear daughters, that in this Mother House, more than anywhere else, great good should be effected, because here must be nurtured the tender seedlings destined to be later on transplanted into foreign lands, there to work wonders for the glory of God.

MAXIM

The spirit of our holy Institute is one full of charity, condescension and sweetness.

CHAPTER XLIII

*Advice Regarding Visits to the Sick—
Charity for the Dying and the Dead—
Compassion for those in Temptation*

WHERE shall we die? How shall we die? Some will die here but many more in far-off lands. Some end their lives in peace and calm; others, on the contrary, are troubled, sad and keenly sensitive. These different states often depend on temperament. Therefore, my children, you ought not to think hardly of a sick person whom you see irritable and difficult and to whom visits are a trial; very often such a one overcomes herself more than another whom you admire for her exceptional patience and sweetness. Jesus Christ willed to experience sadness and anguish in His agony. Did He not say, *My soul is sorrowful, even unto death?* Is not this encouraging for those who are induced, despite themselves almost, to complain of their extreme sufferings? When you visit such a one, try to find out the subject of conversation that pleases her best. Some wish others to share their sufferings; well, then, talk about their illness, sympathize with them, weep with them. Yesterday, I shed tears with our poor little Sister Mary of St N——, and thus consoled her as I had never done before. But if you perceive that your presence wearies, retire in order to prevent impatience.

Above all, I recommend you not to preach to the sick, whatever be the nature of their illness. In

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their state of weakness you will worry them, and very far from leading them to God you will perhaps help to turn them from Him. Be at peace on this point; they know all that they should know, our good God suggests it to them, and then when you say, "What a happiness it is to suffer; one ought to desire to die," they may feel inclined to answer, or to think, "All that is easy enough to say when it does not concern oneself." Now to prove to you, my dear daughters, that this is not wrong, I will tell you that good sister Mary of St Anselm,* who was so admired for her heroic virtues, always asked me that the sister who sat up with her should be one who did not preach. Generally speaking, noise and talking fatigue sick people and still more the dying.

We should be as tender to the dying as we are to little children. We must take great care not to leave them alone; no one fears loneliness more than the dying. When we see that the last hour is approaching for one of our beloved sisters, we very gently endeavour to lead her to make the sacrifice of her life, and once this has been effected we do not mention it again. I repeat it, if you assist your sisters they will assist you; if you neglect your duty towards the dead, you will be neglected in your turn when you are no more. If you pray for them carelessly, you will be prayed for carelessly; in a word, you will be treated as you have treated others.

These same counsels may be applied to souls. Never speak of temptations to a person who is under temptation; but if she have recourse to you, console and encourage her and always turn her

*Sister Mary of St Anselm Debrais, died at Angers March 9, 1840.

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thoughts into another channel. In such cases take care not to enter into too many details, because if you do fresh temptations will occur to her. Do not allow her to refer to her past life, say it is not your affair but the confessor's.

When you assist a penitent on her death-bed, do not speak of anything that might alarm her, but of God's mercy and love. The penitents are touched by attentions paid them, love wins them; when they are ill, redouble, if possible, your watchfulness and tenderness, and you will soon realize that this is a most efficacious means to keep them in the way of salvation. In a word, be always gentle and considerate, but without weakness.

Our Lord, being God, in His infinite wisdom chose St Peter as Head of the Church, in order that as he had himself sinned by denying his Master in so cowardly a manner, he would have the more pity for sinners. St Jerome owns he needed constantly to recall God's judgements to preserve himself from being the greatest of sinners.

Make use in the first place of kindness: then take care not to contradict a person in temptation. If they are determined not to do certain things, do not insist; if they speak rudely to you, be calm.

I knew one day that a penitent did not intend to go to Vespers. I went to find her and forbade her to assist at them. Another day one of them came to Sister Mary of St N—— and said that she wanted to drown herself (the river had overflowed and was under the windows of the House). "It is a great pity," answered her Mistress unmoved and speaking in a cheerful tone, "because the dress I have given you is quite new; take it off, and you can do as you please." Then, seeing her calmer she added, "Are you thinking of your soul, my child? Do you

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know that it will burn in hell for eternity? " At these words the child was touched, asked pardon of her faults, and her conversion has been a most sincere one.

Finally, my dear daughters, to return to the subject of those who are sick either in soul or body, let us always be kind and compassionate in their regard; let us pity others, not condemn them; let us love our sisters and be charitable to the penitents.

MAXIM

A religious House should be the chosen sanctuary of charity. God takes pleasure only in places rendered beautiful by this virtue.

CHAPTER XLIV

On Dying to Self

ALL Israel is now in peace; a peace which can only be troubled by those amongst us who are not dead to self, for self-seeking might some day bring about the ruin of the Congregation, or at least stay its progress. It is certain, my dear daughters, that persons who lead a soft, self-indulgent life, do not have at heart the works of God and instead of contributing to their development leave them rather to languish and die. "As it is an impossibility," says St John Climacus, "to have our eyes raised towards Heaven and fixed on the earth at the same time, so is it impossible that a person who is attached to the things of earth should love those of Heaven." And it is not possible that a soul should possess zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of her neighbour when she is taken up with the desire of self-gratification. We must rid ourselves of the love of self and of the things of this world, that we may be able to raise our hearts to God and to all that appertains to Him. Great works require perfect self-detachment; we ought to courageously apply ourselves to acquire this virtue which is most necessary in order to overcome our natural inclinations and repugnances. We must love all that is lowly, all that mortifies and destroys our self-love, a very hard sacrifice and one in which our poor human nature finds it most difficult to persevere.

Be sure that if you satisfy your senses, your

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natural affections, you will not be capable of effecting any good in God's service. We must, so to say, break with self, if we desire to attain to the perfection God asks of us. And observe that the false love of ourselves is so powerful that the first impulse of nature, in all we do, is to seek our own pleasure and gratification. This is the greatest obstacle we encounter in the way of grace. We must, therefore, be always ready to fight, and the most efficacious means of acquiring the victory is the mortification and renunciation of all that serves only to gratify nature.

Remember the athletes. What was it that rendered them strong and vigorous in the combat? It was their sobriety, and the continual, severe, hard, indefatigable exercise of their strength. Thus should a religious act in the spiritual life; not allowing unworthy affections to gain the mastery; combating her inclinations, resisting the voice of nature, and listening to the call of grace which makes itself heard in the depth of her soul. Sometimes a slight human attachment, an affection for a trifle, enslaves our poor hearts and prevents us from rising to God.

The attainment of this complete self-abnegation is what is most difficult and laborious in the spiritual life; it is the work of a life-time, for, as the author of the *Imitation of Christ* says: "To leave creatures and detach ourselves from them is but little, but to get rid entirely of oneself is very difficult." If you are not dead to yourselves, my dear daughters, you will only too surely cause others to die to themselves. In fact, the least virtuous are the most exacting. No one is more self-willed than a religious who is not dead to nature, to her attachments; consequently no one

oftener gives occasion to others to die to themselves. You will always find, my dear daughters, that the road to perfection consists in dying to self, to our will and to our inclinations. Perhaps some of you will regard this doctrine as too severe and above human strength; others, that this rule is not a universal one, that it does not apply to all. Do not deceive yourselves, but be convinced that this death to self can be reached and that it is a labour from which none can exempt themselves. Amongst those who are listening to me, some say: "I wish to die to myself, cost what it may"; others, though thinking the same, place a limit to their abnegation; they believe they cannot renounce such and such an inclination; lastly, there are some who allow their self-love to be an insuperable barrier behind which they entrench themselves. Nevertheless, I say again, endeavour to die to all that does not lead to God. Die to a worldly life, to your desires and to your will, to your self-love, to your judgement and to your own ideas. Renounce all these things to place them at the foot of the Cross, there to be buried and offered as a sacrifice to Our Lord, to obedience. In this way you will walk safely along the path of perfection in company with Our Divine Master. Follow Him in all simplicity and purity of heart; He will be your support.

The Apostle St Paul tells us that we must live the life of the spirit, that is to say, we must rise above our nature and fill our minds with the thoughts and sentiments of faith.

Oh, my dear daughters, you completely renounced the life of the senses when you pronounced your holy Vows on the day of your religious profession, and prostrated yourselves under

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the pall as a proof that you renounced everything that can flatter the senses. All your senses were buried in the tomb, there they must remain for ever. Do not allow them to rise again, do not permit them to make fresh claims; never seek your own satisfaction, your ease, but lead a life of sacrifice and privation, for which you will one day be rewarded in Heaven.

As to a worldly life, that also you have renounced, for according to the ideas common amongst people of the world themselves a religious should no longer think of the things of earth. I know well that none of you do this, that you certainly have no wish to take back with one hand what you have given with the other. But the sad world which you have left, bidding it an eternal farewell, is not, in truth, your greatest danger. We carry about with us an inner world, that is to say the world of our inclinations, and this it is which clamours the most for gratification and adulation. If we ought to be detached from the world and its pleasures, we should not be less so from the invisible one within us which accompanies us everywhere.

You must be despoiled of all things to be clothed with Jesus Christ. Live in this world as if your soul were in Heaven and your body in the tomb. In words this appears to be easy, but in practice we find it difficult. To live in a tomb is assuredly not an easy matter, yet a person consecrated to God should place herself there with Our Lord, dying completely to creatures and to herself. She must despoil herself of all things to be clothed with Jesus Christ. In what does your novitiate consist if not in preparing your soul for this separation, so that all should be given to God and nothing to nature.

At the moment of the dissolution of our body our soul will abide in God, if we have been faithful to Him during this life. It will re-enter its element, so to say, where it will be immovably established as in a place of security. But if, unhappily, we have had a too great love of self, if we have sought after creatures although we had renounced them, what will become of us at the hour of death?

Should you find yourselves preferring one employment to another, one person, one House to another, and if you are attaching much importance to these trifles which only serve to torment and entangle souls, preventing their free access to God, it would prove that you still live a worldly life. The saints knew what it was to die to themselves; no repugnance ever deterred them. They were never heard to say: "I could not make such a sacrifice. . . . Such or such an employment would cost me too much; I feel it an impossibility to leave this House, to go to that one, etc." No religious should be found in the Congregation imperfect enough to be thus miserably attached to their inclinations.

Reflect, my dear daughters, that God consoles with ineffable consolations generous souls who seek Him alone.

MAXIM

Take up and practise this maxim: Suffer everything from others, but never cause anyone else to suffer.

Be of a sociable disposition, that is to say, be amiable and polite. Know how to accommodate yourselves to the characters of those with whom you come in contact.

CHAPTER XLV

On the Abuse of Grace

TO-DAY, my dear daughters, I have to recall to your minds a sentence of the Prophet Isaiah, a sentence which is truly very terrifying, but yet one we must never forget. It is this: *In the land of the saints he hath done wicked things; and he shall not see the glory of the Lord.** What is this land of the saints of which the Prophet here speaks, if it be not this holy House whither we have been called to grow in virtue and in perfection? But if we forget our vocation, if we profane the land of the saints by our infidelities, let us recall the words of Isaiah and think how terrible it is to fall into the hands of the living God.

Those who wish to delude themselves will perhaps tell me that the Lord is merciful, and that He will have pity on our weakness.

† Yes, this is true; but I must also remind them that if the Lord is merciful, He is equally just and terrible in His punishments. . . . Let us question our dear sisters now in the tomb, and who have been summoned into the presence of the Lord and before His dreaded tribunal. Were one of them to appear here in the midst of this assembly, how much better she could tell you than I of the strict account God requires of everything, and what cause we have to fear the rigorous examination we shall one day have to undergo.

“ Because you are religious and live in the

*Isa. xxvi, 10.

House of the Lord," said St Jerome, "do not suppose that you are exempt from all danger. On the contrary, reflect that the servant to whom his Master's will has been more clearly known, and who, with better means for its accomplishment, has nevertheless neglected it, will be accounted more guilty and will be more severely punished."

Holy Scripture is full of threats against souls who, having received graces and favours from God in abundance, show themselves ungrateful to Him and forget their duties. I will recall some of them to you, and you will see, my beloved daughters, that each word I quote is in itself worth a whole instruction.

Woe to you, if after promising fidelity to God you forsake Him, for, *you shall be as an oak with the leaves falling off, and as a garden without water.** If thou dost not keep the commandments of the Lord without turning to the right hand or to the left, thou wilt grope at midday as the blind are wont to grope in the dark, thou will never succeed in thy enterprises, and thou shalt be struck with all sorts of evils.† *I will suddenly give it (the vineyard) drink lest any hurt come to it ; I keep it night and day, and I shall be as good to her if she is faithful to Me.‡ I will suddenly speak of a nation and of a kingdom: to build up and plant it. If it shall do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, I will repent of the good that I have spoken to do unto it.§*

It is not easy for a whole Congregation, or even for an entire community, to be so far unfaithful to God that all its members should merit a common punishment. But it is only too easy to find in all places, however holy, souls who are wilfully blind, who deceive themselves concerning their duties,

*Isa. i, 30. †Deut. ‡Isa. xxvii, 3. §Jer. xviii, 9, 10.

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fail in their obligations, trifle with grace, and find their condemnation in what ought to contribute to their sanctification.

Were it ever to happen that one of those now listening to me should begin to fall away from the religious spirit which at present animates her, may God grant that the remembrance of what we are saying to-day may awaken salutary reflections in her which will cause her to enter into herself and return in earnest to her duty. Otherwise a sentence of death will one day be pronounced upon her; she will bid an eternal farewell to Heaven, to that beatitude to which she was called, and will thus be forever separated from her virtuous sisters who will go to enjoy their reward in glory. St Jerome says: "There is no merit nor subject for recompense for having lived in Jerusalem and in the holy places; but the merit, that which is worthy of recompense, is to have led a holy life in these holy places."

Moreover, can a tepid, immortified religious, full of self, negligent in her duties, resenting correction, persevere in the land of the saints? Will it be God's good pleasure to keep her there? Rather will He not permit that she become weary of it? A religious of this stamp, says a grave author, finds neither sweetness nor consolation in the life; she is no longer capable of tasting how sweet is the Lord, consequently she is tempted to regret the onions of Egypt and become the slave of the devil by a terrible apostasy, by a shameful desertion. She will be separated from God, she will abandon Him, she will cease to be His spouse, she will return to the land of sinners where she will certainly not find the graces which had been destined for her. And then what will become of her? What sentence may she not expect? What will be her fate?

Jerusalem, unfaithful and undergoing the penalty of her infidelities, may be considered a figure of the religious who does not correspond, as she ought, to her vocation, who fails in her grave obligations and who will later be severely punished. Yes, my dear daughters, the comparison of Jerusalem and such a religious is a very true and striking one.

We are daily overwhelmed with God's benefits as was Jerusalem. He watches over and guards us as the apple of His eye. He covers us with His wings and lavishes on us His most tender caresses. He frequently sends us prophets to recall His holy will to us and make known what He desires we should do for His service. He protects us against our enemies and puts them to flight; He has surrounded us, as He did Jerusalem, with a wall of enclosure which defends us from outward foes. He speaks to us, unceasingly, in the depth of our souls to encourage us in our labours, to urge us, to entreat us to remain faithful to Him. He often invites us to the Holy Table to be nourished with His Flesh and Blood. He gives us manna in abundance as He did formerly to the children of Israel in the desert. Now, my dear daughters, if like Jerusalem, unfaithful and deaf to the voice of God, a religious were unfortunately to abuse so many graces and means of sanctification, what could she expect? She must look for the fate of the ungrateful and wicked city. As with Jerusalem, when her end draws nigh, she will be surrounded by enemies who will besiege her and straighten her on all sides, causing her to perish miserably.

I am not meaning to speak of religious who fall into some fault or defect through pure frailty or inexperience. Such persons, with the help of good

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advice or of some circumstance which, happening opportunely, causes them to reflect, can easily return to the right path. But those for whom there is real reason to fear, are religious who fail in their duty, who seem to make it a study, so to say, to deceive their conscience, hiding themselves from themselves and endeavouring to delude those whose duty it is to correct them. Oh! that these unhappy souls would reflect that though they may succeed in deceiving men they assuredly cannot deceive God.

Why is it that we see the dying gather all their strength to lay open their whole soul to their Superior? Because at the moment of death, when, to so speak, the light of God and eternity begins to dawn upon us, we judge very differently of the things of this present life. We feel then the necessity of not concealing anything, and we realize how pure and sincere must that soul be which has to appear before the supreme Judge from whom no thought can be concealed.

Think frequently of these truths, and you will not be tempted to yield to negligence in your duties and to tepidity; on the contrary, you will be kept in constant fervour. Had you to live another eighty years in this world, it would be necessary that you should persevere always in this holy fervour in God's service. I will even say that the longer you live the more you should strive to overcome difficulties and avoid dangers. You have, I know, made much progress up to the present moment, but this is due to the care bestowed on you and of which you have profited. You should now need only the remembrance of the presence of God to keep you firm in the practice of virtue. He sees you always, thinks of you, and He perhaps

destines you to fulfil His holy will in a certain place where, perchance, you may be deprived of the spiritual succour granted you so abundantly in the past. Therefore establish as the foundation of your virtue and the basis of your sanctification the holy fear of God, the fear of displeasing Him. Happy the soul that preserves this holy fear to the last moment of her life; she is sure to die the death of the just.

Superiors ought to be faithful in watching and correcting, for they are placed, according to the language of Scripture, to be *the watchmen of Israel*. Now, if sentinels sleep and do not sound the trumpet at the approach of the enemy, they are responsible for all the harm that happens to the army. In like manner, says the Lord: *If the just man shall turn away from his justice . . . because you ought to have corrected him and have not done so, he shall die in his sin, and his justices which he hath done shall not be remembered, but I shall require his blood at thy hand*, as being to blame for his loss by your guilty silence. But if, on the contrary, having warned him, he be not converted and dies in his sin, *thou wilt have delivered thy soul*.*

Dear sister novices, beloved professed sisters, be grateful to and cordially thank those who prevent you from taking a wrong step, or who hold out their hand to aid you to rise when you have fallen. Faults repaired at once by such means will not be very prejudicial to your soul. David himself, that king according to God's heart, fell into great sin; but he was soon converted by the frank and severe rebuke of the prophet Nathan and God pardoned him all.

Another time, this same king wished, through

*Ezek. iii.

vanity, to number his people and as he would not heed the counsels of Joab, the general of his army who respectfully represented to him that by so doing he would perhaps anger the Lord, drew down on himself a great punishment from God. St Paul, preaching with zeal to the Jews at Corinth, who instead of listening to his words only became more and more hardened, shook his garments to show his indignation and said: *Your blood will be upon your own heads: I am clean henceforth; I will go unto the Gentiles.*

I also wish to be innocent of the blood of those who refuse to amend after being warned of their faults. If my words are of no avail to them good religious will profit by them. For this reason I shall continue to speak in season and out of season, and to-day I shall conclude by recalling to your minds what Moses said, before dying, to the people of Israel: "What hath not the Lord done for you? He hath guarded you during forty years in the desert without food ever being wanting to you. God Himself dictated His law to you and made a covenant with you. Keep for ever the words of this covenant and know that not to you only do I make it, but to all that are present and that are absent, for those living to-day and those who shall come after. I have set before you life or death, a blessing or a curse. Choose therefore life, that both you and your seed may live."*

My heart addresses you, my dear daughters, in the same words. Beware of breaking God's covenant with you, love Him with all your heart, forget not His holy law, fulfil all that it prescribes; walk with entire fidelity in the land of the saints, in order that you may find life therein, and that at the

*Deut. xxx.

moment of your passage into eternity you may have neither remorse for the past nor fear for the account which you have to render.

MAXIM.

Loss of time may be the cause of our greatest regret at the hour of death. Profit, therefore, of every moment to make progress in the interior life.

CHAPTER XLVI

Of the Graces which pass Unheeded

AMONGST other profound reflections, Father Suchet* gave us a few days ago the following sentence from St Augustine: "I tremble when I think of the graces which pass unheeded." Oh, my dear daughters, if this thought caused a great Doctor and light of the Church to tremble, with what dread should it not inspire us? As for myself, I assure you, it appals me, because I believe that abuse of grace will be the chief subject upon which a religious will be judged. Grace is so delicate, says St Teresa, it is a breath that passes so rapidly, the least inattention may cause us to lose it. Grace, it may be said, hovers continually around us, constantly seeking entrance into our souls. For instance, it inspires us to repress a useless word during the time of silence, not to reply when something disagreeable is said to us, to practise charity, obedience, etc., and if, by our fault, we are deaf to this voice soliciting us to do right we shall have to render an account of it at the judgement seat of God.

I hope you are all adorned with sanctifying or habitual grace, which, received first in baptism and afterwards in the sacrament of penance, is only lost by mortal sin, a grace which each of you, I like to think, preserves with the greatest care. But actual grace is only too easily lost; because, as the

*M. Suchet, Vicar-General of Algeria, came to Angers in 1864. He had known our Mother at Tours.

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author of *The Imitation of Christ* says, the movements of this grace are easily mistaken for those of nature. Nature is satisfied with little in the matter of virtue, whilst grace never says: it is enough. Nature looks for sensible consolation; grace, on the contrary, impels us to wish to die to self so as to seek God alone and it unceasingly inspires us with some new way of practising virtue. Father Surin says: "Grace has to wage war constantly in order to overcome the inclinations of our poor weak nature. Those who are careful to accustom themselves early in life to correspond with grace usually come to practise virtue without any difficulty. It becomes, as it were, a natural disposition formed by the habit they have acquired of always doing right." I think, my dear daughters, that we see this happily realized under our own eyes, for all of you, it seems to me, have this natural inclination to good. But if St Augustine himself had reason to say, "I fear for the graces which pass unheeded," you should always feel this salutary fear. Always walk uprightly in the presence of God, faithfully observe your Rules; acquit yourselves of your duties in the best possible manner, and the grace of God will ever accompany you and will always be in you.

It perhaps often happens we do not heed the grace of the moment, whilst we pay but too much attention to the crosses we meet; and as these are numerous, if we make much of them they will weigh still heavier and become an insupportable burden. Let them pass, my dear daughters. . . . Every evening in the recollection of prayer I say to myself: "Perhaps to-day's cross will not be so heavy to-morrow. Perhaps it will not even exist." ometimes I am mistaken but sufficient for the

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day is the evil thereof. In sending us trials God proportions them to our weakness. What most imports us is not to allow the graces to escape which God grants to us so that by continual fidelity we may win fresh favours.

MAXIM

The principal resolution you should all make is this: I wish to live only by faith, by the cross and by zeal.

CHAPTER XLVII

There have been Saints in every Age and in all Conditions of Life

SOME little time ago, my dear daughters, our holy Mother the Church placed on the lips of the faithful the following words: *God is wonderful in His works and in His Saints.*

I was reading only yesterday a book, entitled: *St Teresa's acts of Love and Adoration in admiring the Works of God and the Miracles which Grace effects in His Saints.* Have we not often, like this great saint, been transported with admiration in contemplating the majestic and sublime spectacle of nature, of the firmament, of the various species of plants, of the multitude and variety of animals, of the harmony of their construction, of the art and industry of men, and of all the callings which, combined, serve for the order and good of society? And is it not true that God's goodness and wisdom are to be admired even in the smallest things? Like St Teresa, have we not been more than once moved to astonishment, gratitude and love, in considering the establishment of Holy Church, the zeal of the Apostles, the courage of the martyrs, and all the virtues of great souls who have succeeded one another from age to age until our own days? And have we not also admired the works and institutions which have been established at various times, according as they were required for God's glory and the salvation of souls, each one coming into existence according to the circumstances and

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needs of the age which saw them rise? For this reason we have rejoiced enthusiastically, singing with the Church, " God is wonderful in His works " and " in His saints."

There have been saints in all ages. Our first parents were saints. After their sin they spent long years on earth doing penance for the fault they had committed, labouring in the sweat of their brow, serving God in sorrow and tears, until having thus satisfied divine justice they were admitted into a place of rest waiting until the promised Saviour came to open the gates of Heaven to them. We may then affirm that they were saints. The early patriarchs were also saints keeping constantly faithful to God's law. The prophets were saints. In the primitive Church the number of saints was so great they cannot be estimated. In our own time also there are saints, and every day the heavenly city counts new inhabitants. " I saw," says St John, " a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues."*

It is certain that there are saints in all conditions of life; nevertheless, we must observe that religious communities are those which ought to be most fruitful in souls illustrious for sanctity. From the first ages of the Church monasteries were founded whither young virgins retired as to a blessed refuge, devoting themselves to prayer and to good works. How many saints, both men and women, have not the various Religious Orders given both to the world and to Heaven. Our little Congregation which has just come into existence, since it has been founded scarcely thirty years, nevertheless counts, I hope, many of its members amongst the

*Apoc. vii, 9,

elect. Yes, we may hope to have seen saints amongst the professed, saints amongst the novices, saints also amongst the postulants; they all expired with a smile on their lips, rejoicing to see the moment come when they were to go to Heaven to be united to their Divine Spouse.

But I hope that you, my dear daughters, will not be taken from me too soon by death. You will live to labour for God's glory and to be a consolation to me, and I have a sweet hope that you will become so many saints by keeping very faithfully to the Rule and to all that is recommended to you, in order that you may attain the end of your vocation.

I said I had seen saints even amongst the postulants and novices. I cannot refrain from speaking to you of one, amongst others, whom I shall never forget. She was a sister to our holy Superior of Algiers, who also has lately taken her flight to Heaven. This poor child arrived here from Munich thoroughly ill.* She had a lung affection which left no hope of a cure, but she was consumed with the desire of becoming a Religious of the Good Shepherd and of dying in our midst. She was so ill that we opened our doors in fear and trembling. At the end of a few days we gave her the habit; after the ceremony she went to bed. We obtained permission from the bishop that she should pronounce her Vows. Very soon after she died. I can always see the place in the infirmary where her bed stood. She was really like an angel in her last moments; the ardour of her love for Our Lord Jesus Christ was so great that those who saw her were

*Caroline de Stransky, born at Augsburg, died at the Mother House, June 27, 1841, aged twenty-one. She had received at her Clothing the name of Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart.

transported with admiration. Every moment she uttered fervent acts of love, she could not conceal her transports, she burned with a desire to be united to God. Mgr Chalandon, now Archbishop of Aix, told us later that he had proofs that this soul was holy, in the signal favours which several persons had obtained by her intercession. He added, with all the reserve due to such matters, that if these favours were not, strictly speaking, miracles, they at least shared the nature of very extraordinary graces.

There is another sentence of Holy Scripture that we often need to recall for our encouragement in times of sorrow, and it is this *Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of the saints*. Nowhere do we find it written, that amongst all the marvels that have come from the hand of the Creator, any one thing has been spoken of as being precious in the eyes of God Himself. *The death of the saints only is precious* in the eyes of God. And remark that it is said, *the death of the saints*, to distinguish it clearly not only from the death of sinners which is terrible, but also from the death of those who, without being God's enemies, yet have not attained to that high degree of virtue which constitutes sanctity, and who have abandoned themselves to a certain tepidity of life. When we speak of a *precious death*, we refer, properly speaking, only to fervent souls who have flown, so to say, in the ways of perfection, counting sacrifices as naught, entirely immolating themselves for Him Who, out of love for us, became Victim and Redeemer for the salvation of souls. Oh, yes! such a death is desirable, for it is truly *precious* before God.

Such was the death of the young novice of which I have spoken to you and such also was that of our

good and pious Superior of Algiers,* whom you all unite with me in mourning at this moment. Oh, yes! that zealous holy sister, whose soul must have been so pleasing to the Lord, truly died the death of the saints. She made her life a continual sacrifice to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. At the moment when she neared the shores of the heavenly country, the portals of eternity, our good Father Suchet (Vicar-General of Algiers), said to her with holy confidence: "So, my daughter, you at last find yourself at the end of your life, you have reached the desired haven: would you have the courage to say with the glorious Bishop St Martin, 'Lord, behold me about to go to Thee; nevertheless, if Thou dost wish still to make use of me on earth, I do not refuse to continue to labour for Thee'?" She replied, "Yes, Father, I would say so readily although the delay of my union with my Heavenly Spouse would cost me much." Admire, my beloved daughters, this spectacle of generosity and submission. All this was the fruit of a life devoted to the accomplishment of the holy will of God.

Oh, how fervent she was when still a novice! The novitiate was then, as now, very numerous, and it was difficult for me to have frequent private communications with each novice. But I could not refuse myself the pleasure of sending, every week or fortnight, for good Mary of St Teresa and of conversing a little with her, so greatly did her sentiments charm and console me. Oh, how the noble examples of these blessed souls should animate and excite in you the desire to imitate them! A large

*Mother Mary of St Teresa de Stransky, Superior of our House of El-Biar, died July 2, 1865. She wrote the *Letters on Africa*, which have been published in German.

number of your sisters have terminated their career in an equally saintly manner; others are fervently endeavouring to sanctify themselves and are the joy and the honour of our holy Congregation. I long that this beautiful novitiate, so dear to the Heart of God and to that of the Blessed Virgin and very dear to mine, should be one day its glory and support.

It is also said in Holy Scripture, *Be ye holy, as I am holy.*

In the Old Law it was much more difficult to sanctify oneself than it is in the New, because God kept Himself, so to say, hidden in the heights of His inaccessible splendours; but in the fulness of time the Son of God, in becoming Man, was given us as a model for the practice of humility, obedience, mortification, and of all the virtues. Moreover, He Himself has deigned to remain always present in the Blessed Eucharist, where we find the very source of sanctity.

What prevents us from becoming saints? Saints became saints by means of this Sacrament, for which they prepared with special affection, and which they received with the most tender devotion. Is it not in our power to do as much with the help of grace? St Teresa was so inflamed with the desire to be nourished with this Bread of the Elect, that to obtain this happiness she said she was ready to pass through an army in battle array. And what affection, what love had not our holy Superior of Algiers, whom we have mentioned to you, for this heavenly manna. When travelling, if she had any hope of receiving Holy Communion, however ill and exhausted with fatigue she might be, she made every effort to remain fasting even to the latest hour, and when they stopped anywhere

she hastened to the Church, regardless of bodily fatigue, to reanimate her soul by receiving Him Who was the object of her desires. By means of frequent and fervent Communion she became holy, and now in company with other saints is in possession of immortal glory. Of this we are firmly convinced.

You also, my dear daughters, have here an efficacious means of assuring your eternal salvation and obtaining a place amongst the saints. Then let your Communions be made with all the requisite dispositions; let your obedience be perfect, and we shall have the happiness of being able to say that we count as many saints amongst us as there are novices, young professed sisters, and sisters ancient in religion.

MAXIM

Remember, my dear daughters, that the principal virtues of a religious are abnegation and obedience.

CHAPTER XLVIII

On the Virtues of our dear Sister Mary of St Anselm Debrais, who Died at the Mother-House, March 29, 1840

ARE we not inclined, my dear daughters, to seek everywhere for our dear Sister Mary of St Anselm? We cannot accustom ourselves to the void she has left amongst us. But let us contemplate her in Heaven, where she is praying for the community and for each of us; her happiness will soften our sorrow.

Mary has taken her to herself, for she portrayed her virtues here below. She was filled with God. What judgement, what wisdom, what spiritual riches did this elect soul possess. She was always compared to St Aloysius Gonzaga by her purity, her angelic piety, her abandonment to God. Our beloved sister could always be looked upon as a model.

Whilst in the world what edification did she not give by her tender piety, her humility, her devotedness to her family, of which she was at the same time the ornament, the consolation and the resource. Then, as in the cloister, she forgot herself to attend to the needs of those around her, and when she had rendered them some signal service, she ingeniously found reason to make them believe she was the one most obliged. "Go to bed," she would say to her mother and to her sisters, "I will stay up a little to do accounts. I really prefer to stay up, just now it is good for my health." And

when it was a question of remaining away from some evening entertainments or visits, "Oh, I entreat of you go without me, I am so dull, so disagreeable, I feel I am not entertaining; but to make up for it I will embroider collars and caps for you, so as not to be altogether useless." These little voluntary sacrifices which cost young people much were the prelude to her dear vocation.

Just before entering religion she was speaking one day to her director, M. Regnier,* of her attraction for our holy Congregation and she said to him, with admirable humility: "I am such a sinner. Perhaps my presence will contaminate the house of God." (Angel of God, you were to adorn it!) "I am not thinking of that," replied the Vicar General, "but of your mother's tears, of the need she has of your care." "God will give me the grace to overcome obstacles," she answered.

How triumphant M. Regnier was when he presented her to us. "I bring you a saint, a soul of gold," he remarked, and he knew what he was saying, having directed her from her tenderest years. From her modest, retiring manner one was far from suspecting the rare talents she had received from God. She was very well educated, she knew Latin, and English was as familiar to her as French, yet according to her own account she was absolutely fit for nothing.

In religion she was a living example of the Rule. One had only to look at our dear Sister Mary of St Anselm to know what ought to be done. In the novitiate she declared herself entirely useless and believed that the other novices had more abilities and education. When her mother asked her what

*Our Superior, Vicar General of Angers, afterwards Cardinal Archbishop of Cambrai.

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were her occupations in the Good Shepherd, she replied, with her usual sweetness: "I am a burden to the community, but our sisters are so kind that they never make me feel it." "Yet you were so necessary to us at home." "Ah, dear mother, it was your affection that made you think so," she answered. As a matter of fact, her family had never known that she had filled any office in the house. Which of you can say that you saw her fail in humility, obedience or charity, during her two years of novitiate? At recreation she loved to be last: she was always ready to say her *coulpe* instead of others, was obedient to the least sign, and ingenious in covering or in excusing the faults of her sisters. During her last days, on her bed of suffering, it was a great trial to her that she was considered virtuous. "Oh, Mother!" she often said to me, "no one knows what I really am except God." I wish also that you should admire and imitate the perfect silence of our earthly angel. Was she ever seen to stir in the choir? She remained as it were immovable there. In the refectory she never made the least noise with her knife, fork and spoon, her circumspection amounted almost to scrupulosity.

Shall I speak of her discretion, of her prudence, of the delicate manner in which she discharged her office of secretary. It may be truly said on this point that her left hand never knew what her right did. When I had made use of her for some private letters on a matter which caused me great anxiety, she carefully avoided anything that might recall it to my memory. I had great designs on Mary of St Anselm, my secretary and my assistant in the novitiate. Had I had her only, to help me, I could have spared several professed whom I thought of

sending to Foundations where subjects are petitioned for so earnestly. Unmurmuringly, my dear daughters, let us say humbly: "Man proposes and God disposes." It will only depend on you whether she will be replaced, because who could hinder you from, I will not say imitating all her virtues, as perhaps not one of you are led by the same way, but her humility, her obedience, for example, why should you not have as much of them as she had? These virtues seemed to be the life of her soul; her constant contemplation of God caused her to perceive her least imperfections. We do not doubt that she presented her Vows to God pure and intact. She was not one of those plants which the burning breath of pride withers, but a flower whose calyx, ever open to the morning dew, acquired each day new freshness and beauty. Her soul, like the ships which come from distant isles freighted with rich stores, was filled with virtues.

Our dear Sister Mary of St Anselm's charity was perfect. Who amongst us has not had a happy experience of it? As assistant of the novitiate she was hard and severe only to herself. When I pointed out some abuses to her, she replied: "I did not perceive anything, dear Mother; all our sister novices are good and well behaved, no doubt it was I who committed this blunder: no one else could have done it." She was so kind-hearted that the mere thought of having perhaps pained one of her sisters made her so uneasy she feared to communicate. How she sympathized in the sorrows of others in order to comfort them! To her may be very justly applied this eulogium of St Paul: *He made himself all things to all men to gain all to Christ*. I may say that she was a martyr for every one, because not a fault was committed, nor did she see a

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sister suffer the least thing, without reproaching herself with the one and believing herself to be the cause of the other. Her delight was to be amongst you all. She sought out the simplest in order to instruct them; she said she liked to be with those who were melancholy because their dispositions harmonized with the state of her soul; when she found herself with young people, she remarked, "They are necessary to me to cheer me."

When she was obliged by her office to tell me of some little abuse, she always added: "Mother, it is want of thought, because our sister has otherwise so many good qualities." This very humble, very mortified, very obedient religious was, nevertheless, tormented with almost incredible interior sufferings. Often at the moment of Communion she used to come and entreat me to allow her to stay away, and when she had received Holy Communion through holy obedience, she has come after her thanksgiving to thank me. Notwithstanding her state of habitual suffering and the interior troubles to which God subjected her, she always preserved the same serenity.

So beautiful a life was to be crowned with a beautiful death. The doctor himself paid this great tribute to her memory: "This holy religious is perfect in humility and obedience, she dies because she is too perfect to live longer." This is a consolation, but what a treasure is taken from us. Let us adore the designs of Providence without seeking to penetrate them.

When I went to announce to her that she must make the sacrifice of her life, I saw her countenance become rosy and shining. She beheld her end approach not only calmly, but joyfully. Her virtue shone with new splendour during her last illness;

always gay, always patient, she longed for the moment of her departure from this world. When in her agony, she doubted whether she might ask for an alleviation during the great silence of the night. She even reproached herself with having shown that she was thirsty. When dying she again offered all her sufferings for the works of the Congregation, which she loved passionately; she offered them for all our intentions. Her attachment, her devotedness to the Institute was as unchangeable as it was boundless, and she gave a last proof of it by asking her family to assist unceasingly the Congregation, in order to discharge in some little way the debt of gratitude she owed to it. A sweet smile hovered on her lips when a promise was made to this effect. When we suggested that she should ask God to cure her, feeling only a desire of Heaven and fearing to disobey, she added: "If you wish it, Mother, if our sisters wish it, but how it costs me!" Then her dying lips murmured, "It is so sweet to die." Soon after, drawing near to her bedside, I said to her: "My child, we will go into the House of the Lord." "Ah, yes, my Mother," she answered with a look of happiness, and she expired.

The memory of this humble religious will live for ever amongst us.

According to your desire, my dear daughters, we have had her heart taken out. Enclosed in a glass vessel it will be placed in a niche in the cloister and over it will be inscribed the words: *He that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. Let the sight of it animate you to imitate such glorious examples. Above all say to yourselves: our dear and deeply regretted Sister Mary of St Anselm kept silence in going about the monastery.

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Thus our dear solitude will continue to be embalmed by the perfume of her virtues, and future generations will be taught how virgins blossom in the garden of the Spouse.

MAXIM

We are never closer to God than when we are hidden from the eyes of creatures.

CHAPTER XLIX

Love of Work

LOVE work, my dear daughters, it is a means of delivering you from great temptations. Rather than do nothing, wind yarn.

Here is a beautiful passage from a letter of St Jerome to a young virgin named Demetriade. I think it would be well to read it over again with you to-day.*

“After you have bent your knees in frequent and long intervals of fervent prayer and fervent meditation, take up your wool and spin either with your distaff or your wheel; or else wind what your sisters have spun, and try to improve upon what they have done. If you keep yourselves occupied, in light works of this kind, your days will never seem long, and you will work out your salvation and that of your sisters, and you will preserve your own chastity and that of others, and you will be great in God’s eyes. Holy Scripture says that the soul of an idle person is filled with temptations; therefore, you should never cease to work that you may thus guard yourselves from thinking of anything else but serving and pleasing God. You can offer no gift that will be more agreeable to God than that which you have justly and faithfully acquired by the honest labour of your hands; and you will be very praiseworthy before God, if you occupy yourselves in some good works, as much to supply your

*Here our Mother had the following passage read from a very ancient work given by the Count de Neuville.

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necessities as to give other religious a good example of flying idleness."

Observe, my dear daughters, that St Jerome spoke to the haughty patricians of the fourth century, reared in the idleness and luxury of that period.

Work, as you know, is of divine institution. God said to Adam, *In the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread*. To no one on earth is it permitted to live in idleness, and thus escape this hard but just sentence. We must always work in one way or another. This is what our sister novices should be made to well understand; convincing them that the active life may be in perfect accord with the contemplative, and that a soul may rise to the highest degree of contemplation even when busily occupied. *Bernard*

A solitary having gone to visit other solitaries in Egypt, and perceiving they were at work was much astonished, and said to them: "We were not born to occupy ourselves with such base and low work; for myself, I meditate and contemplate my Lord and my God. We are created to adore, love and serve Him." Having obtained permission to pass several days with them, the Superior had him conducted to a cell, the door of which he ordered to be fastened. When the hour came for dinner the solitary knocked, but in vain; he was forced to fast the whole day. In the evening he complained of this to the Superior, who went to see him. "What," he answered, "is not eating too low a thing; I thought your love of God was strong enough to nourish you! As for us, we think that if we have to eat we have also to work." These reflections were of use to the solitary, who recognized his error.

In our Congregation we must unite the offices of

Martha and Mary; we should know like Martha how to apply ourselves to exterior work, but keep in the presence of our Divine Master, as did Mary. Labour like Martha; do you suppose she did not love Our Saviour? She is reproached with being a little too eager; but if Our Lord had come into our House, should we not have done quite as much as she did? Notwithstanding her eagerness, she did not leave her Beloved Guest at all. She went and came to Jesus; she returned to her work and returned anew to the Good Master; seeing that her sister did not leave Him, she was almost jealous. Do the same; lend yourself to your employments, but always return to God.

Be very much on your guard against a fear of labour; remember it is the chief austerity that we have to practise in our Congregation, and that it is less, incomparably less, painful to labour than to be lost eternally. Understand thoroughly that our Institute is intended for work. In our Houses the Mothers ought to labour to feed their children; therefore we must lend ourselves to everything, and not shrink from any work. May this be so, above all, in the Mother-House! Already every one works joyfully, without regard to the employment given them, fully understanding that there is no occupation without its merit when it is done by obedience. All our Foundations are poor, whatever may be their exterior appearance, therefore, in them all we must labour. Not one of them has an income, and I am very glad of it, because riches are the cause of the relaxation of communities.

There are certainly few religious who have worked as hard as Mother de Chantal. During her lifetime she founded a large number of monasteries of her Order. Besides her journeys, which were

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very frequent; besides the work of all kinds, which her important office demanded, she wrote letters and other precious papers, which she left for the consolation of her daughters, and there are few of her Houses which do not glory in possessing some pieces of her needlework, which are kept as relics. This work was intended, above all, for the sacristy, for it was her delight to work for the Church and for the altar. It was very rare that she did not fill the office of sacristan; it was left to her because of her desire to be nearer to the Blessed Sacrament, and to satisfy her devotion to the Blessed Eucharist, whence she drew all her energy and spiritual strength.

Great souls, souls of prayer, accomplish much work without disquiet. St Teresa was never anxious, never disturbed, however multiplied were her occupations; whatever the difficulties she encountered she remained tranquil, remembering that God acted in her. He will also act in you, my dear daughters, and He will communicate to you in abundance the knowledge you need, provided that you also, after the example of these great saints, love prayer, are generous, charitable, affable, industrious; in a word, it suffices that you are careful to act for God alone. Never be indolent nor slothful. Idleness and softness caused Solomon to neglect the right use of the gift of wisdom, which had been granted him by the Lord.

Avoid these faults above all. Those who do everything in a frivolous manner, in the easiest way, without taking trouble, do not gain much for Heaven.

You should labour unceasingly, according to your ability and to the wish of your Superiors, without ever being discouraged even in considering

your weakness and the mediocrity of your talents, because you must remember that all your strength comes from God. There is not one amongst you who is not capable of being of service to us, in one way or another, by working in the field of the Lord. Each one is useful, either in clearing the land, in cultivating it, or in gathering the fruit. Those who are engaged all day writing, work hard; they comfort those souls who need encouragement, they reanimate the zeal and good will of their sisters. Those who are in the classes work hard as well, when they devote themselves to the perfect accomplishment of their duties. Our sisters—cooks, bakers, gardeners, *robières*, *lingères*, all work hard too; they should apply themselves to do well what they do, for they dwell like the others in the House of the Lord, and because we must all together, in common accord, contribute to the general good of the community. In the same way, those occupied in preparing needlework should love their employment; they must not lose their time, remembering that it is not their own, and that whenever they waste it they transgress their state of Poverty.

If you should ever find yourself in a House where work is wanting, then say: "Oh, well! let us make little scapulars, embroider, knit, as is done in the Mother-House." But you must contrive to procure work for the classes. Sewing generally suits them best.

Sometimes, during the winter, we are one or two months with very little work. What are we to do during that time? Let each one then offer herself to assist in the various charges of the House. Some will help to put the whole of the *lingerie* in order, others will go and work in the *roberie*, others will

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take up crochet work and all kinds of work, which will come in usefully. We shall thus have laid up a store in summer like the ants.

I know there are many who have the missions much at heart, above all, the missions amongst infidels, but remember, that if we do not labour hard here, if we do not practise great economy, very far from undertaking new works, we shall not be able to maintain those that exist.

It was customary in the ancient monasteries or convents of Egypt to accept no one who was not willing to work in some way. Sometimes, several thousand religious lived by the labour of their hands, under the guidance of one Superior, to whom they gave all their work for the relief of the poor. At the harvest time they even hired themselves out to some landowner, in order to be able to bestow an alms on those who were in need.

You also labour, my dear daughters, not for yourselves, not for your own advantage, but for the good of souls. You are industrious, and without thinking of your poverty, you study how to keep our sisters and our establishments. These charitable undertakings are the object of your thoughts, and I myself, day and night, seek fresh means of providing for them. I feel no uneasiness on your account, as long as you are at Angers, but our sisters who are on the battlefield, who knows how many things they are in need of? Who knows all the troubles, the privations they have to endure? As long as a mother has her child near her, she herself takes care of him, she provides for all his wants; but when he is in battle she can no longer watch over him. Well, this is precisely my case with regard to my daughters who are far from me. I cannot assure them their daily bread, but I feel I

must continually think of them, and I spare no trouble when it is in my power to console and assist them.

Do you know what it is that greatly pleases the Sovereign Pontiff in our Institute? It is the love of work, the love of a laborious life, it is to see that none of you fear the trouble and fatigues our work demands.

If we cannot do much, let us be content with doing a little, but we should never remain idle. Let us take very special care not to become useless in the community by too great love of self, of our comfort, of our health. Some persons are always inclined to believe themselves unwell; they have a thousand imaginary ailments, and because of some indispositions and discomforts which their tenderness of self exaggerates, they hardly do anything, become a burden to others by their exactions. Oh! it seems to me that it must be very painful to say to oneself, when we recollect ourselves for our examen, "I am a burden to the community by my own fault." We can always find the means of being useful in some way when we have a good will.

Even during the recreations the novices and the professed might have it in view to do something useful. Some will go occasionally and gather vegetables, or prepare them; others will weed, sweep the garden walks, etc. . . . All will endeavour not to be *a burden to anyone*. You will thus relieve our sisters employed in the heavy charges, who, filled with gratitude, will address to Heaven for their charitable sisters, the prayer which is so acceptable to God, that of a soul which has been comforted. Moreover, you will co-operate in the maintenance of a larger number of penitents. Then you will acquire experience in managing a House and will

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learn the rules of a wise economy. I would like all our monasteries to adopt this system; besides promoting economy, health would also benefit by it, for nothing is of more service in strengthening the constitution than exercise.

When you devote yourselves with ardour to your employments, you only accomplish the law which God imposes on you; but when you lend yourselves to the help of your sisters, you not only enter into the spirit of the Rule, but you, moreover, practise the Gospel counsels, for you practise perfect charity to your neighbour.

Since our Rule does not oblige us to many bodily mortifications, we must labour much instead, we must devote ourselves to sustain the House of God. Take notice, what a difference there is between the work we do, and that which is continually done in the world by the greater number of workmen, by poor people. Great ladies who are truly Christian also work hard, whether it is to clothe the poor or to adorn the churches. When you devote yourselves to the general good of the Congregation, you extend your zeal to the most distant countries; when you contribute to the support of the house in which you live, you share in the merit of all the good which that House effects all around. A cook who fulfils her duties well, a sister in the bake-house who looks after her flour and makes good bread, an intelligent and devoted sister-gardener are treasures; an enclosure where everything is made productive is an immense resource for an establishment. Zeal and energy save and support Houses.

When we really love God, nothing is a trouble to us that is for His glory. And let me ask you, do you not give God greater glory by working to support

one or two penitents extra, than you would if, under pretext of becoming more perfect, you remained half the day in choir or in your cell occupied only with yourself? It may be said that entire devotedness to God and to the Congregation is a continued ecstasy. Happy the Superior who finds this spirit of devotedness in the religious of her community.

Work, strictly speaking, is not a prayer; but it can take the place of prayer when it is done solely with the intention of promoting the glory of God. Thus, work holds a chief place in the spirit of our Institute; this work, according to circumstances, should be preferred to a long retreat. If you were Trappistines, Carmelites, or others, it would be a different thing; but you are Religious of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd. St Paul, St Ignatius of Loyola, St Francis Xavier, St Vincent of Paul, did not lead the same kind of life as did the holy anchorites, St Antony, St Hilarion, St Arsenius, etc. All, however, raised themselves to a high degree of sanctity by following the path to which they were called.

Labour then generously and unceasingly, according to the spirit of your vocation. Help one another reciprocally; this charity will draw down the blessings of Heaven on your labours, and I assure you, you will have the sweet consolation of seeing the work of God increase before your eyes, that work to which with common accord you all co-operate.

MAXIM

There are graces prepared for our state, for the places and for the employments to which we are called. These graces will never be wanting to us if we do what God asks of us.

CHAPTER L

The Bees

WHEN I see you, my beloved daughters, all so earnestly occupied in your different offices, when I reflect on your zeal, your obedience, and on the beautiful union existing amongst you, the Mother-House appears to me like a bee-hive, for which you all vie in labouring, and which by your industry will, I hope, become one day a vast and solid edifice in which future generations will come and take refuge, making use of what you will have prepared for them, nourishing themselves with the fruit of your labours, and continuing your work by walking in your footsteps and following your examples.

Like unto bees, you are all occupied in gathering from the flowers of religious life a delicious honey which will be composed of virtues.

In a hive there is a Mother or Queen bee, there are working bees and young bees.

Is it not true that here, in the Mother House, there is a Mother-bee who loves you all most affectionately, and who devotes herself entirely to your happiness? Are there not zealous hard-working professed here who represent the working-bees, and then a swarm of younger ones, I mean our dear novices, who have their eyes fixed on the ancients in order to imitate them, and who are waiting for their wings to grow that they may take their flight to fields of labour.

Perfect order is maintained in a hive. The

Mother bee has the general care of it, and with this she occupies herself unceasingly, diligently forms the new generation, and all entertain a sentiment of gratitude in her regard. When she goes to pay a visit round the hive a certain number of bees accompany her. Those who meet her make way respectfully, and several joyfully join those accompanying her. It may be said that this is an image of the respectful and filial love which is borne towards the Superior in well-ordered communities. Is not this truly the case amongst us, my dear daughters? If you are the objects of my affection and of my care, I can say also that I look on myself as the happiest of Mothers inasmuch as I see that each of my daughters seeks affectionately to give me satisfaction and, in the docility and simplicity of a religious spirit, endeavours to lighten the weight of my heavy labours.

St Francis of Sales says that hives are a symbol of the order and union of a community. The bees by instinct divide the employments between them, helping one another in perfect order and without any confusion. To begin with, all work in arranging the hive, seeking materials on all sides, and often from a great distance, without, however, losing their way.

Bees seem unable to live without work, without obedience. May it be the same amongst you, my very dear daughters; may fidelity to our holy Rules and an assiduity in the accomplishment of your offices be always the sweet occupation of your life.

As so many bees you fly from flower to flower, bringing your harvest to the common store. This is as the mysterious work of a hive, where each occupies herself for the general good, without re-

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serving anything for herself. Those who are beginners now in religion find their little cells already built, the stores already prepared, and it will come to pass that thousands and thousands of souls will come here after us to enjoy the delights and the rest of the Lord, working in their turn to prepare a place for those who will succeed them.

Do you know, my dear daughters, what the old bees do to try the young bees who are soon to have wings? In order to be sure that they are strong and capable of helping them, they shut them up in the cells where they have been reared, and leave them. Those who have neither courage nor energy remain shut up and die. But the strong and robust work so hard with their head and little feet, that they succeed in piercing their wax enclosure and get out. Then the old ones surround them and teach them to fly, to go and seek for honey and collect it.

Like the young bees shut up by wax in their little cells we keep the novices in a state of humility, dependence and obedience, obliging them to submit themselves to the Rule, teaching them true devotedness, in order that they may be really useful in a community.

When the trial has been made and it has been successful, there is great rejoicing in the hive.

This is when novices are received by the Chapter; the old religious embrace them, prepare their clothing as professed, prepare flowers to crown them, then the community conducts them to the altar, leading them as in triumph.

When the time comes for the bees to emigrate, those who have to form part of the colony take care to make a store of provisions, so as not to reach their new habitation without resources. The Mother-bee assigns the place where the swarm has

to settle. Those who are to leave keep themselves in readiness, and when the signal is given they take flight, never pausing until they reach the spot where the new hive is to be found. They examine it carefully, cleanse it thoroughly, and begin over again to work hard, observing the same foresight, the same industry, the same activity, keeping the same rules, the same laws as those of the hive they have left and in which they were brought up.

My dear daughters, whilst I was in prayer Our Lord showed me numerous swarms leaving this Mother House of Angers; even now colonies of new bees await the signal of departure. This emigration will be the beginning of their life of sacrifice. Meanwhile pray, my dear daughters, and until you are shown the land where obedience will send you, lay up great provisions for the journey. Draw honey in plenty from meditation, be faithful to all the advice given you, to all the recommendations you receive; instruct yourselves perfectly in all the Rules and in all the Observances of this Mother House, which you must always love, as we love our *native land*, and which you ought to practise until death.

My dear daughters, these are the glorious days of the Institute! By your fidelity you must preserve intact the spirit of this dear Institute, you must constantly renew its primitive spirit, always labouring for the greater perfection of this Mother-House, which is as the cradle of all the new hives which are formed, and the centre to which bees of all countries will come, from time to time, to renew their vigour to perpetuate and spread everywhere and throughout all time, that spirit of zeal, of obedience and of charity which it is my happiness to see in you now.

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You understand then how necessary it is that this Mother House of Angers should always so keep itself that it may be a model to the other Houses.

Several amongst you, O very dear bees, are about to take flight and leave us. Our wishes and our prayers will accompany you, and our hearts will be with you wherever you go.

There is no separation for those who are united by bonds of charity, such as exist between us. "Those who go remain, and those who remain go," said St Francis of Sales to his daughters of the Visitation, to encourage them when there were departures. It is only bodies that are separated, but minds remain always united, and always more closely united in Our Lord, for Whose love the sacrifice is made of leaving all that is dearest. And does not this happen amongst us, my children? Could it be possible that the day should ever come when our hearts would be estranged? No, never, never! always never! for it would be my death-blow and the death-blow of your dear Institute.

You will always remain united to one another by the holy bonds of charity, keeping yourselves closely united to your Mother House, which will be the point to which you will turn for support, the common centre of your affections.

And be very sure, that as long as the beautiful union now existing continues in the Congregation, God will not cease to overwhelm it with blessings and favours, for it is written of union: There the Lord hath commanded blessing and life for evermore.*

*Ps. cxxxii, 4.

MAXIM

When in Foundation, often repeat and say to yourselves: I heard that at the Mother House; these things were done there in such a manner, we were recommended such or such a thing in the Novitiate— let us be faithful to it.

CHAPTER LI

To the Sisters of the Novitiate—On the Vows

I AM inclined to think you sometimes feel I return too frequently to the same subject, that I speak too often of your Vows, that I alarm you unnecessarily concerning your obligations. You must, on the contrary, persuade yourselves that I could never say enough on the point, for it is a matter of primary importance that you should apply your whole mind to the accomplishment of your duties as religious. The fear you sometimes entertain of not being sufficiently faithful to your obligations should not disquiet you, but only stimulate you to make every effort to be faithful to God to whom you are consecrated. If by speaking to you of the Vows for thirty consecutive years I were only to cause one fault less to be committed against them, I should not consider my time thrown away, for the least offence to God wounds His Heart so deeply it is an incomparable good to prevent it. And this all the more because, where the Vows of religion are concerned, I know not if any fault can be really slight.

I do not allude here to certain infractions of the Rule which do not affect the essence of the Vows, but of those faults against the very spirit of the engagements we have contracted. If, for example, you fail in silence once by forgetfulness or levity, it would not be called a sin against your Vows, for these failings are not against the spirit of your religious profession, although they are displeasing to

Our Lord, as they indicate a certain indifference towards Him, and He frequently punishes them by withholding some fresh grace which He would otherwise have granted us. But if, after being reminded to observe silence, you deliberately break it, caring little for the act of disobedience you commit, and if others are thus induced to imitate you things assume another aspect.

Should the novices practise the Vows? Yes; and why? To accustom them to do so faithfully later, when they shall have pronounced them. Moreover, by observing everything as if they were professed, they share in all the advantages and privileges of the community.

If we consider the matter strictly, it is clear that the novices have fewer obligations than the professed as regards the Vows, because they have not yet bound themselves to their observance by a solemn promise. But when we remember that they can merit by practising them like the professed, would it not be a fault in them to remain indifferent to the acquisition of so much merit? And were they to continue in this indifference, would it be right to admit them to the holy profession? Further, it is evident that a professed religious who shall fail to observe her Rules, contenting herself with avoiding faults against her Vows, would assuredly not have so large a share in the spiritual advantages of religious life, as a novice who faithfully fulfils her duties.

It is said in Holy Scripture: *He that breaketh the hedge, a serpent shall bite him.* We may apply this text to our Vows, looking on them as guarded by the double hedge of our holy Rules and Constitutions. If we break the Rule, we run the risk of being bitten by the serpent; that is, we expose ourselves

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to the danger of failing in our most essential duties. And I may say, that in the case of those who have sinned against their Vows, their neglect of our holy Observances unhappily led the way to it. You will, therefore, recognize how necessary it is that you should be regular in everything, and scrupulously faithful to the recommendations you receive.

How then could anyone amongst you be allowed to say, for instance: "I cannot submit to the will of my Superior; I cannot take her opinion. I get on better with such or such a one." Or else: "I think I may keep this little present without failing in poverty: the community would not be the richer for this trifle. I may have books that are handsomely bound or which have silk or velvet covers; they have cost the community nothing, since they are a present from my relations." Again: "I cannot make up my mind to go to such or such a House," or, "I cannot do any good here," etc., etc. Do you suppose that religious who speak thus could have fully understood the gravity of their obligations? Does it not seem to you that they give proof of deplorable levity, in their manner of estimating the value of their religious profession? And is it not also apparent that they infringe their Vows of obedience, poverty and zeal for the salvation of souls?

A Vow is a promise made of our own free will to God which is very pleasing to Him; but having made it freely, we have no right to break it. Whoever breaks their Vows breaks their promise to God Himself and commits a sin of sacrilege. Open the Books of Moses; we read in Numbers: *If any man make a Vow to the Lord, or bind himself by an*

*oath, he shall not make his word void, but shall fulfil all that he promised.**

Observe, my dear daughters, that when there is question of the Vows no substitution is allowed. *All that has been promised* must be faithfully fulfilled, which means that the Lord rigorously exacts fidelity to our plighted word, which is a sacred promise. The pagans themselves considered it a base thing to fail in fidelity to their divinity.

If at any time we should unfortunately falter in the way of perfection and find ourselves in danger of shipwreck, our only salvation would be to cling to the branches of the tree of our Institute, that is, hold to the Vows we have pronounced before the Lord.

Prayer, above all, will assist us to keep our Vows intact; it brings blessings on a whole House, on a whole Religious Order. The people of God were destitute of all things in the desert. Moses prays, and, behold, water flows from a stone, manna falls from Heaven. Josue prays, and by his prayer he stays the sun in the midst of its course. If, my dear daughters, you wish to preserve your Vows in their entirety, never cease to pray, and pray fervently, and remember, that the faithful and constant observance of her Vows is in itself a homage of prayer from a religious, which ascending to the Lord is well pleasing to Him. Be not ungrateful, or you will cease to be happy. Let gratitude, on the contrary, be the mainspring of all your actions. If you ought never to forget your duties of gratitude towards men, what are not your obligations towards God who has chosen you to be His spouses. Be grateful to Him then every day of your life, thank Him anew at every moment, tell Him how happy

*Num. xxx, 3.

you are to have been chosen by Him. I hope everything from a religious who loves her Vows, and I fear everything for one who does not realize her happiness in having made them. You will do good in the classes in so far as you love your Vows, for the penitents only respect mistresses who cherish their vocation. To hear them speak of the happiness of their state is sometimes sufficient to convert a penitent. Inasmuch as I feel consolation in assisting at the death of a religious who has always loved her Vows, so do I dread to receive the last breath of one whom I have known not to appreciate her happiness. A religious of the Company of Jesus, young in age and in religion, being at the point of death, was visited by a Superior, who asked him if he had no trouble, no fears. At this question the dying man began to laugh. His visitor was astonished, and inquiring into the reason of his joyfulness received the following reply: "Oh, have I not cause to rejoice? From the time I had the happiness of making my Vows, my life has been but one act of gratitude, and now that I am going to God I have no uneasiness."

At the moment of death we ought to be able to present our Vows intact, as if we had just pronounced them. This should give us matter for serious reflection. Our judgement will be very severe, and woe to the tepid soul! "It is a terrible thing for a religious to appear alone before God," says Bossuet; "he will have to render Him an account of all that he has read on spiritual subjects, of all the conferences he has heard, and of all the advice he has received." Let us examine ourselves then, and see whether we have no matter for self-reproach. Sometimes the slightest imperfections are the source of very great evils.

It is my wish that the postulants who are listening to me should begin from now to prepare themselves for the beautiful day of their profession. It is recounted in Holy Scripture that the young girls, from amongst whom King Assuerus was to choose a spouse, prepared themselves a whole year before being presented to their Sovereign. What shall we say of the care we ought to take before becoming the spouses of Jesus Christ! Let the postulants and novices, therefore, begin from to-day to exercise themselves in the practice of the Vows of religion. Let them strive to increase more and more in their souls the splendour of divine grace by the continual exercise of every virtue. In this way they may be sure that in presenting themselves to the King of kings on the glorious day of their profession, they will win His love, receive the title of spouse and the crown of a queen, a title and crown which they will bear for all eternity in Heaven, if they remain faithful through life to their Heavenly Spouse.

Oh, how happy we are then, my beloved daughters, to be thus united to Our Lord, to be vowed irrevocably to Him. Never let us cease thanking Him for so signal a benefit, one which even in this world procures us so many consolations. There is nothing more noble, nothing greater than to be bound as closely as we are to Our Lord Jesus Christ. Shall we not kiss with joy the precious chains of our holy Vows? Shall we not implore the Most High to draw these sacred bonds still closer and make them eternal? Oh! yes, yes; it is the dearest desire of my heart. I have the sweet consolation of seeing that you love and cherish your vocation, that in it you find your happiness. Oh, may God confirm and perpetuate our dear Institute for ever; may it become a nursery of holy

souls, who will go forth and spread the good odour of Jesus Christ throughout the whole world.

MAXIM

You must draw from the Divine Heart of Jesus the esteem and love of all the virtues that you should practise, and of those above all which are the special object of your Vows.

A religious possessing the spirit of her Institute, who loves her Vows, contemns all that is not God.

CHAPTER LII

To the Sisters of the Novitiate—Of Poverty

THE Vow of Poverty, my dear daughters, came into existence with the Church. The first Christians sold their possessions, brought the price to the Apostles, and all was put in common. It was the period of the first fervour and an image of our manner of acting in religious life. Each one brings what God has bestowed on her, and ought afterwards to receive gratefully what is deemed necessary for her needs, without thinking that more is her due.

You ought all to understand that after your profession you are not allowed to keep any worldly goods, nor dispose of anything whatever, without the consent of your Superior. (If you have next to nothing, and it is agreed, nevertheless, to receive you, you ought in conscience to give the little that belongs to you. The greater the consideration shown on this point by the community, the greater should it be on your side also. You ought not to dispose of the least sum in favour of your family without permission.

You know the terrible punishment of Ananias and Saphira, who lied by assuring St Peter that they had not kept anything for themselves from the price of the land they had sold. They were punished by death. My dear daughters, there are religious in hell for having sinned against their Vow of Poverty.

Our holy Constitutions require of us a perfect

despoilment; that we be perfectly stripped of everything. If you happen to lose or break something of value through inadvertence, you are guilty of inattention, of negligence, yet you could not be said to have committed a fault against your Vow. But if you take into your head to accept or dispose, according to your liking, of any object without permission, then you sin against the Vow of Poverty, and your sin will be more or less grave according to the value of the object and to the circumstances.

We are obliged to observe poverty in our cells and everywhere, and even certain permissions that you might obtain from your Superior would not exempt you from the fire of Purgatory. Economy is part of the Vow of Poverty, but not a mean economy, about food, for instance; which, far from being a virtue, would be a fault, since health is impaired by insufficient food. If you are orderly and manage well, you will never be reduced to this extremity. Oh, yes, be orderly. Were you a princess, you still ought to set an example on this point. Disorder brings about the ruin of Houses. You are called to govern persons devoid of order; what will you do if you have none yourselves?

Be very prudent in what relates to the interests of the House, but do not worry. Jesus Christ says: *Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your Heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin: but I say to you, that not Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed as one of these.* Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice; and all these things*

*St Matt. vi, 26, 28, 29.

*shall be added unto you.** We must, therefore, place ourselves entirely in the hands of God.

Two things are very prejudicial to a monastery—too great riches and too great poverty. Nevertheless, if you are very poor, put your confidence in God. Here at Angers we have not always had what we have now. On a certain Whit-Monday we found there were only some apples and pears, neither soup nor bread. For some time we rose at four to make up bundles of vegetables, which we sold to procure necessary food. We used to hoe and cultivate the garden, and Providence did not abandon us. A relation of Madame d'Andigné sent us a mattress one day, and she had charitably slipped a thousand francs into a corner of it which were a great help.

I also recommend you, my dear daughters, not to have a mania for storing up, only buy provisions for which you can pay. So anxious am I that you should have a horror of debt, that I would willingly refer to the matter daily.

It is not practising poverty to be attached to your books, to be unwilling to wear mended habits or a veil unless it be new or finer than that of others. Those who encourage such inclinations in themselves are very far from loving Our Lord's life of privation and of imitating the Apostles, who left all to follow Him. Let us have no attachments, and be ready to dispense even with what is necessary. Would you know what you must do that you may never want for anything? Never look after yourself, and others will look after you.

Peace and abundance are blessings attached to the Vow of Poverty, when it is practised with an entire confidence in God. But to receive these

*St Matt. vi, 33.

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blessings we must have no attachments. Take care not to keep too great a collection of medals and pictures; we become attached to these as to other things, and they are chains which hold our heart captive. During my novitiate, everything was taken from me, I was allowed only the pins I actually used. One day before my clothing I wrote to ask for prayers. "And why wish to have more prayers than others?" they said to me, and my letter was at once torn up. I had chosen a book for my retreat which I thought would do me good; it was taken from me, and I was told my retreat should not depend on a book. One favour only was granted me during my novitiate, that of pronouncing my Vows at the Chapter a year before my Profession. "Never shall I refuse to allow you to despoil yourself of everything," said our Mother to me when I solicited this favour.

Let us then conclude, my children, that in poverty you will find all riches, and that he who possesses nothing has everything, because God has taken upon Himself the care of his life. St Francis of Assisi said to God: "Lord, since it is for Thy sake that I possess nothing, Thou owest me everything." Take for practice not to attach yourself to any of the little things you use and to have only what is strictly necessary. Remember your vocation is too sublime to allow you to remain groveling on this earth. Aspire to higher things as becomes religious and correspond to the designs of God over your Institute.

MAXIM

You are not called to devote yourselves to the rich, my dear daughters; make yourselves poor with the poor, because the poor are the treasures God has confided to you.

Let us remain poor and keep out of debt: that should be all our ambition.

CHAPTER LIII

*To the Sisters of the Novitiate
On Obedience (1)*

WE read in Holy Scripture, my dear daughters, this sentence of the Holy Spirit, which is also in our Constitutions: *The obedient man shall recount victories.* Yes, if you are obedient, everything in your vocation will become easy to you; in the first place you will preserve the vocation God has given you, and thus you will labour more efficaciously for the salvation of souls. On the contrary, if you do not possess this true spirit of obedience, whatever talents you may be endowed with, you will never effect any good and will be more of a burden than a help to your Superiors. The spirit of faith in obedience will make you so many wonder-workers. By obedience alone you will reach the summit of perfection.

In the Vow of Obedience is contained all the other Vows of religion, and the first Religious Orders made that alone, firmly persuaded that if it were well observed the others would be also. In fact as long as the Vow of Obedience was faithfully kept, monasteries continued in their first fervour and in the exact observance of all their Rules. For our Congregation the Vow of Obedience is as the pillar of fire which conducted the Israelites in the desert. They followed it when it went before them, they halted when it stood still.

When I was a novice, I had so great an attraction for obedience that at the end of a year of novitiate

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our Mother allowed me to make the Vow of Obedience and gave me the silver heart. From that moment I felt more than ever drawn to this virtue. One day the Life of St Dositheus was being read in the refectory, in which it is related that a religious of his monastery saw him raised to a great height of glory, because of the perfection with which he practised the virtue of obedience. During the whole of dinner my tears flowed so continually they watered my bread, and so clear a light was given me then of the beauty of obedience that I conceived a longing from that time to practise it faithfully. Oh, I really believe, my dear daughters, that my perseverance in my vocation is due solely to the virtue of obedience. Attach yourselves then very much to this virtue if you wish to persevere; always obey, whatever you may be told to do; obey simply like little children.

Obedience should be the favourite virtue of novices, it alone should teach them. I hope everything from an obedient novice, though she may have faults, whilst I fear for the vocation of another who, whilst having otherwise many qualifications, does not attach much importance to obedience.

Obedience should be our means of attaining to perfection. St Francis Xavier recommends nothing so strongly to Superiors as to form their subjects to obedience. Have no self-will, let employments be a matter of indifference to you. Learn to submit your judgement, offer some violence to yourselves, and the thing commanded will become easy by the help of the grace God will grant to you.

Obedience, my dear children, will prepare you wonderfully for the accomplishment of God's designs over your souls. Remark that those of our

sisters who have effected the greatest good in the Congregation are religious who have been the most obedient. Do not prefer your own ideas to those of your Superior; to do so is insupportable pride. When you receive an order, do not examine into, nor weigh its motives, but obey blindly. If the Superior makes a mistake, she will answer for it, not you. By living thus you will be preparing yourselves for a happy, successful future. All the conversions you will undertake, will succeed, because you will be animated with an interior spirit, and you will teach only what you have yourselves practised.

During our journey to Bourges I met a holy religious celebrated for his wisdom and experience who said to me: "Humble your religious, do not spare them, if it be necessary turn them this way and that, do not hesitate to contradict them; mould the young minds of your novices also, in a word, teach them to obey without a moment's delay, without reflection, without any thought of self, like a dead body which can be placed here or there without the smallest choice or resistance. Then, and only then, will your Congregation be in a perfect state. How would you employ one who has not acquired this prompt obedience? Do not tell me that she might, after all, be really good, for I assure you that she would be worth nothing at all, and that a person who did not better understand the obligation of her Vows, could be only compared to spoilt fruit."

How could it be possible, my dear daughters, that you should not understand your Vow of Obedience after so many instructions? . . . how severe will be your judgement if you do not profit by the numerous novitiates you have heard. In

entering religion you gave your will to God by Vow; why would you wish to recall it? It would be as mean as to take a valuable gift back which you had presented to some one in proof of your affection.

Remember, that an infraction of your Vow of Obedience will always cause you unhappiness, whilst if you are obedient you will never be anything but happy. Oh! how glorious is our state which obliges us to obey and makes obedience our chief obligation. Become obedient, then, like that young novice to whom her Superior said in jest: "Throw yourself into this well," and who was actually preparing to do so. I will not tell you, my dear children, to throw yourselves into a well which would endanger your life, but I shall tell you, even order you, to cast yourselves without delay into the well of humility, into the well of obedience, where the spiritual life and the purity of your three other Vows will be maintained. Yes, thanks to obedience you will keep your other Vows, you will present them fair and unstained at the Judgement Seat of God, for, I repeat it, obedience is the safeguard of all your obligations.

The Jews in captivity, sitting on the banks of the rivers of Babylon, cried out: "O Jerusalem, if ever I forget thee, let my right hand be withered and my tongue cleave to my palate!" You, my children, should cry out unceasingly: "Oh, obedience, if ever I forget thee, let my right hand be withered and my tongue cleave to my palate! "

MAXIM

Do nothing but by obedience, and God, Who never lets Himself be out-done in generosity, will rather work a miracle than leave you in a difficulty.

Obey, my dear daughters, be always ready to obey and you will possess the true spirit of charity.

CHAPTER LIV

To the Sisters of the Novitiate
On Obedience (II)

WE shall speak to you again to-day on obedience, and shall do so constantly, because, positively, you must acquire this virtue, without which there can be no religious life. As the ivy clings to the oak reaching even to its branches, so, my dear daughters, should a religious, in order to attain perfection, cling to obedience. Look at St Stanislaus, who, so to speak, did nothing extraordinary yet became a great saint by the end of ten months' novitiate because of his perfect obedience. The Vow of Obedience includes the three others, since the practice of this virtue suffices of itself to make us fulfil all our obligations. I have known novices anxious about the Vow of Poverty, who feared not to be able to observe it; they did not understand that it is very easy to keep oneself detached from everything and to be satisfied with what is necessary. It is rather the Vow of Obedience which should make us uneasy, because it has no limit and one can fail in it in a thousand ways.

The sacrifice of Abraham is the most perfect model of the sacrifice of religious life. If Isaac had not allowed himself to be bound willingly, had he resisted, if Abraham had not been so generous, what occurred would never have happened, and neither Abraham nor Isaac would have merited as they did. Abraham asked no questions, he raised no difficulty to God's command, he did not propose

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for the accomplishment of his sacrifice any other than the place which the Lord had assigned for it. He simply obeyed. You, my dear daughters, should do as much; you ought to submit to God's will in all things, obeying blindly, generously, and treasures of happiness will redound to your souls.

Some time ago a holy missionary was sent to Africa to work a mission where only one other colleague awaited him. The Provincial had said to him: "You will be two; that will suffice." These words were the rule of his conduct. He undertook his hard task in the midst of a large number of savages; the work was overwhelming, but he comforted himself by often repeating the words of his Superior: "There will be two of you; that will suffice." He soon died, a martyr to obedience and a victim to his devotedness, for he went so far as to forget his own needs to give spiritual nourishment to his poor neophytes.

This self-forgetfulness should animate you, my dear daughters, as well as that perfect obedience which will free you from all preoccupation concerning your destination. You ought to be always ready to start the next day, or even the very day of your nomination, to whatever place it is judged fitting to send you. This prompt obedience constitutes the strength of a Generalate; because, what benefit would accrue from being erected into a Congregation, if subjects could not be sent to one House or another without using all sorts of precautions and consideration. You must understand that our Institute cannot exist but by obedience. If you are not ready to obey at the first sign you will be very unhappy, because during your whole life you will be in fear of receiving some order that will not please you.

It is related of Father Laynez that on leaving the assemblies of Cardinals, of which he was the light, he was found washing the dishes in the Roman College. It was humility, it was obedience that caused him to perform these actions that in appearance were vile, but which contributed to render him an ever-shining light, not only for his Society but for the whole Church.

I would wish that mortification, prayer, great devotedness, and, above all, obedience, be found in the Congregation. What could you do, my dear daughters, without this virtue?

One of our sisters, whom I have seen recently, was taught by a happy experience the value of the Vow of Obedience. She had been destined for a certain House, but felt so great a repugnance to go that she begged me not to insist. I then told her she should remain here and another be sent in her place. A few hours after she came to me, asking, as a favour, that I would send her to her destination, because she had no peace, nor quiet of mind, fearing to fail in obedience. I granted her request, and she is happier than ever, giving satisfaction in every way to her Superior, who says that she looks on the great advantage the sister is to the community as a matter for much congratulation.

My dear daughters, in speaking to you of obedience I will quote the reply which one of our Superiors, now dying, made to her chaplain, who begged for her advice on the subject of her successor: "Father, my thoughts are no longer taken up with anything here below, still less with that which is not my business. To live and die under obedience should be the only care of a religious." Such, my children, are our thoughts at our passage into eternity, when obedience alone

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will render us peaceful and free from all disquiet of mind. Rest assured, every one must obey, and it often happens that those who appear to be the least bound to do so are those who obey the most. Our Institute is, in an especial manner, founded on simple, blind obedience.

We often disobey without an evil intention; but how is it that we find religious committing faults against obedience after keeping faithful to it for a certain time? It is because their will has not been annihilated. This is the cause of many sufferings to a Superior, who, seeing that a habit of disobedience has taken possession of one of her sisters, in the end lets her have her own way. Such persons embitter a Superior's life and at the same time destroy the reign of grace within their own souls. Self-opinionatedness is a red-hot spade which digs down even to the depths of hell, for it is impossible to reason with a person who holds so obstinately to her own decisions and ideas.

The most agreeable sacrifice which we can make to God is that of our will. "What was it that created hell?" asks St Bernard. "It was obstinate adherence to private judgement." Take notice, my children, that when the devil wishes to ruin a novice, he begins by persuading her to keep obstinately to her own ideas, to commit some fault against obedience. Be on the watch against the malicious artifices of this wicked spirit, and the efforts he makes to harm you. Unfortunately, he may meet with weak souls whom he turns and twists as he likes, tossing them about as children do the ball at a game of tennis.

A religious who ceases to remember her Vow of Obedience will only save her soul with great difficulty. Cloud after cloud will envelop her, and

times of darkness will succeed each other as she goes through life. Blinded by her own judgement she will be lost. Notice, my dear daughters, what God said to Moses regarding His people who had murmured: *When they sinned against Me I forgave them, but now that it is against you they shall all perish.* And in truth, it is more difficult to prevent murmurs against Superiors than against God. A religious who holds a thought against faith in abhorrence will let herself blame her Superior because she has nothing which distinguishes her from others, and is subject to the ordinary frailties of human nature. Some Religious of the Company of Jesus, having written to their Father General to complain about a Superior he had given them, but whom they thought too young, received this answer: "You must keep the Superior I have given you and endeavour to accommodate yourselves to him."

Even were a Superior to order you to do something in which you would be sure to fail, you have no right to decline. Imitate your Queen, the Blessed Virgin; render yourselves worthy of her love and of her name which you bear by blindly obeying the orders you receive.

Act by obedience, live by obedience, walk by obedience, sustain yourselves by obedience, and you will enjoy that profound peace obtained only by the practice of this virtue. I shall unceasingly repeat: "Obedience must be the marrow of your soul."

MAXIM

The religious spirit consists above all in realizing the importance of the Vows, loving and practising them, thus causing no anxiety to Superiors.

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We must never blame anything in the conduct of Superiors, because what appears a mistaken or doubtful way of acting often turns to the greater good of souls and to the greater glory of God.

CHAPTER LV

To the Sisters of the Novitiate

BE thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee
the crown of life.*

Pray much, my dear daughters, for our dear novitiate, which though not going on badly, I should like to see still more fervent. By the grace of God, our Congregation is now like a tree which bears fruit by the operation of God's spirit; its works are as pure as the rays of the sun. I venture to say there may be amongst us souls of prayer, such as St Teresa; of zeal and obedience, such as St Francis Xavier; and souls filled with love, like St Magdalen of Pazzi; yet may not some one unfaithful sheep be found in this large flock who will ruin the fold? . . . I seem to hear each of you say: "I am determined it shall not be me." This is as it should be, nevertheless I must warn you not to trust too much to your present good dispositions. Fervent to-day, to-morrow perhaps you will not be so. In one moment you may lose all that you have acquired. Be sure of this, my dear daughters, two or three badly disposed persons who might gain admittance amongst us could ruin you all. Remember Lucifer; what a multitude of heavenly spirits did he not draw into his own wicked rebellion against God. When we see that these glorious spirits, placed in the Heavens to serve the Lord, did not persevere in good but fell away, who is there amongst us who should not fear the frailty of her nature?

*Apoc. ii, 10.

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If ever, as time goes on, you perceive that, unhappily, some bad spirit has found entrance amongst you, fly from her as from a serpent, undeterred by human respect. Sometimes we go and rest on a grassy bank, and when we least expect it a reptile stings us. Do not hesitate to withdraw at once from companions who would corrupt your religious innocence. Give them to understand that their conversation fills you with fear and this perhaps will make them enter into themselves. One day the Superior of an unenclosed community, which I knew, desired the mistress of the school to take her pupils out for a walk. A sub-mistress, who was to accompany her, remarked in a low tone and with a sarcastic smile: "If this goes on, we shall indeed make great progress in the spiritual life." The other religious looked at her, and then answered aloud and very emphatically: "Sister, I should like to think that you do not realize what you say, otherwise your remark would be odious to me."

As for myself, I am really afraid of persons of this kind. I detest those meetings where there are murmurs and criticisms; faults which result from meanness, ambition and selfishness. O, my children, I should feel greatly grieved were you to fall into similar faults, therefore be on your guard against them.

When you receive an order, avoid all the reasoning of poor human nature, and never lose sight of the charming simplicity of religious life, that simplicity which I feel so happy to observe amongst you all. Anyone seeking to rob you of it would play the part of the devil, and, I assure you, I would rather see the devil in your cells, because he would cause you less harm than the companionship of an

unfaithful religious. When he can get a religious into his service, terrible is the havoc.

Be firmness itself when there is question of obedience, repel strongly and constantly all assaults which may come to you, in one way or another, against the virtue. Resist once, twice and even a third time do not yield, or rather never do so, for the crown is given only to those who persevere to the end.

Holy Scripture contains a striking example on this subject, and I have seen it referred to in spiritual works along with the following reflections. God sent a prophet of Juda to Jeroboam, King of Israel, giving him a positive command to take no food in that country, not even a mouthful of bread or a drop of water, and when his embassy was ended to return another way and never retrace his steps during this journey. In conformity to this order the prophet prepared to depart as soon as he had fulfilled his mission. Now Jeroboam was indignant at the freedom with which he had spoken, and, wishing to retain him by force, he extended his hand and ordered his guards to seize him. But God Himself came to the aid of His servant, and the hand of the king became withered, and he was powerless to withdraw it until the prophet prayed the Lord to restore it. Jeroboam then endeavoured to win him by great promises, and he invited him to dine with him; but the prophet courageously resisted all his offers, and said: *If thou wouldst give me half thy kingdom, I will not go with thee, nor eat bread nor drink water in this place, for so it was enjoined me by the word of the Lord commanding me.* Here we see the prophet twice victorious. God had protected and defended him against the king's violence. Shall we find this prophet, who had firmly

refused gifts and honours, victorious a third time, or will he allow himself to be entrapped; will he, through want of thought, transgress God's orders? This is exactly what we shall see him do, and it will make us understand how important it is to hold to the ordinances of obedience, and never to act without reflection.

The man who deceived the servant of God was not wicked; on the contrary, he was a prophet of Israel advanced in years who dwelt in Bethel and earnestly desired to see him. Having learned the route he was to take, he immediately mounted his ass and set out hoping to find him, and in this he succeeded, for the prophet had been so overcome with fatigue and hunger that he halted to rest a little under a turpentine tree. On seeing him the old prophet hastened to him and, touched with compassion, said kindly: *Come home with me to eat bread.* The servant of God replied: *I must not return, nor go with thee, neither will I eat bread, nor drink water in this place: because the Lord hath so spoken to me.* But the other went on to say: *I am also a prophet, like unto thee,* and, deceiving him by a falsehood, he added: *An angel spoke to me in the word of the Lord, saying: Bring him back with thee into thy house that he may eat bread and drink water.*

The prophet, knowing that he had received positive orders from God Who cannot deceive, should have doubted the truth of this man's words, but, without reflection, he returned to Bethel, ate bread and drank water. Then in punishment of this disobedience, which might be called involuntary, he was killed by a lion on his homeward journey. No doubt he accepted, with entire resignation and in a spirit of penance, this corporal death of which he had been warned by God, through the mouth of the

very prophet of Israel who had been the cause of his fault and was himself guilty of sin.*

You see then, my dear daughters, how important it is that we should not allow ourselves to be deceived and that we should persevere faithfully to the end. And reflect that not only the wicked may be a stumbling-block to us and lead us into error, but the good, even with the best, purest intentions, may cause us to commit faults against obedience and the spirit of our Institute. "You must not think," said a holy Superior to her daughters, "that every zealous, virtuous person has received from God the mission to direct and rule you." Each of you should remember that she has solemnly made her Vows before God and the Church, and that it is impossible that she should ever go astray if she abide by the guidance of her who is chosen by God to direct her; for she will never lead her from the path she has to follow. If a doubt on any point should arise in some particular House, it ought to be referred to the fountain-head, to the Superior General, and thus the spirit of the Congregation will continue to be propagated from its centre to every part in its pristine purity. But if some imagine that they may accept every opinion, every counsel, that appears commendable, they will find themselves advised in different ways; variety will be introduced into our Customs, and, finally, sins committed against the Rule and against the Vows. It may even, unhappily, come to pass that you will abandon your vocation for another represented as better. Therefore, *continue thou in those things which thou hast learned.*

The Apostle St Jude says: *The angels who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habita-*

tion, He (Jesus) hath reserved under darkness in everlasting chains. . . . May not a similar fate be reserved for you also if you degenerate from your holy vocation, and above all if you abandon your right home? Recollect what happened to Moses for one act of infidelity of which he was guilty. God allowed him to see the Promised Land, but he was not permitted to enter it. Persevere in your present good dispositions. Do not let your spiritual energy relax as you advance in age. Be as faithful in little things as in great. It has been observed that God ceases to protect monasteries which have become relaxed.

My reflections this morning were very consoling: My God, I said, what was our holy Founder's object in establishing this House? The glory of God and the salvation of souls; and I believe that truly his end has been attained, for never could holier dispositions be found than were those of our children during their retreat. How many souls, but recently under the power of the devil, are now pure and free from sin. Does not this thought fill your souls with consolation? The work is a glorious one. Oh, it was not for your own salvation alone that you embraced the religious state. God destined you to have a spiritual family, He gave you children to convert, and if you fail in your vocation you will have to render an account, not of your own soul only, but also of those God confided to your care, but who were lost through your want of correspondence to God's designs over you. He has deigned to choose you as His coadjutrices, and to this end has given you special graces; but to sanctify and perfect you He demands co-operation on your part, He exacts perfect fidelity. Go straight on, without turning to the right or to the left, for *your adver-*

sary the devil, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

He was artful enough to cause Adam and Eve to sin in the earthly paradise; he led Judas, Our Lord's disciple, into the most horrible of crimes; he dared to approach Jesus Himself to tempt Him. What more can be said? What Religious House is there that he will respect and not endeavour to disturb? Above all, my beloved daughters, can you think that he will leave you in peace whilst you wage war against him? Go forth then to the conflict with courage, and do not let your adversary gain the victory. If through your fault a single foundation were lost, the souls that should have been saved in it would cry for vengeance upon you. Fear greatly your own weakness but have unbounded confidence in God, and do not doubt but that He will ever be with you. The prophet Isaias says: *They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.*

Never yield to discouragement, whatever difficulties you have to overcome, whatever trials you have to endure, and do not by your infidelities render yourselves unworthy of God's protection.

A few days ago I received a letter from one of our sisters who had started with much courage on her mission, but now, finding great difficulties in her path, she thinks them insurmountable, she allows herself to be discouraged, and writes earnestly begging to be sent elsewhere. Her sister, also a religious, to whom I communicated the contents of the letter, took upon herself to answer it, and wrote as follows: " My sister, if you are weak enough to abandon the mission confided to you, fear, and fear greatly, for your soul. Our Mother

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will recall you, for she is too kind to let you be so unhappy, but later you will feel great remorse.”*

Do not forget those words of the Holy Gospel: *If the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall the earth be savoured. It is good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden underfoot by men.* And what is a Religious of the Good Shepherd without courage, without obedience, but salt that has lost its savour and is good for nothing but to be rejected by God.

Theologians tell us that God has attached special graces to a certain place or work to which He calls a soul. If we are not careful in faithfully accomplishing the particular mission He has Himself assigned us, if we have the misfortune to turn aside from the path He has marked out for us, we run the risk of losing the special graces destined for us and being thus destitute, of falling into an inextricable labyrinth of trials and sorrows.

Therefore, it is not without reason that I so frequently urge you to be faithful always and in everything. . . . Be faithful to God, living only for Him, labouring only for Him, offering Him all you do. Be faithful to those whose office it is to govern and direct you, by fulfilling all your duties, and do not add in the slightest degree to the heavy burden they already bear. Be faithful to your sisters by edifying them, by helping them, by never giving them pain, by treating them amiably and affectionately, by being, in a word, all that the spouses of Jesus should be. Be faithful to your poor penitents, to your orphans, and to all your children, by lavishing upon them with zeal and charity the most assiduous care. Be faithful to yourselves by

*This religious remained faithfully at her post where she died after accomplishing great works for the glory of God.

corresponding to the innumerable graces God grants to you, and by striving to advance in the path of perfection. Finally, be faithful to the holy Institute which has received you and in which you will find salvation. By your energy and prudence multiply its good works, die in its bosom, and you may be sure that in the end the victory, the palm and the crown will be yours.

MAXIM

Those who unceasingly pursue the end of their vocation, who prefer to suffer everything themselves rather than cause others the least suffering, who are obedient and mortified, will, I assure you, have a glorious mansion in the house of the Lord.

A religious who is faithful to her Rule advances with rapid strides towards perfection; unknown and hidden she treads the path to Heaven and we shall gaze in surprise when we see the height she has attained amongst the blessed.

CHAPTER LVI

To the Sisters of the Novitiate—The Interior Life—Love of the Cross—To Suffer and be Silent

TWO things are essentially necessary to us, my dear daughters, an interior spirit and a love of the cross. Without an interior spirit you can no more lead a spiritual life than a fish can live out of water. How earnestly should you strive during your novitiate to form yourselves to the interior life. How I long to see saints such as St Teresa in our monastery. The saint never lost the sense of God's presence for a single moment. It must not be thought that this rendered her sad or self-concentrated; on the contrary, of all in the house she was the gayest and most amiable. We can be merry without being dissipated. Accustom yourselves not to speak too loud; a great talker will never be very spiritual. I do not say to any one of you, "You will do no good," but I fear you will not if you do not form yourselves to the interior spirit.

Your novitiate is the richest season of your life. It may be said to be covered with gold and diamonds. Imitate the ant, and lay up in the summer provisions which will be of use to you during the winter that follows; you will thus prepare for yourselves the crown of glory that God destines for fervent souls.

But to the interior spirit must be united a love of the cross, the one cannot exist without the other.

It is above all in suffering that Religious of the Good Shepherd should imitate Our Lord, because, you know, my dear daughters, that to labour for the salvation of souls and to suffer are synonymous terms and cannot be separated. It was entirely of your own free will that you asked to enter the novitiate, and you knew you would have to suffer. To begin with, however, God gives nothing but consolations, and in this He shows His loving mercy and kindness; for if He unveiled all our future, it would alarm us. You are now in a kind of paradise, you find everything easy, your trials are very light, but when you go to Foundations you will meet at times with some very heavy crosses. Do not think, however, that crosses will disturb our souls or that they rob us of our peace of mind. Oh, no, far from it; when we offer them to God, we enjoy great inward peace and they become lighter. If you cannot now bear a little humiliation or a little contradiction, what will you do then? It is on this account, my dear daughters, that you ought to form yourselves well, during your novitiate, to the practice of religious virtues, to a love of your little crosses, in order to merit that God may some day give you courage to bear with patience and joy all those that await you. What a misfortune it would be if you were good and virtuous only when in the Mother House, and in a Foundation became so negligent and easy-going that no trace of the spirit of the Institute could be seen in you. Such conduct would be disastrous for yourself and for the Congregation. You are formed in the novitiate with such care and solicitude, only that you may become capable later of upholding our Houses, of which you should be at once the example and resource.

Act for God alone. You will not always have some one to watch over you from morning to night and lead you by the hand to your duties. We have often told you that faults which we are unwilling to correct in the novitiate almost always remain with us during life. The only happiness on this earth, my children, consists in the accomplishment of our duties; be then very faithful to them. My constant desire is, that the novitiate should maintain the holiness and the honour of the Congregation; you will do this only by applying yourselves to the practice of charity and humility. Where you are sent by obedience, where there is poverty to practise, where there are many souls to save—there should you find happiness. The combat over, then the crown will come. Had you the choice of two Foundations, one poor, the other flourishing, your heart should turn by preference to the first named. Observe that Religious Institutes are always begun in the midst of suffering. Our great benefactresses, our ever-to-be-regretted Sisters Mary Chantal of Jesus and Mary Teresa of Jesus, who had given all their property to this House, once they became religious were the poorest of all. The last-named, Madame de Couëspel, having gone to found one of our monasteries, was obliged to hire a soldier's mattress to sleep upon, and to use old newspapers as pocket-handkerchiefs. But as she greatly loved her vocation, this did not discourage her in the slightest degree. If you were not animated with a love for your vocation, it would be an insurmountable obstacle to your profession; because in order to support the heat of the combat and to bear suffering we must love our vocation.

I do not conceal from you that because of the poor souls we wish to save, our work is stamped by

trial, obscurity and opprobrium, so that it does not always appear as white as our habits; but at death, more than during life, how glorious this will seem. If we have always endeavoured to accomplish the will of God, could we be anything but peaceful in dying? What can a religious regret who has loved but God, who has worked only for God? The greatest sacrifices will then seem trifling. How is it that our spiritual vision becomes so keen on our death-bed, unless it be that the soul, already partly freed from its mortal frame, perceives, as God draws nigh and illuminates her, the extent of her obligations. Oh, how great is the happiness that Religious of the Good Shepherd enjoy in Heaven. When they look back at the generosity with which they trampled under their feet the vanities of the world, and consecrated themselves to the service of the Divine Master, they are filled with joy and render thanks to the adorable Trinity. The more they had suffered in this life the greater the reward. . . . If these reflections lead you to love the cross, to love sacrifice, you will soon become perfect religious, you will be ready to go to the ends of the world to save souls. Therefore, my good daughters, embrace the crosses you will meet, don't fear them; great works take their rise in the midst of all sorts of trials and labours. A Religious of the Good Shepherd should pursue the path of suffering with constancy; she should never say: it is enough, but continue to thank God in trial as in gladness. Remember the Institute rests on the cross and on the love of our Observances. I cannot better compare it than to the Angel mentioned in the Apocalypse, who set his right foot on the sea and his left upon the earth, to show that he stood unshaken. Labour then to acquire this love

of the cross and of humiliations, which in the designs of God must merit for us a crown of inestimable value.

Adversity is the best of masters, and we learn to lead an interior life far better in poverty than in prosperity. Suffering well borne imparts vigour to our souls, but we must accept trials and adversity as proofs of God's love and mercy. I think I may say with certainty that those who try to avoid a little cross will meet a heavier one. Souls who, to begin with, are weak and faltering, grow strong in abandonment, poverty and adversity; moreover, if they rise above these trials they will be fit instruments for God's work, and will the better understand the sorrows of others for having themselves endured them.

Often you do not think enough, my dear children, in the reprimands you receive and in the troubles which befall you, that God chastises you in mercy because He loves you. Be convinced of this, that your Superiors are always the instruments of Providence; all they require from you is in the interests of your soul and for your good. They know that by following your own will you endanger your salvation, and from this they wish to save you, by pointing out what is God's will. Those who live by love do not live without sorrow. The more we give to God, the more He asks; but the greater the violence we offer ourselves, the greater is the reward we receive in return. Therefore we ought to be always ready to make the sacrifices God requires from us. In the early days of the Company of Jesus St Ignatius had only ten religious with him in Rome. He appointed four for a large mission, but God said to him: "I wish to have them all." "What then shall I do?" replied

St Ignatius. "Thou shalt remain alone with Me in Rome."

That we meet with crosses ought not to surprise us. Bossuet says: "When Our Lord wishes to crucify a soul, He always finds means to do so." "Happy the communities who suffer," remarks a pious author. We have observed there is always a house of Calvary in our Institute, but just as a storm at sea is succeeded by a yet greater calm, so crosses are a prelude to great graces. Though we must learn to bear crosses, this does not prevent us from feeling the pain of them; St Paul himself said: "Life is become bitter to me by my diverse sufferings." And, indeed, who is there that is free from contradictions and affliction? How many persons there are in the world who, contradicted from morning to night, resign themselves to their fate in silence whilst some religious complain unceasingly.

I often read with pleasure this passage of *The Following of Christ*: "If thou art silent under suffering, thou wilt draw down God's help upon thee." These words reveal the admirable secrets of the lovers of the cross; let us not be content with only meditating upon them, let us put them in practice. Let us accept the sufferings that God sends us with so entire a submission, so complete a resignation, that no murmur, no complaint shall ever escape us, nor the slightest sign of discouragement ever be visible.

I cannot repeat often enough that good works take their rise, gain strength and are perfected only at the foot of the cross. Our Lord wills that we follow Him to Calvary, in order to allow us to participate in the work of the redemption of souls which He effected by the shedding of His precious

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Blood. If you encounter trials in the employments in which obedience places you, if in some class the characters of the children cause you a thousand difficulties, suffer patiently and in silence, do not by your own fault lose the merit which God has given you the means of acquiring.

MAXIM

We must above all things love God, the Institute, the cross, order and work.

Wait, keep silence, pray, suffer and hope: for ten years have I heard this in prayer.

My dear daughters, learn to suffer and be silent.

CHAPTER LVII

Counsels to the Sisters of the Novitiate

I LOOK on the novitiate as the nursery of the whole Order, and I cannot refrain from saying to you, my dear daughters, that you will either be the support and glory of the Congregation or you will be its trial. But no—you will be its glory by remaining faithful to your holy vocation.

Our Lord Jesus Christ has continually given us particular proofs of His love. From the beginning of this House of Angers He has sent us subjects according to His Own Heart, religious filled with ardour and zeal. Oh, how fervent was our novice-ship, and what progress was made in religious perfection!

Those first novices are already the apostles of the Institute, they are specially called to do great works; there will always be some who will be animated with this holy and edifying zeal. Labour then to be some day of the number of these chosen, privileged souls. Our good God has called you, as He did the first novices, and if you be faithful you will be blessed as they have been.

I see you all, ascending and descending the mystical ladder, striving to reach perfection. I beg of you not to grow weary. Remember that you are not alone, but Jesus Christ labours with you and imparts to you His strength. Oh! if you did but perfectly understand the beauty, the value of your vocation, you would think yourselves very happy and highly favoured by Heaven. Our Lord said one

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day to His Apostles: *I will make you to be fishers of men*. What had the Apostles on their side? They were poor ignorant fishers of fish, and God made them fishers of men. Well, my dear daughters, Our Lord may perhaps choose those amongst you who seem the least capable, and destine them to be very successful fishers of souls. This is proved by what we have already witnessed; very simple souls, devoid of any particular talent and apparently little calculated to render great services, have, nevertheless, effected wonders, God wishing to exalt their humility and ardent love for souls. On the contrary, a novice, who is wanting in the spirit of sacrifice, though endowed with the finest qualities of mind, is capable of but little good, and becomes rather a burden than a help to her convent. Oh! how great are the evils that result when a love of self is allowed to predominate.

There are certain persons who always imagine that they are not treated as they deserve, and who wish that others should be continually occupied in flattering and gratifying their pride. Such novices will never become religious according to God's Heart; even though they have been highly educated, know languages, they will not be of use. Love knowledge; apply yourselves to study, to the sciences, if you so desire; perhaps by these means you will render great services to the Congregation, but above all, you must love obedience, humility, and have great zeal for our observances and the accomplishment of our Rule. Often read our Constitutions and put them in practice. This should be your first study, otherwise, having broken down the hedge which protected you, the serpent of ennui and pride will wound you, and you will be in danger of perishing.

Do you know, my dear children, the demon which, above all the rest, brings about the loss of vocations? It is the demon of pride which upsets and destroys communities, which attacks the palace of the rich and the cottage of the poor. It seems to me that the demon of pride holds a hatchet in one hand and a sword in the other. It destroys all our good actions and penetrates into our inmost souls. I would a thousand times rather see you all bitten by a venomous serpent and die, than that the demon of pride should take up its abode amongst you. I do not mean to say that pride dwells in your souls, but you must not neglect to reform your exterior; all that is contrary to humility in your deportment, in your walk, must be corrected. Our Divine Saviour greatly recommended this beautiful virtue to us. Oh! how I love those words, which are far the most beautiful of all His sentences; *Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of Heart.*

“ Let him who is the first, become the last, the servant of all.” Be the humblest if you wish to be the greatest. I should tremble for a religious who thought that a foundation could not exist without her.

Besides the demon of pride, there is the demon of gluttony, which tempts us to wish for different food, filling us with disgust for what is served; then there is the demon of jealousy, who sows discord for a mere nothing; and there are the demons of impatience, bad temper, deceit, inconstancy, indiscretion, etc., etc. When these infernal spirits cannot succeed in bringing relaxation into a monastery they hold council together, saying: “ Let us contrive that persons should be received into this monastery of a proud sensitive disposi-

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tion, who are annoyed at everything, and take offence at the least slight to their self love. Thus, of a certainty, peace will be disturbed, and we shall finally carry off the victory."

You remember, my dear daughters, the story of the malicious fiend who was able to congratulate himself upon having, at last, caused a sin in a religious whom he had tempted thirty years. What was the snare he employed to entrap this poor soul? It was a sentiment of pride.

The demon of tepidity is also one that we must guard against carefully. Truly it is difficult to know what to do in a community with certain indolent persons who care for nothing, and whom everything wearies. "If you should have such a one amongst you," says a Father of the Society of Jesus, "you will find that wherever she may be placed, whatever employment you give her, she will always be discontented."

Our vocation is not meant for those indolent souls, who, afraid of labour and fearing fatigue, are capable of abandoning God's work. We need great souls like St Teresa, full of fervour and courage. Knowing the great good of which this holy soul was capable, the devils, unable to overcome her virtue, persecuted her in a thousand ways. Upon one occasion they threw down the walls of a convent she was building, burying in its ruins one of her young nephews, whom she miraculously restored to life. They cast her down several-times, and would have killed her had they been permitted. Sometimes they seated themselves on the heads of the novices to make them yawn and sleep in choir; but they were baffled by the fervour of those good Carmelites. Our Lord, Whose delight it was to be in their midst, said one day to St Teresa: "After Heaven

and the Blessed Sacrament, my delight is to be in the hearts of your daughters."

Mother Anne of St Bartholomew, one of St Teresa's first daughters, saw a troop of these infernal spirits in her cell upon one occasion, endeavouring in every way possible to terrify her, furious because of the Carmelite monasteries she was about to found in France. Whenever a fresh House was being opened, horrible phantoms appeared to her night and day. But she did not allow herself to be vanquished; she remained firm, remembering that in God's service we must offer a prompt resistance to the devil, and thus she resolutely and courageously put her enemies to flight. It was observed that when the Blessed Sacrament was placed in the chapel of a new Foundation, the evil spirits completely disappeared.

Oh! how I long for all my children to be great souls like these, with no other desire than to extend the reign of Christ and to continually advance in perfection, undeterred by any obstacle whatever. "This desire," says St Bernard, "is the most evident sign of God's presence in a soul; when it is lacking, there is reason to fear that indifference and tepidity taking its place will lead us to grow weary of the exercises of religion; just as a disgust for food is a sign of illness, so a distaste for religious exercises is an infallible presage of the fall of a soul."

Graces we neglect pass away never to return. One generation quickly follows another, as may be seen in our Institute. For example—in thirty years shall I still be here? Will any of my first daughters be living? . . . You see then how important it is that our novices should form themselves, should be zealous in the discharge of their employments, should have

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the honour of the Congregation at heart and labour in such a manner that they may, some day, uphold our monasteries. In a word, the primitive fervour must never degenerate; may your holy lives entirely consecrated to the good of souls draw down upon our Institute the blessings and favours of Heaven.

MAXIM

Be very regular, very earnest. If you are not exact in the novitiate, neither will you be in your employments nor in the Foundations.

Study the law; its taste is bitter to the palate, but sweet to the heart. Be faithful to it till the last moment of your lives; live according to the pattern set you on the mountain.

CHAPTER LVIII

Further Counsels to the Sisters of the Novitiate

YOU know, my dear daughters, that persons who embrace religious life are chosen by God, but woe to those who fail to correspond to this grace, they will end by falling into an abyss. By being unfaithful to the Divine call and thus depriving ourselves of God's special protection, we become exposed to the grave danger of losing our souls. For this reason I cannot refrain from urging you, strongly, to use every effort to remain faithful to the counsels you receive in order to preserve the spirit of your vocation.

If, as is the case, we shall have to render an account on the day of judgement of all the inspirations, of all the instructions we have received, of the impressions made upon us by good example, we ought to have always before our minds how terrible will be this account. May the fear of this dreaded day urge you to profit of the advice given by those charged to guide you in the way of salvation, and by their solicitude for your spiritual progress.

I desire that every one here should be saints, because you are on the mountain. Each of you should be a living rule, so that, if the House were destroyed by fire and the Directories and Constitutions burnt, you would be so many living examples from which others could learn them. Study your holy Observances continually, for the human mind

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is weak and you might forget your laws. Those who do not impress a love of our holy Rules deeply on their minds are easily overthrown. David said: *I meditate Thy law day and night*: it was his delight and his strength, and so should it be for us. Search the Rule as you would a mine of gold; by so doing you will find reflections and thoughts calculated to maintain you in your duty, and above all in the charity required of you by our fourth Vow. Keep your Constitutions in your heart, in your mind, in your hand, so that they may keep you. Begin the day holily, follow all the exercises with great regularity. As little children are nourished by milk, so should you draw strength from your Constitutions. They are the star which will lead you to Heaven, the pillar of fire which will enlighten you in the thickest darkness.

Do not allow your observance of the Constitutions to depend upon your humour or caprice, but conform your humour and caprice to your Constitutions. When those whose office it is to maintain public tranquillity in a kingdom apply themselves to carry out the laws, order, peace, and the happiness of its inhabitants are secured. In the same way we shall be supported and strengthened, more and more, according to our greater or less fidelity to the exact observance of our Rules and Constitutions. Never let us degenerate from them in anything they prescribe, and we shall always live in peace.

It is of the utmost consequence, my dear children, that you firmly resolve to open your mind only to those who have been deputed by God to guide you, Who gives them at the same time grace and light to dispel your doubts or comfort you in the troubles which may torment you.

Do not allow your weakness to overcome you. If you fall, rise again with courage. Remember that before we reach the summit of Carmel, and taste the spiritual delights granted to faithful religious, we must first pass through a torrent of bitterness and drink of the waters of tribulation. Mount Carmel is the emblem of delights, because, at one time, it was extremely fertile, rich in vineyards, olive trees, and beautified by all sorts of flowers and fruit. Great fatigue has to be gone through before reaching the summit of the mountain, and in climbing it one often loses heart.

I once saw a picture representing Mount Carmel, which three souls were endeavouring to ascend. One of them had reached a great height, another was at the foot of the mountain bound by chains to a rock, whilst the third was half way up, but her foot was caught by a thread and she was prevented from ascending further. The soul chained to the rock represented those who, being bound by bad habits, we can hardly hope to see ascending, unless it pleases God to work a miracle and break the chains of iron that hold them captive. The one whose foot was entangled in a thread was an emblem of souls who, it is true, wish to serve God, yet remain, as it were, attached by some little inordinate affection to the things of earth. They strive to ascend and cannot, because hindered by this thread, for even the smallest imperfections are an obstacle to our advancement in the spiritual life.

What a misfortune it would be, my dear daughters, if it happened that by an imprudent word or by your bad example you were ever to shake the vocation of one of your companions! What an account you would have to give of it to God! En-

deavour then to set good example and be a source of edification one to another.

Do not be afraid of a few little trials. In the country the finest trees are those which the gardener has cut and pruned. Be strong in soul and generous, setting aside love of self, and if occasion offer do not hesitate to perform even heroic acts of virtue. If we only use the tips of our fingers or hardly wet ourselves with a sponge when we wash, can we expect to be ever really clean? To learn to swim we must not enter the water little by little, but throw ourselves into it. There have been saints who, feeling an extreme repugnance to attend the sick in order to overcome themselves actually sucked the most frightful sores, and afterwards were enabled to do with pleasure what had before filled them with horror. Others have been known to overcome temptation and recover their peace of soul by throwing themselves into the midst of thorns and letting the sharp points pierce their flesh. The Mother de Chantal, who for long was subjected to very dangerous temptations against faith, performed extraordinary acts when the trial was greatest. One day, in particular, she engraved upon her breast with a red hot iron the names of Jesus and Mary. We have then examples which prove that there are no temptations, whatever, which we cannot resist with a firm will and the assistance of God's grace. But let me add, never perform similar mortifications without permission.

Never lose courage, my children, do not imagine that you would find salvation more attainable in the world; be convinced on the contrary, that in the rush of life you would encounter much graver dangers, and would become very unhappy. Do not be like the novice mentioned in the lives of the

Fathers of the Desert, who, weary of the aridity and troubles of mind he experienced, said to himself: "I will go back and live in the world, as I am so disgusted with the practices of religious life." God willed to correct him in a truly singular manner; He permitted the evil one to visit Him armed with a huge iron bar, with which he dealt him three successive blows on his back, saying: "Behold how I treat those who are in my service."

We cannot taste the happiness of being religious, except at the cost of sacrifice. For a long time a young novice went through a kind of martyrdom because she could not accustom herself to silence. Another religious, of a very austere Order, had to do great violence to herself when told to sweep; on several occasions she allowed the broom to drop out of her hands, so intense was her repugnance. But each time she picked it up again, saying: "My God, help me! I would rather die than not accomplish Thy will." During many years she experienced no spiritual consolation, and though it seemed to her that she felt only disgust for her vocation, yet she rendered it so attractive to those with whom she came in contact that she inspired them with a love for it.

Expect trials, my dear daughters; it may be said that those know nothing of spiritual life, who have not been tempted. St Gregory writes: "There is a devil of the morning, a noonday devil and an evening devil," which means that the evil one tempts us at the beginning, in the middle, and at the end of our lives and of our good works. He tempts the novices, he tempts the young professed, he tempts the older religious, he tempts the novices with great fury and with much cunning, believing that if he succeed, everything is gained by thus turning

away a soul from her vocation at the beginning of her religious career. He tempts those who have grown old in religion, thinking that his prey may easily escape him. He is less ardent in his pursuit of those midway in their course, flattering himself he has time before him in which to ensnare them, and relying also on the inconstancy of the human mind.

Resist temptations with courage, be not of the number of those irresolute souls who are the sport of the demon. A saint one day saw the spirit of darkness amusing himself with a large number of souls, as children do with snowballs. These were souls destitute of courage, to whom a straw could be an obstacle, who are blown about by every wind of joy or sorrow, led by their imagination, occupied with themselves without any thought for God's glory. Be not of the number of those souls, my dear children, but prove yourselves on all occasions to be strong souls, firm in your resolutions, generous and unshaken in combating the suggestions of the evil spirit. By this means you will render yourselves capable of the great works which your zeal leads you to desire.

Meanwhile, strengthen yourselves in every way possible, for I must tell you that I prefer to maintain and cultivate the vocation of but one amongst you, rather than undertake the conversion of fifty or even a hundred penitents, and for this reason, that we must always aim at what is the most perfect. Consequently, I am anxious to fortify you now against all that may later on be a stumbling block to you. You know that when a huntsman bends his bow, he always aims higher than the object which he wishes to hit, otherwise he would miss his mark. Do likewise, aim higher, in order that

you may at least attain the end you must reach. For want of this precaution many religious are less perfect after ten years of profession than they were on the day they pronounced their Vows.

In you, my dear novices, are founded all our hopes; we count upon you for the relief of our Foundations. Our sisters there are sinking under the weight of their labours. Oh, how we long that you should go to their help! But prepare to meet crosses wherever you may be. Sometimes where things seem the brightest the most thorns are hidden. Our sisters in our Foundations could tell you how many and bitter are the secret trials they meet with. In order to accustom you to these crosses I would wish that you should all have some interior trials to bear, as they are excellent means of strengthening our souls. When I unceasingly exhort you to fidelity to your Rule and holy Observances, I have also in view that you should, by so doing, merit the numerous graces which you will need in those times of struggles and labour.

MAXIM

If on leaving the novitiate a novice can in conscience feel that she has always been obedient, her heart abounds in joy, her soul is filled with light, her days pass away in peace. Oh! what blessings are attached to solitude and to an interior spirit and how earnestly the novices should apply themselves to it! They are in the spring-time of life. Only by prayer will they fit themselves for the works of the Institute.

CHAPTER LIX

The Classes

MUCH will be required from those to whom much has been given. I constantly refer to the one subject, my dear daughters, our holy vocation, to which we should be so devotedly attached, and to our fourth Vow, our glory and our defence. This Vow it is that gives inestimable merit to all our actions, and you must habituate yourselves to look on it as the supreme end and object of all the good you do. Great purity of heart is required of us by this Vow, for as we are called upon to illuminate the souls of others our own should be resplendent with all virtues.

You must serve both as guides and as Mothers to the children of the classes. They should find in you comfort in their troubles and a remedy for their evils. The more grievous the spiritual maladies of our penitents the greater should be our interest in them. The stronger their inclination to evil, the deeper should be our compassion for them.

Let us then endeavour by our kind manner to strengthen the "bruised reed" and prevent "the smoking flax" from being extinguished. If we act harshly towards these souls that God Himself has touched by His grace, we may fear that in punishment of our temerity and pride He will abandon us to our own strength. Reflect on these words of St Augustine: "There is no sin so great which others have committed that we might not fall into if God withdrew His preventing grace." The germ

of all evil exists within us; and did not God in His goodness continually watch over us, blinded by the violence of our bad inclinations we should become their unhappy victims. The Apostle St Paul had truly reason to say: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection, lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a cast-away."

St Magdalen had sinned grievously, nevertheless, we may believe that in the eyes of God she was less culpable than many Christians of the present day, for she had not then been enlightened by the truths of the Gospel.

What an account will be exacted of us who have received such great graces!

Much more also will be required of those amongst our penitents who have had the happiness of receiving baptism at their birth, who in their youth were instructed in the truths of the Catholic religion and several times approached the sacraments, but then revolted against God, than of those to whom these helps were wanting. They are far more culpable than was Magdalen, and with what zeal should we labour for their conversion.

Never think or say that having committed many sins the penitents should be ready to suffer anything without complaint. Oh! my dear daughters, this is not what Our Lord taught us by the manner in which He treated sinners.

We had amongst our penitents, at one time, a young person who inspired me with the deepest compassion. Always silent and in tears, she could not be consoled for having offended God. I often said to her: "You must have confidence in the infinite mercy of God." "Oh, Mother," she replied, "I feel my grief will kill me, only death will end

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my sorrow for having offended my Saviour."

In fact she did not live long, and died leaving to her companions a most edifying memory and an example of sincere conversion and perfect repentance.

Young and inexperienced religious often fall into the mistake of imagining they can convert souls by constant preaching. No, this is not a good way; it only wearies them. If you wish to gain their hearts, soften their characters and correct their faults, you must first conciliate and take care of them, showing them much care and consideration. The greater number are ignorant when they come and take pleasure in evil. It is not possible to win them to God except by treating them with extreme consideration. When reproving the children, do not use unbecoming expressions; this would only irritate them. Be polite and show them the refinement that belongs to the spouses of Jesus Christ. This is one of the chief means of giving them edification.

"Before you speak learn to keep silence; learn the law before you explain it." These words may be specially addressed to those destined to guide others. They must first nourish themselves with prayer, meditation, simplicity, humility and the spirit of our holy Constitutions, that they may be enabled to give spiritual nourishment to those dependent on them. Appreciate, my dear children, the grandeur of your task. It is essential that the mistresses should be better than their children, and for this reason they ought to labour without intermission at their own perfection. Say often with David, *Save me, O Lord, that I may not faint on the way.*

I was one day taking a newly received penitent to the class. In passing through the garden we met

one of our old sisters. "Mother," said the young girl, "that is not a religious but an angel." So impressed was she by the religious bearing and modest demeanour of the sister that it had much to do with her conversion which was true and lasting.

You will sometimes find it hard to remain in the class in the midst of persons who are frequently difficult to manage. But, my dearest children, bear in mind that the work of saving souls is one of labour and sacrifice. Souls are not gained without cost, and ordinarily the fruit of our work is seen only after much trouble and long waiting.

Each of our Houses already counts a large number of conversions amongst our penitents, and several of those dear children have died in most edifying dispositions. What an encouragement for us!

I have just learnt that in one of our monasteries ten penitents were received in one day. How many sins will be prevented by means of our sisters. Go, my dear daughters, go in search of souls throughout every country in the world.

How much reason had our Venerable Founder to recommend us to implore light from the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, that we may see in what manner we should deal with our penitents. Read our *Book of Customs*, where it says: "They should often ask the Divine Heart of Jesus, the source of all sanctity, to grant them the virtues of prudence and mildness, bearing in mind that these souls have not been redeemed, as says St Peter, by gold and silver, but by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ."

We are told in our holy Constitutions that the conversion of one soul is a greater work than the creation of an entire world, for material things

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cannot resist the word of God, whilst, unhappily, souls do so only too frequently.

The greatest temptations the penitents have to endure are ordinarily against faith and hope. Never cease to strengthen the truths of religion in their souls, and to encourage them to a firm hope in the Divine Mercy. If, sometimes, when they are near death, they tell you they cannot hope to be saved after having contributed to the ruin of so many souls, sustain them and animate their courage by placing before their eyes the proofs we have of God's infinite goodness to sinners.

You know the sentiments of St Ignatius. He endeavoured to found a Refuge in Rome, and after devoting time, trouble and labour to it, he was blamed on all sides for having undertaken an enterprise which, it was thought, could not possibly succeed. The saint, seeing this, remarked with perfect calm and resignation: "Had I prevented but one mortal sin, I should have been well satisfied." He used to say, "We ought to imitate the angels, who, after employing every means to save men, never lose their holy peace, whatever the success of their ministry." St Paul writes: *Neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.**

Unfortunately, we see souls fall away after giving promise of great things. A word, a little jealousy, a contradiction, the slightest thing, suffices to destroy all. It has been remarked these poor children have usually two kinds of conversion. The first is not solid, for their dispositions change like the seasons. For example, you will see them exemplary during the winter, and on the return of spring they allow themselves to be upset by the

* 1 Cor. iii, 7.

recollection of what they had left in the world, and wish to return to it. A Superior in a foreign country who had observed this for years, wrote to me lately as follows: "The peace which has reigned amongst our children this spring proves the fruit they derived from the retreat they made shortly before it, but I am always in fear of some sad change in their dispositions."

The second conversion, however, is a fruitful one, therefore you must not be discouraged. Surmount all obstacles, and continue your way. Let us devote ourselves entirely to the salvation of souls, and with such courage that we may be ready to sacrifice life itself for them. Thus shall we glorify the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary where our names will be inscribed for eternity.

MAXIM

Study the character of your penitents closely. You will not learn to know them in the class-room, but by watching them at recreation and in your conversations with them.

CHAPTER LX

The Classes (continued)

WE must to-day renew a recommendation of great importance, my beloved daughters, which is, never to strike the children. I well know that none of you fail on this point—but I feel it my duty to again urge the faithful observance of this recommendation. Never use harsh measures. It is well known that they do not correct, and only inculcate us before God and man. Let this prohibition last *always* and *for ever*. Act as if it were written up everywhere, because I wish it adhered to everywhere and on every occasion.

Never forget that we have no rights over our penitents. We can neither treat them harshly nor lock them up. They are all here by their free will or placed with us by the competent authority of their relations, and we have no more right to punish them than we have to keep them against their will. Besides, severity is not the spirit of our vocation, nor is it God's spirit. If a penitent openly resist you, if she threaten you, dismiss her. Our penitents should be animated with a good will, we are not obliged to keep any others.

Do not scold overmuch. Be grave in your manner but very kind; above all, when our dear penitents first enter, for whatever their cause, the tears they shed are always very bitter, and if they did not meet with great kindness from you they might fall into despair.

Do not deceive yourselves. Frequently the first

feeling they experience on entering is one of antipathy for the House, and sometimes even for those charged with their guidance. But afterwards, if they be well treated and surrounded with thoughtful care and marks of interest, they soon change, and they begin to taste the charm of religion. Then follow esteem and attachment for the religious, and, as you see, many of them end by wishing never to leave us.

Great care and watchfulness are required to bring back souls to God. This has been the experience of all our Houses. Two things have usually a pernicious effect on our penitents; military music and the sound of drums, and unfortunately in our monasteries established in the midst of towns, these troublesome distractions often occur. Happy are our Houses situated at a little distance from the noise of cities; they enjoy quiet and breathe a purer atmosphere. -

Redouble your vigilance; in the church, at their work, and especially during their recreation hours and in the dormitory, be watchful over our dear children. A lamp should burn all night in their dormitory as our Constitutions prescribe. Let your watchfulness extend itself to every one without, however, causing them annoyance. Act as a mother who has her eyes open, ever attentive to her children, the objects of her affection. Be very careful that no accident should happen, nor any offence against God be committed, through want of watchfulness on your part.

We recommend those of you who are not occupied in the classes to refrain from going to them or speaking to the children without permission. Be sure if you are not named for a class the grace to do good in it is wanting, nor can you treat with the

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children, that is, with the persons of our different establishments, without great prejudice to yourself unless you have the blessing of obedience. The children know that in acting thus you are disobedient. On the contrary, a religious who keeps to her duty and who avoids, as far as she can, being seen, and speaks only to those she is authorized to speak to, wins respect, and if she be some day named mistress she is received with esteem and gladness.

By the reserve which the religious practise the community and classes should be kept widely apart.

It is necessary that the second mistresses should act with authority during the hours they spend in the class. Nothing does more harm than a too marked difference, by which everything is referred to the first, as if the second were of no account. First mistresses should evince much confidence towards the sisters who work with them, but the second should be full of deference and consideration towards the first, leading the children to confidence in her. They should never say, for example: "If I were your first mistress I should not do this or that." Such remarks disedify the children, and cause them to lose their respect and esteem for the person who speaks thus, and they regard her as not having a good spirit. Second mistresses should be as angels of peace, and the first should make much account of what they say and feel glad to use their mediation on many occasions.

As for reprimands they should be left to the first mistress. She knows best what suits each. Whilst on the one hand she should not be suspicious regarding her *aides*, on the other her confidence in them should not lead her to leave the management of the class in their hands.

She should find her happiness in being in the midst of her children. Nothing is more beneficial to an establishment than the constant presence of the first mistress. She should remember she has not only the charge of temporal details, but is bound to watch over souls for whom she will have to render an account.

If you are not their first mistress, never suffer any of our penitents to speak in the least confidentially to you. For your experience, I will tell you that I myself, when I was second mistress, committed an imprudence which caused me much regret. A penitent came to me and said: "Mother, I have not the courage to tell my first mistress something which torments me; will you have the goodness to listen to me a moment so that you may advise me?" I consented out of compassion, and then added what I judged suitable. But she had deceived me.

Penitents find innumerable pretexts for confiding secrets to a mistress if they perceive that it pleases her. Some would even be capable of inventing sins they had not committed, and ask advice under pretext of requiring guidance. Tell them that such counsels should be sought from the confessor, to whom they should open their whole soul, in order to obtain true comfort. You know our holy Constitutions, my dear daughters, and what they set down on this point. Keep to it faithfully.

How should the mistresses act when they are appointed to their office? In the first place they should put their work into the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary, resolving to have frequent recourse to Them. Then they should beg the Superior to instruct them and make her wishes known to them.

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Should they begin straight away and give grand instructions in the class? No, this would not be an opportune moment to do so. They ought in the first place to conciliate their children, showing kindness to them; they should take great care of the sick, and be very particular in insisting on order and cleanliness.

Let me warn those amongst you who are employed with the penitents, Magdalens and the children of our various classes, to beware of ever being familiar with them; never speak to them about your health. When your behaviour is wanting in gravity, you may be sure that you lose the dignity necessary to be a mistress.

It would very ill become a religious to speak to the children about herself, her family or what she was in the world. Still more unsuitable would it be to make known to them the troubles and difficulties she might experience. This would not only be petty but might cause the loss of that respect which persons consecrated to God should command by the dignity of their behaviour.

To see that her children learn the catechism and be well instructed in the truths of our holy religion, is a first and indispensable duty for a mistress, so that on their return to the world they may persevere in good and in the practice of Christian virtues. Some of them are incapable of learning the catechism, word for word, and if you exact this it humiliates and discourages them.

You must have patience, to make them understand and retain the lessons in their own fashion. bringing yourselves to the level of their intelligence,

It is important that lessons of reading, writing and arithmetic, etc., be given regularly to our orphans and preservation children. Taught thus

and also how to work, these young girls will not only be able to support themselves, but to help their parents likewise. Inspire them with great respect for their parents and with much devotedness to their families.

When you perceive that a reprimand will put a child in a temper, speak in general against the fault or address the reproof to another, who would receive it with docility.

You should keep their belongings and linen in good order. Our young girls are hurt if they see the contrary, though they sometimes may be themselves disorder itself. Perfect order ought to reign in our establishments. Let your children be neat and their clothes carefully mended. One can judge by a first glance whether or not order reigns in a class.

My dear daughters, you are bound to be Mothers to your penitents, you owe them the care a mother owes her child, and every one here is a mother; the cooks, the sisters who bake, labour for the penitents, preparing food which they should do most carefully.

I repeat once more, do not give your children cold, badly prepared food. Use discretion, and do not divide bread between three that is only enough for one, and if you see a child leaves her food through caprice do not take occasion to reprove her with all her faults.

Let your rule of conduct be all that you have seen practised in the Mother House, and do not deviate from it. If you find yourselves with some one who wishes to act otherwise, remind her of what she has seen and heard here. Imitate these good Vendéan farmers who keep repeating to their sons and grandsons: "My father worked here, my father worked there."

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I wish to impress well upon you never to allow the penitents or children of any class, to work at trifles on Sundays under the pretext that it is for a pious object, to ornament the altars, etc. Do not allow it.

Never place a child as infirmarian, whether she belong to the preservation, the penitents' class, or the Magdalens. A religious should always be the infirmarian and have surveillance over the child who is *aide*. If you do otherwise and leave them to themselves, you may be the cause of the loss of their souls. Moreover, a slight mistake on their part, giving the medicine at the wrong time, or administering a wrong dose, might result in nothing less than the death of the sick person.

It is indispensably necessary, as you perceive, that the mistresses be very watchful, and the infirmarian still more so, and that the sisters in the pharmacy should carefully explain how the medicines are to be taken.

One more recommendation in conclusion: do not sit up at night; do not allow prolonged vigils under the pretext that the work is pressing.

A mistress who is faithful to all these recommendations, who endeavours to practise all we have said, may be very sure that she has fulfilled her mission. She will be the beloved daughter of my heart, and have a right to my most tender affection.

MAXIM

Those who wish to labour for the salvation of souls should have recourse to the holy angels; to St Michael for charity, to the Angel Guardians for patience.

A mistress of penitents ought to be the first up and the last to go to bed.

CHAPTER LXI

Further Counsels with regard to the Children

TAKE notice, my dear daughters, that what might convert one penitent might have a contrary effect on another. Great tact and discernment are necessary to say the right thing. For instance, it would be a mistake to speak of them of penance on a day when their dinner had not been to their taste. You should rather say: "Poor children, I am very sorry you should have had such a dinner to-day; I feel really grieved about it." You will see that then they will tell you: "Oh, Mother, it does not matter. It was good enough." Another day in an instruction you can speak to them of the great evil of sin, of the sufferings we shall have to endure in purgatory, and show them how happy we are to be able to lessen them by doing penance in this world.

I perceived one day that a certain number of our penitents were very much upset. They were continually whispering, grumbling, and apparently plotting amongst themselves. As soon as I had a few moments free, I went and prostrated myself before the Blessed Sacrament and prayed earnestly to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. After an hour's adoration I returned to the class to replace the second mistress. What was my astonishment to see them all melt into tears and throw themselves on their knees, promising that in future they would console me by their conduct.

I often invited them to make acts of reparation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and short retreats in His honour, during which they observed perfect silence. Sometimes I remained the whole day with them, a sister replacing me only for a few minutes.

Remembering what I had heard an experienced Superior of a community* say about the danger of allowing ennui to take possession of the minds of her pupils, I took great care to prevent our poor children from becoming low spirited. When we see them sad, we should say a few words to them, induce them to sing hymns, and use every means to restore their joy of heart. How many faults are thus avoided, specially during recreation! I recollect one Sunday many of them were in a dreadful humour; they paid no attention to the mistress, on the contrary, seemed to ridicule her; they were sitting together under a tree and appeared to be plotting mischief. I went up to them and tried to persuade them to walk, but they did not follow me as usual. I felt puzzled to know how to act, and prayed interiorly that God would inspire me.

At last I saw a little grasshopper at my feet; I took it up and showed it to some of them, saying, "Is it not pretty?" One after another they came to see what was going on, and they laughed derisively, exclaiming, "Oh! what a beauty! It is really well worth looking at, to be sure!" Pretending not to hear, I asked what name they would like to give the little animal, adding, "We will keep it and build a little house for it beside us, etc., etc." I continued to joke and they began to be amused, their bad humour changed, so that in a few minutes it had vanished. They went themselves to find a cage, which they fashioned into a kind of

* Mme de Lignac.

castle, and the poor little grasshopper helped for some time to amuse us during recreation.

You see what a difficult thing it is to manage a class; but I beg of you, for the love of God, never to say anything to your children that can hurt their feelings, or you would be doing the devil's work. These poor faltering souls would be discouraged, and you would cease to be daughters of the Good Shepherd Who raises the fallen sheep, places it on His shoulders, and shows towards it nothing but tenderness. Be very just in your way of acting. When they ask pardon, do not make them feel it when you forgive them. Avoid hurting their feelings, a thing which it is very hard to forgive.

Use every means, my dear daughters, to win souls to virtue. Do not forget the following reflection made by several writers, which has always impressed me: "It is remarkable that Our Lord is called, by the prophet Isaiah, *Rod* and *Flower*, signifying that the rod corrects and the flower delights." But the term sword is never applied to Him, because the sword wounds and kills.

We read in the *Life of St Francis Xavier* that he ate and drank with the Indians, conforming to their customs. The Jesuit Fathers carefully preserve the parasol he used during his walks with the Japanese. I have seen this parasol,* which is made of palm leaves artistically arranged. I assure you, I attach more value to this object, which served to contribute to the glory of God and the conquest of souls, than I should have done to an instrument of the most austere penance.

To gain souls to God, you must be pleasant and agreeable. Endeavour to become so. Let peace always shine on your countenance, and let words of

*During our Mother's stay in Rome, 1843.

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sweetness and charity flow like balm from your lips on to the souls of your hearers. Far from being affected or haughty, be natural, affable and obliging, yet grave in your manner. In fine, let it be visible to all that you are souls consecrated to God and happy in your vocation.

Another point you must assiduously cultivate is thoughtfulness. When a mistress is forgetful, she is a burden to the sisters under her, and also to the children.

Be careful to know and provide for their temporal needs. Before speaking to them of spiritual matters, manage that they should be satisfied with the treatment they receive. Do not imagine that allowing them to suffer will help to their conversion. Treat them in a large-hearted way.

Feel a lively compassion for these poor souls who have to do great violence to themselves, and have many passions to root out of their souls. Do you think that it is easy for them to obey, to keep silence, to work all day?

Watch that no one amongst them be ill without the mistress knowing it, and do not expect the same work from a child when she is unwell as when she is in health. Do all in your power that the penitents should have nothing to complain of. Poor children, they go to the refectory where they find a very frugal meal; then a thousand recollections occur to them, they think that in the world they could have had whatever they pleased, that they might go here and there as they liked, and the more earnest is their desire to be converted the greater are their temptations.

Have something pleasant and agreeable to tell them, from time to time, to dispel their sadness and cheer them. A mistress who has the habit of

remaining at her post all day, without saying a word to her children, will find it very difficult to make any impression on their hearts when she gives an instruction. It would be worse still, if the recreation were sadder and more serious even than the hours of silence. You must amuse them with innocent diversions. I should wish you to have a fund of pleasant anecdotes to relate. You can hardly imagine how much such things please them and help to banish the weariness, struggles and temptations they endure.

Be convinced it requires great tact to give the children opportune and agreeable amusement and distraction. It needs more talent and effort to make their recreations profitable and happy than to give them beautiful instructions.

As for myself, I remember it was a great trial to me on holidays when Mass could not be sung, and that by eight o'clock all the services were over. The Saturday before I tried to think how I could help the poor children to pass the day pleasantly.

MAXIM

A mistress of a class is a victim: she has a great many sacrifices to make, therefore we should all be generous with God. Much has been done when once we are impressed with the necessity of sacrifice and abnegation. Our works succeed only through self-sacrifice.

You will meet troubles and difficulties everywhere, but what do trials signify to a soul on fire with the love of God?

CHAPTER LXII

*On the Happiness of Working for the
Salvation of Souls*

O H! how touched I felt, my dear daughters, by the consoling words addressed to you the last day of your retreat: "A religious who has had the happiness of converting a soul will be almost certain of saving her own. Should she fall into tepidity, or be assailed by the most terrible temptations, the soul she had restored to God would pray for her, saying: 'Lord, she showed mercy to me, be merciful then to her.' "

This thought should encourage and reassure you, even though you may have many faults to reproach yourselves with, for when you are on the point of appearing before God's tribunal, the souls who owe their salvation to you will plead your cause, crying out: "Soul for soul, Lord; this good Mother helped me to save mine; but for her I should have been lost; with the assistance of Thy grace, she converted me. Have mercy on her then as she had mercy on me."

I often call to mind this article of the Rule: "Observe that for which you are assembled and collected into a Congregation, etc.," and reflecting upon you, I say to myself, that the holiest sense in which this passage may be applied to you is regarding the salvation of souls. In fact, why have you left your country, your family and all that you possessed in the world, if it be not to save souls

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and would it not be a misfortune if you were now to lose sight of your end?

We have reason to esteem ourselves very happy in our vocation, more so than many other religious to whom opportunities are wanting for effecting all the good they desire. When we close the eyes of our penitents, of our children, in death, what a consolation it is to be able to suggest thoughts to them at the very end which will prepare them for their judgement, whilst religious in hospitals are often forbidden to exhort the dying in their last moments.

Let us value the happiness of our vocation and behold with joy and thanksgiving all the good Heaven reserves for us to accomplish. Our ministry is a glorious one, and we may well say it is a continuation of that of the Apostles. For your consolation, listen to Jesus Christ speaking to His disciples: "You who have followed Me shall be seated on a throne of glory in Heaven." This is addressed to all who have imitated the Apostles in their apostolic labours. We can truly affirm that, wherever we are established, God pours down torrents of graces and love by the blessings He bestows on our labours, whilst waiting to enjoy in Heaven that torrent of sweetness and delight which satiates the souls of the just. Let us receive in peace the crosses we meet here below; we shall never be exempted from them. They have never been wanting in this lower world and never will be.

You ought all to pray for the salvation of souls. A holy priest said to me lately: "You must undertake good works and pray about them; if you live for any other end you are not in your vocation."

You are all servants of the Blessed Virgin, and she has chosen you only that you may take care of

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souls, so that it would be cowardice in our Institute to allow them to perish. By trusting you with these precious souls she confers a great honour upon you. But we must be faithful, otherwise this terrible threat would be realized in our regard: "Cursed be he who afflicts his Mother's heart." God's glory suffers when we fail to take up a work, and sometimes the sin of one individual entails the punishment of several. ✕

As long as you are in the Institute you all labour for the salvation of souls, or at least it is your vocation to do so. Even those employed in the garden, bakehouse, *lingerie*, or in any other way, it matters not where, all labour for the salvation of souls. They fulfil our fourth Vow as much as do Superiors and first mistresses.

The Superior has not made a different Vow to you, and she will be judged as you will be. If there be any difference, it consists in the gravity of the obligations of a Superior, which are greater because of the importance of her charge, of which she will have to give an account. Those who pray and those who, instead of prayer, offer their work to God, as all can do who are occupied in the most laborious works of the house; even the sick on their bed of suffering, often labour more efficaciously for the salvation of souls than those employed in the classes.

Perchance the sister who has the lowliest work, who is the least thought of, may be the one who, by the fervour of her good desires, obtains the conversion of souls, whilst others who appear to have had all the merit may sometimes have contributed but very little to it.

We are all travelling to the same end, but I tremble when I remember St Paul's words: *Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed,*

but one receiveth the prize. Everywhere are to be found weak, pusillanimous souls devoid of earnestness, in whom the spirit of their vocation does not exist, and who end by losing the prize.

If we live negligently, we are unfaithful to our common Mother, the religious state; we must not be like stagnant water. Believe me, my dear daughters, you are no more exposed to danger in the midst of your penitents than a Carmelite in her cell. Never allow pride to govern you in any way, and on the other hand do not yield to discouragement. Be obedient, and God will bestow on you the graces necessary for the fulfilment of the employment confided to you. I repeat again: With your Rules and your Constitutions you can do everything. Expand your souls! The mistresses of the classes should be like the pelican who feeds her young with her own blood.

Oh, my dear daughters, do not be satisfied with thinking only of yourselves; do not say that it is enough for you to think of your perfection, for you know that to labour for the salvation of souls is an essential part of your obligations.

You frequently ask how I managed the penitents when I was their mistress. Well, it was by being just and kind.

To speak little and punish rarely is generally the best line to pursue in bringing these souls back to God. A life of prayer helps more towards correcting them than a thousand fine words. Piety speaks to their hearts far more than the most eloquent discourses, and it is piety above all which you should instil into them. We ought to accustom ourselves never to raise our voice when reproofing. Sometimes their evil dispositions will lead them to provoke us, just to be punished. Then is the moment to appear

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not to notice their faults. Beware of punishing a whole class for the faults of a few. It might entail very serious consequences. Poor children who have worked all day, and done everything they could to please their mistresses, ought not to be treated like those who are in fault.

Further, it is necessary that the mistresses should be themselves exact to all points of Rule, and see that they are punctually carried out. Let all be done at the hours assigned, and not later. In any uncertainty the mistresses should say, "We will consult our Mother." They will thus win the esteem of the children, who will be led by their example to be submissive.

It would indeed be unfortunate if the children perceived that a religious had but little love for obedience, that she was given to criticism, that she had a distaste for her employment, that she was partial, for when she wished to correct them they would reply, "Physician, heal thyself."

It would be very dangerous to speak to them of their past faults. The penitents would be greatly scandalized if you touched on certain matters, were it only in passing, for they are persuaded religious are far from conceiving any thought of such things. You must win them by means entirely opposite to those to which they are accustomed; treat the roughest with the greatest refinement, speaking to them in gentle terms, sparing them everything that would excite them to impatience or discouragement.

I remember to have seen a penitent whose face was disfigured with weeping. When any words of comfort were addressed to her, she would say, with astonishment: "How can anyone think of a poor sinner like me!" During the illness which brought

her to the tomb, she endured her sufferings with admirable patience. She often exclaimed: "Oh, my God! can it be true that Thou dost pardon me? I have sinned so grievously! But I have shed so many tears, will they not save me?" . . . She went through great anguish during her last days; she seemed to see the devil holding a large book open, in which all the sins of her life were inscribed with terrible exactitude. A few hours before she expired, as she appeared perfectly calm, the mistress to whom she had mentioned her troubles asked if she still continued to fear. "No, no, Mother," she answered; "I die in peace. I have hidden myself completely in the wounds of Our Lord Jesus Christ. I confide in the treasure of His infinite mercy, from which I hope for all things.

A dying Magdalen of Tours, seeing me enter the infirmary, exclaimed: "Oh, Mother, my best friend, how much you have done for me! I owe my conversion to you. What a consolation it is to see you! It seems Our Lord Himself has sent you to me to strengthen me." In the midst of her greatest sufferings she looked on it as a fault to seek the least relief, deeming herself unworthy of any, and reproaching herself with her want of courage under suffering. I had even then a desire to see many Houses of the Order established, and I said to her, "My child, you will probably die soon. If, as I hope, you will have the happiness of going to Heaven, promise me to ask God to let me know whether my desire to found Houses for souls who wish to forsake the path of sin is inspired by Him." "But how can you doubt it? Yes, yes, Mother, leave it to me, I will remember it before Our Lord." Shortly after her death we were called here to found this House of Angers.

We had a penitent who was at enmity with God from her first Communion, which she had made unworthily. This unhappy creature committed all the mortal sins she could, communicating almost daily after breaking her fast, eating even in church to show greater contempt. When she caught sight of lambs she would, in a fury, take up stones to throw at them, unable to bear their sight, because they represented the Divine Lamb, Our Lord Jesus Christ. She set cornfields on fire in order to ruin God's work. But, finally, touched by God's grace, horrified at herself, she asked admittance into our fold, where she was sincerely converted, and obtained the grace of so great contrition that she never dared to raise her eyes to Heaven. During three years she observed the Rules perfectly. At the end of that time she fell ill, prepared in the most edifying manner for her last passage, and expired in tender sentiments of piety. The day before her death she gave me a picture, saying, with a smile, that it represented St Euphrasia building churches.

The penitents are sometimes very fervent. I have seen one remain in prayer and perfect recollection for two or three hours successively. Another seemed to me never to commit a voluntary fault.

Four Magdalens, fearing to be unfaithful to God, asked the grace to die, which they obtained, for they were soon called to Heaven, one after another in the order of their profession.

If it be an abuse to find fault too often, it is another not to do so at all. Sometimes it is indispensable to make the weight of authority felt. I found myself, on one occasion, compelled to speak very severely to a penitent who at first gave edification, but who afterwards scandalized her companions as much as she had edified them. Nothing

seemed to make her think seriously. A humiliation conquered her at last and brought her back to her duty. But these severe measures must be employed rarely.

When I was still a young religious I had the management of a very difficult class of penitents. I must own that, for a time, I was most severe, above all, in abolishing private conversations, so much so, that the confessor said to me: "Now, my child, you have done enough: things are going on well; lessen your severity a little, otherwise your government will become too hard." I obeyed. One means which I found successful in making them feel they were in fault, was to look at them severely, and several told me that they would have preferred the greatest punishment to this.

During the first days I spent in that class I hardly spoke, everything went on in profound silence, although these children were inclined to be very giddy. Sometimes they said to me: "Mother you must be very tired, go and rest a little, we will be very good whilst you are away." "O children," I replied, "I could not be more contented than in your midst, it is my greatest rest to be here." I took great care not to leave them! When I was obliged to thwart their wishes they used every possible means to induce me to give way to them. One day I found five or six at the door of our room, I asked what they wanted, but no one dared answer. At last one replied that they wished to speak to me altogether. Knowing what they had in view I said to them, "What folly it is to suppose that a daughter of our Lady of Charity would allow herself to be influenced by threats! Go away, and remember she would die, were it necessary, in the discharge of her duty."

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Be very prudent, my dear daughters, never needlessly expose yourselves to be treated with disrespect by the children, or disobeyed. Understand how necessary it is to watch over yourselves that you may not yield to impatience. If you feel irritated or annoyed, refrain from correcting. Fénelon says that when anyone who receives a reproof perceives that it has been given under the influence of passion, it is very difficult for the person corrected to repress her own temper.

I unceasingly impress upon you that a wise condescension inspired by true charity obtains far more than too great strictness. Remember all that is hard must be reserved for ourselves, and what is pleasant given to others. You ought to be like the fig tree, which keeps its bitterness in itself, but gives forth only sweetness. Remember we gain nothing by using violent measures. A cup of sweet milk given opportunely to one of our dear penitents will be more effectual in bringing her back to right sentiments than acts of severity.

MAXIM

St Teresa told her Religious that she bequeathed to them as her testament the spirit of prayer and the consolations of prayer. I, my dear daughters, bequeath to you as my testament love for the salvation of souls.

CHAPTER LXIII

Charity and Zeal

TAKE *this child and nurse him for me; I will give thee thy wages.** Are not these words, addressed by the daughter of a great king to the mother of Moses, spoken to you, my dear daughters, by a great Queen, by Holy Church? To you she confides her children whom the world rejects, but whom her maternal love eagerly receives. What an honour Holy Church bestows on you in associating you with the very mission of Jesus Christ!

What did Moses-become—that little child who seemed destined to perish in the waters of the Nile? He became the liberator of the people of God. What may this poor penitent who is placed in your hands become? She will prove perhaps a true Magdalen, a Pelagia. How glorious is your mission, my beloved daughters, and how necessary is prayer to fulfil it worthily. Each of us should offer for this intention all her sacrifices, all her trials, all her mortifications, all her good works; thus every moment of our lives will be consecrated to the salvation of these dear souls. The spirit of charity should be unceasingly the mainspring of your actions. You should have in view but the glory of God and the salvation of souls in the recital of the Office, in your chants and in your work. How I rejoice, particularly on Feasts, when I hear you all chanting the holy

* Exod. ii, 9.

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Office. It fills me with such devotion that I shed tears of joy. I believe that your piety and fervour helps greatly to the conversion of souls.

See how our good God loves these dear souls! The miracles which take place in the Institute seem to be worked only in their regard. It is because of them that we are asked for from all parts. Everywhere these words are addressed to us: "Take care of these children." We must even admit that we owe our vocation to these strayed sheep, because without them our Congregation would not exist, and all the benefits we receive are always given in consideration of what we do for them.

We continually discourse to you about our fourth Vow. But could we speak too much of it, allude too often to the subject of the salvation of souls since it is our vocation and our only end? My greatest desire is that you may understand, more and more, the extent of your obligations regarding these dear souls. Endeavour to accomplish your fourth Vow in all its perfection. It is summed up in two words, *Charity* and *Zeal*. I advise you to ponder on it over and over again. You can enter the Kingdom of Heaven only by charity and zeal. The Apostles possessed charity and zeal, and they worked wonders. Listen to St Paul crying out: *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?* It is in this manner that you ought to suffer for your penitents, trusting that God will always strengthen you with His grace, as He did St Paul. Our Father Eudes was filled with charity and zeal, and he founded, not only our Congregation but also several other Institutes. M. de Neuville possessed charity and zeal, and he succeeded in founding

this House of Angers, the cradle of our Institute, whence so many other Houses have already sprung, which are havens of salvation for a large number of souls. The venerable bishops who ask to have us in their dioceses, the founders and benefactors of our monasteries, are moved by charity and zeal. What shall I say of our great benefactress, Madame d'Andigné, whose only thought was to do good? What of so many others who give continual proofs of charity and zeal?

If it happen sometimes that you see our poor children covered with the dust of the world, to say nothing more, imitate the woman in the Gospel who wiped the face of her Divine Master with her veil, and the Precious Blood which cleanses them will appear on their brows.

Yesterday, I paid our good penitents a visit in their class-room. These dear children, seeing me take so active a part in our works, said: "Oh Mother, you must indeed love souls, as you are never tired of working for them." "Speak to me frankly, children," I replied; "I am convinced that you do not really think that our labours bring us such bitter suffering, and that far from looking upon them as almost enough to kill us, you feel we are fortunate to be able to do as we are doing." Tears which seemed to come from their hearts were their only answer.

Oh, what charity and compassion we should have for these souls placed in our hands by Holy Church, in the name of the Divine Pastor and of their tender Mother, the Blessed Virgin. Love them much, very much. Console and strengthen these suffering sheep; make them by God's grace happy, very happy; this is your duty. Do not forget that you will win hearts to Our Lord only by charity.

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Of course, you must first of all have charity for yourselves, that is to say, an ardent zeal for your progress in spiritual life; without this you could not possess true charity nor true zeal for the souls confided to you, and whom you must nourish from the superabundant charity of your own heart. Oh, be generous!

Do not come to Our Lord's vineyard destitute of the tools necessary for your work; He might dismiss you as useless. Set to work; let your zeal be pure, prudent, universal and persevering. Pure, because it should be inspired by the Holy Spirit, Who is the source of all purity. Universal and persevering, not an inconstant zeal which exists for a week and then cools down, but a daily zeal; a universal zeal, which is not affected either by countries or individuals; an enlightened zeal, which saves us from committing acts of imprudence even under the appearance of good. Let us seek counsel when we doubt; by a want of prudence we are sometimes led into unpardonable follies.

Zeal does not consist in continual preaching, in giving good advice, in constantly exhorting to virtue, but rather in giving good example. Example impresses much more than words, and through it we often obtain astonishing results.

Our fourth Vow may be said to constitute the essence of our vocation. It is this Vow, my dear daughters, that inflames you with the desire to fly to the most distant shores, there to conquer souls for God.

Why do our novices learn English, Italian, etc., and why do the English, the Italians, learn French, "the Mother tongue of all," as one of our dear American daughters expresses it? Not simply to acquire this knowledge for themselves, but that

they may use it for the conversion of a great number of penitents.

I think we may hope that our Congregation will become so numerous and widespread, that God will grant to some amongst us the glory of one day shedding their blood for the salvation of souls. Shall I tell you, therefore, to court martyrdom? No, it is sufficient that your zeal impels you to desire only holy obedience and to wish only what obedience requires of you. After all, my children, you should always be martyrs by a continual martyrdom of sacrifice and labour.

Love all your penitents, whatever their nationality. Devote yourselves to their happiness with all possible zeal, and you will rejoice the Heart of Jesus and the Heart of the Blessed Virgin; you will rejoice the Church, which has inherited the love of Jesus and Mary for souls. "Take these children," she says, "and I will give thee thy wages."

MAXIM

We unceasingly recommend charity to your children. O my beloved daughters, be charitable to your flocks, be their true Mothers.

CHAPTER LXIV

*On Gratitude—Before the Feast of
St Ignatius*

THE feast of St Ignatius is not a feast commanded by the Church nor by our Rule, yet we are preparing to celebrate it with much solemnity.

Have you divined the reason, my dear daughters? What are your thoughts on the subject? Gratitude has no doubt been a predominant feeling in your hearts, and you anticipate with joy the approaching celebration of the anniversary of the foundation of your dear Mother House. When I see you all gathered together here, and my thoughts travel throughout the entire Congregation, I cannot refrain from saying to myself that, were it not for the Generalate of the Good Shepherd of Angers, the majority of you would not perhaps have been religious.

Where would our dear German, English, Italian sisters be but for the establishment of the Mother House? Who knows whether the many beloved sisters we mourn, who were so edifying, and who, no doubt, now enjoy eternal glory, would be as high in Heaven but for the grace of having belonged to the Institute? Might they not have remained in the world and been lost, like so many others? For remember, my children, there is no one here, and in general there is no religious, however imperfect, who would not have been much more so had she remained in the world.

St Paul said, even to the early Christians: "You are the children of saints." St Francis Borgia, third General of the Society of Jesus, addressed the sons of St Ignatius in the same words; and we, my dear daughters, we shall tell you that you are the children of miracles. Yes, the existence of the Institute is a chain of miracles. To God alone is due our preservation and prosperity. Is it not true that you find this a fine, convenient roomy house, but you do not know what it was ten years ago. I, who saw it begin, grow and extend, can hardly believe my eyes, and with good reason I exclaim, "It is miraculous!" We were founded, in very truth, as missions are amongst savages. Forgotten by every one, we languished in misery, without furniture, without bedding, without clothing, sometimes in want of food, or at all events what we had was most uninviting and badly cooked. We spent a year thus. No Mass, except on Sunday and Thursday, and then so late we could rarely communicate at it. I shall remember all my life how that year, on the beautiful Feast of Corpus Christi, we were deprived of the happiness of communicating. His Lordship our Bishop seemed to completely ignore our existence, and other persons who were willing to help us thought we were very rich.

After all this came a time of consolation. We received a large number of postulants. Each one vied with the other in giving up her bed, and when the postulant heard of our hardships she felt glad to share them in her turn. It was then that we received our dear Sisters Mary of St Sophia* and Mary of St Francis Xavier,† who exclaimed as soon

*Sister Mary of St Sophia Lavoy entered June 20, 1831, and died at Angers, June 25, 1852.

†Sister Mary of St Francis Xavier Matthieu entered

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as she saw me: "Oh Mother! I have been seeking you for ten years; you appeared to me in a dream, and now I recognize you." At the same moment our souls became closely knit together, and will love each other, I hope, throughout all eternity. After them our dear Sister Mary of St Bernard,* that worthy *Vendéenne* and daughter of martyrs, arrived, accompanied by all her relations, who gazed at us with admiration. These dear sisters had their imperfections, like every one else, but I can bear witness that their devotedness was always without limit. Postulants came in large numbers; we gave the habit to those who persevered, and in a month they were sufficiently formed to be of use at the Office, in singing the Litany and sometimes Mass; in a word, they kept the Rule. Although still novices they were chanters, as well as chorists, whilst I was always the officiant.

We had a class of penitents, but penitents who were real demons. In the midst of our affliction mistresses were wanting. Our sisters at Nantes replied, when we asked them to send us one, that they were in the same need. What was to be done? Then it was that a novice, named, Mary of St Teresa, who was just clothed, came to us and offered to take the management of the class. We immediately named her, and God so blessed her efforts that in a short time she turned wolves into lambs. But we did not keep her long amongst us. Worn out by her labours, she was soon reduced to the last extremity, and I shall always regret that on the day of her death I was not called in time to hear her last words. "Miracles, miracles," she re-
August 28, 1831, and died Superior at Saumur, December 29, 1840.

*Sister Mary of St Bernard David entered December 22, 1831, and died at Angers, March 15, 1884.

peated in a low tone; but when I reached her bedside, though conscious, she could not make herself understood.

And, in fact, an era of miracles did set in. We received subjects daily; our novices usually numbered twenty, as did our postulants, and at this moment the idea of the Generalate occurred to several of our sisters. We laid the matter before the bishop, who received it favourably. Oppositions and contradictions to the enterprise were not wanting from other quarters, but God willed the work, and wished to do it Himself. With reason, therefore, may we say that in our foundation three miracles of the divine protection are visible: our existence, our approval by Rome and the rapid increase of our Houses.

I cannot recall to your minds all the claims Our Lord has on your gratitude, but these, my dear daughters, are so many facts which are miracles. Because God is pleased to multiply them, we seem to grow accustomed to them. You admire what you hear about other Convents and other Religious Orders, and do not think of what concerns yourselves, and which I consider quite as miraculous as anything of which I may read or hear.

Moreover, the Divine Gardener chose each of you separately from the midst of the desert of the world, and Himself led you by the hand into His Own flower garden. The abundant dew of heavenly blessings descends daily on your souls to lighten your troubles and lessen your fatigues, causing you to taste an ineffable peace and enjoy a happiness as great as can be here below. You have a heart created to love and to be grateful, therefore let the expression of your joy and gratitude for the signal grace of your vocation ascend to your Bene-

factor. Love your holy state more and more, desire to have a thousand lives to offer to the Lord and strive to return Him love for love.

It grieves you, my dear daughters, when you do not meet with gratitude in those from whom you have a right to expect it. What are not God's claims upon your gratitude—God Who has made you His spouses? Ingratitude is, in truth, one of the things that causes most pain to the human heart. Consider, then, how deeply we grieve the Heart of God when we are ungrateful for the blessings He has bestowed on us.

But, after God, the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Church, who has extended her protection over us, to whom do you owe gratitude? To our good Father de Neuville. To him you owe your happiness, your expectations; in a word, you are indebted to him for everything. This venerated name should be inscribed on every door of the House, on every tree of our enclosure. What tongue could fitly express his benefactions! This revered father lodged us, fed us, sending us provisions every week and paid for our bread and meat, etc. And this is not all. A chapel was needed, and the Count de Neuville it was who first spoke of undertaking the work. I recognized in the following instance that he was a man of God. We wanted an ordinary sized choir for about forty religious, such as we had in the other Houses of the Institute. "Madame," he said, with an inspired air, "know that this work is by no means an ordinary one; it will grow and multiply, and there will be more than two hundred religious here."

The next day he sent us a sum sufficient to pay for the foundations of the Chapel; but to be able to do this and establish our House, he sold his Castle

de Neuville. His benefits to us and to other holy works were unceasing, and this reduced him to live in such poverty that those who visited him when he was ill were moved to tears.*

And yet, my dear daughters, whilst carrying generosity to heroism, this generous man always said he had done nothing!

For the feast of this revered father, the Mother Prioress of one of our Houses in Rome obtained for him and for several others of his family, according to his choice, a plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis*. "I have never experienced so much consolation in my life," said this kind father. "Who suggested this grand thought to a woman, to a religious?"

He might have had, for reply, that the religious had been inspired by gratitude.

And our good mother, the Countess d'Andigné, our worthy and pious benefactress. Oh, what did she not do for us!†

If ever there were grateful souls in our Congregation, they were our two virtuous Sisters-Assistants General, Mary of St Chantal of Jesus (de la Roche) and Mary Teresa of Jesus (de Couëspel),‡ although they were themselves amongst our greatest benefactors. "Oh, Mother," both said to me, "we never received a greater favour in this world, than that which you did us in accepting us as your daughters." And yet, their fine natural gifts and large fortunes made them looked upon as very happy in the world. You know their munificence in our regard, how much they assisted us,

*Count de Neuville died December 4, 1843.

†The Countess d'Andigné de Villequier died July 8, 1846.

‡Our dear Sister Mary Chantal of Jesus Cesbron de la Roche died May 10, 1847; our dear Sister Mary Teresa of Jesus de Couëspel died September 2, 1848.

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and you also saw at the same time their simplicity, obedience and self-denying zeal. This was the outcome of their humble, grateful souls, they knew how to appreciate the great benefit of their vocation, and looked on themselves as the last of all. The nobility of their sentiments corresponded to that of their birth.

It is said of the Seraph of Carmel that she was the most grateful woman in the world; this virtue was one of the characteristics of her sublime sanctity. She herself wrote to one of her daughters with very great humility: "Gratitude is not a virtue in me, but a natural instinct. In fact, I am so constituted that it is sufficient for anyone to give me a sardine, to make me feel affectionate gratitude towards them."

Our venerable Founder, Father Eudes, was extremely grateful, and he certainly wished his daughters to cultivate the same sentiment. It is written in our holy Constitutions: "They shall have a special devotion to the virtue of gratitude, and shall show great gratitude towards their founders and benefactors, and to all their friends."

Pray frequently, my dear daughters, for all your benefactors, spiritual and temporal. Be faithful in offering for them the Communions prescribed by our holy Rule, and beg of Our Lord to grant them all they need and all they wish. Imitate the simplicity of that good Franciscan, Brother Giles, who addressed himself to the Blessed Virgin, saying, with great devotion: "My good Mother, grant our benefactors what they ask. Show that you love those who do us good in your name, otherwise they will not bring us candles to burn before your statue, and then how shall we procure any?"

Say every day, with particular attention, these

words of the *Oremus* of the Office: *Benefactoribus nostris sempiterna bona retribue*. Lord, reward our benefactors by giving them eternal blessings. In like manner repeat after meals: *Retribuere dignare, Domine*, etc. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to grant all those who do us good, for Thy Name's sake, the reward of eternal life. Say also with attention the *De profundis*, which we recite together for our benefactors each time we leave the refectory.

Great and noble thoughts are the fruit of the sentiment of gratitude. Ingratitude is abominable. I fear it beyond anything. I beg of you, my dear daughters, take great care not to be ungrateful. On the contrary, let gratitude double the merit of your good actions.

The simplest definition which can be given of gratitude is expressed in these words: "Gratitude is the memory of the heart." That heart is but a poor one which has no memories, which retains no remembrances.

In speaking to you of gratitude, I will give you an instance of it in a man of the world. He came to the parlour one day to confide to me a difficulty in which he found himself. I sympathized, and endeavoured to be of service to him. After the revolution of 1830, having become one of the first functionaries of the town, he hastened to come to us, and he told me that he would be happy in his turn to be of use to us, that we need fear nothing in case of any insurrection, that he would see we were protected, and, if necessary, would place guards at the door of our house.

When we were starting for Angers this grateful man, having learned the hour of our departure, came to our carriage and said to two soldiers who were also travelling: "I recommend these two reli-

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gious to your care; they deserve every respect and attention. I shall consider as done to myself all that you do for them."

My dear daughters, never forget the benefits you receive. Be grateful to your benefactors, to your Mother House. Be grateful to the Blessed Virgin; and, once more, be grateful to God to whom you are united by eternal bonds. The joy which a good religious feels in the practice of her Vows, causes her to forget crosses, persecutions, poverty, and every suffering. Her whole life is one long act of gratitude. Never is she seen to be sad, and her state seems to her preferable to all the crowns of the world.

I would that all I have just said were written in letters of gold. However, I give it to you; it is your portion, your inheritance; engrave it on your hearts, repeat it to future generations, take it with you to your missions, remind each other of it in far-off lands. Let its remembrance be your consolation, your hope, and thus your gratitude will be lasting. You will love your Vows, crying out day by day with joy and happiness: "We are the children of miracles!"

MAXIM

It is only just that we prove our gratitude to God by devoting ourselves with great and generous hearts to His service, and by accepting all the troubles and afflictions which are met with in our vocation.

CHAPTER LXV

The Annals

GATHER *up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost.**

We had a visit, yesterday, from a religious, enjoying a great reputation for learning, who had been sent to us by his Superior on a purely business matter. As it was his first visit to Angers, and he was not acquainted with our Institute, he made many inquiries about our holy Order and concerning the beginnings of this House. I related, with simplicity and confidence, how the work had developed since His Holiness Pope Gregory XVI had established the Generalate. After I had given him some particulars he said to me, gravely: "Mother, you are walking in a land of benedictions, I would almost say, in a land of miracles. There are few Religious Orders to which God has been so prodigal of His graces. Tell me, have you written down any of the things which you have related to me, or had them written?" "Several of our sisters," I replied, "have prepared some memoirs." "Gratitude to God," he added, "obliges you to write your annals. If you neglect to do so, you will be accountable for it at the last day. You may apply in a special way to yourself these words of Our Lord: *Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost.* From all these little fragments you may prepare delicious food, which will afford nourishment to future generations. A

*St John vi, 12.

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General of our Society said: ' I consider that those of our Fathers who collected and wrote down the incidents connected with the beginning and spread of the Institute, did a greater work than if they had founded several colleges.' "

In truth, my dear daughters, it is very important that, after the study of our religion and of our holy Rules, we apply ourselves to the study of all that relates to the Congregation.

I can say that when I first entered religion I was so eager to know all about the beginnings of the Order, of its origin, and of everything relating to it, that, as a novice at Tours, I always sought the society of the old religious to converse with them. It was my delight, after reading the Scriptures, to peruse the manuscript lives of some of our first Mothers, the letters of our Father Eudes, and an abridgement of his life, which at that time was not printed. When a community letter came from the Houses of the Refuge, I did not sleep the whole night, so beautiful did it all seem. Yet what could six or eight pages contain compared to the circulars which we receive now from all parts, and in which are related so many and such admirable conversions, even amongst pagans and infidels?

St Teresa, that charming saint, says in one of her works: " We animate the children of a noble race to become virtuous by speaking to them of the virtues of their ancestors; we relate their enterprises, deeds of valour, traits of goodness, and thus induce the children to become brave and generous like them." With what pleasure we read the history of St Teresa's Foundations. Her style is so fascinating, and she relates all with such simplicity and grace. The cottage home has its noble and pious traditions, which each family glories in per-

petuating. The children have it at heart to preserve untarnished the good name of their fathers, and it would seem that the virtues of the parents are reproduced in the children. This family pride encourages them to make it a point of honour to keep in the right path.

What I am about to relate, my dear daughters, will make you understand how unfortunate it is not to be perfectly acquainted with all that concerns the Congregation to which we belong.

One day, a long time ago now, I was travelling with two of our sisters, and we stopped with a worthy community, where we were cordially received. In the course of conversation I asked a religious how long the House had been founded, but received an evasive reply; then I inquired: "What is the name of the Founder of your Congregation?" to which she replied ingenuously that she did not know. . . . I cannot tell you what a painful impression this made upon us.

It would indeed grieve me if any one of you were to show similar ignorance, and I should be deeply pained if I found a careless, indifferent spirit creeping into the Institute on this point. But I sincerely hope this will never be.

None of you will ever forget the name of our Venerable Founder, Father John Eudes. Your hymn of gratitude will unceasingly ascend to Heaven, to thank God for having inspired this good Father to found our Institute, one of the masterpieces of zeal for the salvation of souls. You should know everything connected with the beginnings of this Institute, of which he was the founder.*

* See *La Vie du Vénérable Père Eudes* and *Les Origines de Notre-Dame de Charité* (or its history from its foundation

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You will never forget, my dear daughters, that the signal favour of the erection of our Generalate was granted by our Holy Father, Pope Gregory XVI, who despatched the Decree of its erection to us in 1835.

You will also ever remember that the holy Cardinal Odescalchi was then given us as our Protector at Rome,* and when he laid aside the purple to enter the Society of Jesus, Cardinal Della Porta succeeded him, and after him Cardinal Patrizi.

Let the name of the august Pope Pius IX, who gave us so many proofs of his kindness, ever live in your memory; you will always utter this venerated and blessed name with respectful gratitude; and could you ever forget Monsignor Charles Montault, Bishop of Angers, who interested himself not only in the foundation of this House, but who worked indefatigably for the erection of the Generalate?

You are aware also that we owe much to Father Vaures, French Penitentiary at Rome, who used every means in his power to bring about the erection of the Generalate.

Would it be possible, my dear daughters, that you should be ignorant of all that concerns our holy Institute, and that were you questioned upon it you would find it embarrassing to reply? No, a thousand times, no! I could not believe it for a moment.

† We shall write in our annals the benefits we have received from the Court of Rome. We shall inscribe in their pages the name of Count Augustin de la Potherie de Neuville, who sold his ancestral castle and made himself poor to establish this House of

until the Revolution) *par le Père Joseph-Marie Ory, Prêtre de la Congrégation de Jésus et Marie,*

* His life has been published, *La Vie du Cardinal Odescalchi.*

Angers. We shall enter the name of the Countess Genevieve d'Andigné de Villequier, who sustained it by her liberal alms and benevolent kindness, as also the names of our two sisters Assistants-General, Mary Chantal of Jesus Cesbron de la Roche and Mary Teresa of Jesus de Couëspel, who gave up their possessions and edified us by their regularity and devotedness. Could time possibly efface the remembrance of these venerated names? No, I cannot believe it.

My dear daughters, we must put everything in writing. I cannot too strongly recommend that each convent should write their annals carefully. The annual circulars will serve as a continuation of our history, they will be as a new hymn ascending from all our tribes for the glory of God.

We further recommend that the account of the expenditure of each House be kept in very good order everywhere.

The mistresses of the classes should also have their account books, because they ought to give the Superior an exact account of their expenditure. As for the register of names I do not know of a better method than that which was taught me. At a glance one can see the day the penitents or children entered, their names and surnames, their birthplace and age; the name of the person who brought them, and in whose care they were placed on leaving us.

Finally, my dear daughters, be careful to keep everything in order, try to forget nothing. Think what patience our first Mothers must have had to draw up the Directory and Book of Customs, and do not neglect a single point of what is prescribed for us.

MAXIM

The best religious in the Institute will be those who are the most humble and the most obedient; those also who will be well versed in the Rule and Constitutions, and in the Customs of the Mother House.

CHAPTER LXVI

The Annual Circulars

DO you know, my dear daughters, what I call our community letters, when I speak of them to myself? Well! I call them *Christmas Flowers*. The spring time of the year for the Good Shepherd comes in December and January. During these two months we may stroll through the meadows of the Institute, gathering flowers, whose perfume reanimates and strengthens our zeal. I confess, my dear children, that frequently the perusal of one of these circulars serves me as matter for meditation for more than a week. I love to reflect on this little acorn, which the Blessed Virgin planted by means of her poor slave. I have watched it developing, growing year by year, and to-day I see it a strong oak with spreading branches, and rich foliage, sheltering thousands of poor wounded sheep.

The arrival of these community letters is a time which also reminds one of a field of ripe corn, from which one collects the choicest sentiments of hearts.

If these community letters are to be "Christmas Flowers," we must not wait until April or June to send them. To be flowers, they should be written simply and naturally.

Let us offer our good wishes and congratulations to one another, and relate what has taken place, in noble but simple terms. By your edifying recitals, couched in pious religious language, you can cause

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the work of the Good Shepherd to be better known and loved, besides affording us the pleasure of spending some delightful moments.

With regard to the size of the sheets of the circulars, we recommend that they should be exactly the size of the Book of Customs, so that each year the various letters that arrive can be bound together.

The seal of the Congregation should be exactly like that of the Mother House, neither larger nor smaller.

We ought to begin the letters as directed in the Book of Customs, putting the sentence above, not under, "Very honoured Sisters, etc." Let us be exact in giving the Book, chapter and verse of Holy Scripture, which we quote for our circulars.

We should sign ourselves: "The Sisters of the Community of our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd of Angers," adding, after this, "at Rome, at Poitiers," for example, not of the Good Shepherd of Rome, of Poitiers, etc. And why? Because we have been approved under the title of *The Good Shepherd of Angers*. We are thus distinguished from other convents which have taken the name of "The Good Shepherd," as the Sisters of St Joseph of Cluny are distinguished from the numerous Congregations of St Joseph, and the Religious of St Paul of Chartres, from other Congregations of St Paul. The Ursuline Religious of Chavagnes are not the Ursulines of Madame de Lignac, nor the Ursulines of Paris, etc.

We always terminate our letters with, "Blessed be God!" When we founded a House in a country which is very dear to me, the Superior, who was French, was told that the words *Dieu soit béni*, could not be rendered into the language of the country, so that they adopted instead the Latin

words, " *Deus laudetur!* " We wrote on the subject to the Superior, who succeeded the one above named, a native of the country, and a very well-informed person. I received a most charming reply, to the effect that *Dieu soit béni*, Blessed be God, was an expression quite in keeping with their language, and that she was going to adopt it at once, she and her sisters being very happy to conform in this also to the custom of the Institute.

Our dear sisters in Germany called our attention to the fact that some expressions used in our Customs could not be translated literally into German. We submitted their observations to a perfectly competent judge, who told us they were right, so we permitted them to do as they requested.

One more observation. "The titles of Lady or Madam, or that of Reverend or Reverence, shall never be given either to the sisters or to the Superior." But it is not contrary to this constitution to address letters sent by post, " *Madame la Supérieure*," etc.

Be faithful in sending the mortuary circulars, and in asking the suffrages of our holy Order for the repose of the souls of the sisters we have the sorrow to lose.

MAXIM

Let our holy Constitutions be your delight.

Make your hearts gardens, the flowers of which you will offer to Mary.

CHAPTER LXVII

New Year Wishes

WHAT are the sentiments of a mother, who, happy in the midst of her numerous children, sees the year passing away and a new one appearing on the horizon? As she looks on these tender plants, the objects of her fostering care, her heart utters these words: "Live and multiply, for you are my consolation and my crown. May your sentiments be perpetuated from age to age, and may God continue to shed upon you the heavenly dew of His blessings." My dear daughters, I do not hesitate to address those words to you, for you are my joy and my consolation.

I say it to you who are around me, to you who are engaged in so many beautiful and holy works, I say it to your companions who have passed to foreign shores, where they are spending themselves for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Live, multiply and people the earth. Let the eternal Vows which adorn you be the stars to guide you, the compass to direct you; let zeal be the vessel that bears you on.

My wish for you all is that the most tender charity, the most refined cordiality should be, as in the past, the rule and principle of all your thoughts and actions. The hearts of those who are in the Mother House should embrace the Foundations as a mother embraces her children, and the Foundations ought to have a reciprocal love for the

Mother House and for the general good of the whole Congregation.

To some, I wish better health; their sufferings have pained us deeply, and we should wish that their strength equalled their earnest desire to aid the Institute. Above all, let your virtue be strong and robust. If you fall, rise without delay and continue your journey. Accustom yourselves to lead an interior life, a life of prayer; it is these exercises which will prepare you for the accomplishment of God's designs over your souls.

Above all, persevere in that perfect docility to your Superiors which you have hitherto practised, and you will be sure never to go astray.

In a word: *Be ye holy, because I, the Lord your God, am holy,** and His Will is that you become saints. These words, my dear daughters, sum up all the desires of my heart in your regard.

To you who have already made your Vows, I say, that your holiness lies in the accomplishment of those sacred promises. Love your holy Vows, and practise them by dying to yourselves. We ought to be able to say, with St Paul, *I die daily*.

What life can be more beautiful than that of a religious, who, daily offering herself a living holocaust to God, and occupied only with what is pleasing to Him, is at length able to say with the great Apostle, *I live now; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*. Again, *God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ*.

It is therefore necessary that we should suffer in some way, if we wish to work for God's glory.

Our sisters who are founding Houses labour much, and endure many contradictions and privations. These are their sufferings. You, my dear

*Lev. xi, 22.

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daughters, meet with many trials in the fulfilment of your occupations, and often much fatigue; you suffer with the Houses that suffer, because if there be question of upholding one, you immediately give up your most capable *aides*: if to others it be necessary to send assistance, you redouble your economy and labours.

These are, for all of you, the laws of the holiness in which I trust you will walk with constancy.

Penetrate yourselves, more and more, with the grave importance of your obligations towards penitent souls; this is one of the most ardent desires of my heart, though, at the same time, I recognize that our Congregation has already, by God's grace, made much progress on this point. But whilst we see Our Lord extending our works, giving us fresh souls to save, we should redouble our ardour and zeal for our own perfection.

Therefore, you must never cease to pray, to combat and to suffer. I will say more, you ought to consider yourselves happy to pray, to combat and to suffer, for you must remember the present moment is the golden age for you, that is to say, the age of fervour. Later, those who will succeed you will probably have less labour and poverty to endure. Well, perhaps they will not be as happy as you are, and perhaps will wish even they had lived in your day.

Finally, my dear daughters, let us profit by the years Our Lord gives us. One will come which will be our last; and which amongst us can be sure that it will not be said of her at the next New Year, "Alas! she is no longer here to receive our good wishes; her body is mouldering in the tomb, and her soul has been judged!" . . .

The holy patriarch Job said: "My days are

numbered." We also must say, "My days are numbered." How many of our beloved sisters whom we counted upon seeing the end of this year are now in eternity; their days were numbered. And of those now here how many will be absent from our midst next year? What a matter for reflection. If our days are numbered, so are the faults we commit against the holy Vows we have had the happiness to make. Our failures in the Rule and Observances are also counted. Nevertheless, let us not yield to discouragement, but begin the New Year in such good dispositions that we shall have nothing to fear if we have to appear before the Sovereign Judge. Let us live so that each day may find us prepared to die, and our lives will be a foretaste of the ineffable joys of Heaven.

MAXIM

We shall never sufficiently love our holy vocation, which is, of all others, the most beautiful in the sight of God and even of men.

CHAPTER LXVIII

During the General Chapter assembled at the Mother House for the Elections of 1864 —(Last re-election of our beloved and Venerable Mother Mary of St Euphrasia Pelletier)

O H! how consoling it is to find ourselves reunited to-day! How happy I am to have you, my dear daughters, around me to witness the affectionate charity, the peace, the spirit of union reigning amongst you. None of you are strangers to each other. Americans, English, Irish, German, Italians, French, all have but one heart and one mind. You reanimate my courage, which sometimes wavers. Oh! yes, this work is God's work. He will keep you all in His Heart.

The Feast of Tabernacles was formerly held in Jerusalem. It was a time of solemn assembly, a festival of thanksgiving, which the Lord Himself had ordered Moses to cause his people to celebrate in memory of the special protection He had extended to them during those forty years in the desert. At the epoch assigned, all the tribes set out joyfully on their journey, coming from all parts to participate in the Feast, and it was a great sorrow to those who were prevented. Each family was represented at least by its head, or by one of its members, who went with joy in the name of all.

When they reached Jerusalem they assembled in the fields, where they erected pavilions or mov-

able tents, called *Tabernacles*, covering them with leaves or branches of trees. The inhabitants of the city joined them, and during the eight days of the Feast all dwelt in tents, in order to keep in lasting remembrance that in the desert, when God had overwhelmed them with blessings, they had lived in tents. They all assisted together at prayer and at the sacrifices. One of the ancients read the Law, and what appeared faulty in each tribe was reformed. These pious conferences were interspersed with holy chanting and sounds of instruments of music, and we may be quite sure that joyful recreations and fraternal repasts were not forgotten on these occasions.

May we not say, my dear daughters, that this is taking place amongst you here at our Mother House? In seeing you my heart overflows with gratitude and joy, and my thoughts go back to the beautiful Feast of Tabernacles, which the people of God celebrated so solemnly at Jerusalem.

Is it not true that all the tribes of our Israel have vied with each other in coming to celebrate this feast of thanksgiving in their Jerusalem, in this beloved Sion, where God has vouchsafed to shed such abundant treasures of grace on this new people, whom He has been pleased to choose? Is not each family represented by its head? Oh, yes, my daughters, sing in choir the beautiful canticle of David, *Quid retribuam*. Rejoice and be glad, read the holy Law over again, renew your promises, give thanks to the Lord, for all He has done for our Congregation. Love it always as you love it now. I do not fear to say that if you always love your vocation, your Vows, if you always love one another, if you always uphold one another, you

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will be capable of working wonders, and you will go straight to Heaven.

This spirit of charity, simplicity and gratitude is the soul and life of your Institute. With it you will possess all things, and God will continue to shed upon you the dew of His blessings. And then, my dear daughters, it is only by this that it will be possible for you to gain souls to God.

As you are all members of the Institute, and have been formed by it and for it, you should each have its spirit. And what reason have I in telling you that you should have the spirit of the Institute, that you should cherish it? I say this because our Institute is very closely united to Holy Church, because it has the blessings, the protection of the Church, because even the Head of the Church is doubly your first Superior, as Christians and as religious.

Terrible storms often break upon us. Sometimes we find ourselves wrapt in deepest darkness; then we turn our eyes towards home, and help and light come to us from thence.

Take notice of this, my dear daughters, when the Head of the Church suffers, we suffer also; when the bark of Peter is tossed by the tempest, so is our little and frail vessel. Then it is that we must cling closer than ever to the bark which cannot perish, and with it we shall be saved. Since our journey to Rome the truth of what I say is very clear to me.

We were surprised by a dreadful storm; our ship seemed going to pieces, but our watchful pilot said: "Do not be afraid, this is a strongly built vessel, it will withstand the storm." And with firm hand he held the helm, never taking his eyes from the ship, except to consult the heavens and take the right course. About us were little boats, tossed

hither and thither, like shells on the waves. Two poor fishermen were in one, which seemed about to be swallowed up, when suddenly we heard the order, "Lower a boat." Two sturdy sailors immediately offered their services, and by dint of hard rowing and courageous effort all were saved. The passengers surrounded and congratulated them, and the little boat, made fast to our ship, defied the waves of the angry sea.

This seems to me an image of our Mother House, that little bark which has so often been beaten by storms and has so often encountered so many perils. She would infallibly have perished had she not been very securely fastened to the sacred vessel of the Church.

Let us, therefore, as we sail onwards, constantly steer our little boats on the side of Rome, and we shall have nothing to fear.

My dear children, Angers will always be your ship; the poor pilot will always promptly come to your aid to save you, her arms will be ever open to receive you.

You are continually occupied in bringing back souls to the fold of the Good Shepherd; on all sides you raise churches in His honour, and it is for this reason that the representative of Jesus Christ feels such interest in our Congregation. Nothing pleases him more than to see devotion to the Blessed Sacrament increasing, than to see its worship spreading, above all in certain countries, such as England, Ireland, Africa, America, etc.

The foundation of our House in London is in my opinion a marvel, even amongst charitable works. That we should have succeeded in establishing a convent in a Protestant country, triumphing over the obstacles placed in our way by a multitude of

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adversaries, and that we are now enjoying the protection of its inhabitants, is in truth a wonder of God's mercy. Let us hope that it will be the same for the other monasteries we are asked to found.

Do you know what it is that earns this special protection of God? Do you know what it is that enables our Congregation to spread on all sides? I repeat, once more, it comes from our attachment to the Church. Oh! how I love our holy Mother the Church! How consoling it is to me to reflect that our dear Congregation labours for her exaltation. All will pass away, but the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman Church will never pass.

Are you aware of what, furthermore, draws down that special protection of God, which sustains our Institute and imparts to it so much vigour? It is the union which exists amongst ourselves; it is obedience, in a word, our spirit of union. Were this spirit, unhappily, to become wanting, the work would perish; the Congregation would become like a beautiful tree, whose leaves wither, whose flowers fall off, whose branches droop, and which bears no fruit, because a worm has eaten into it and destroyed the root. For God's sake, my dear daughters, endeavour that such a misfortune should never befall us.

Preserve the religious sentiments which at present animate you; be the means of transmitting them to future generations, and your Congregation will always be "as a tree planted by running waters," spreading its branches, covered with leaves, flowers and fruit, on all sides.

A distinguished ecclesiastic, a benefactor of one of our monasteries, said to us one day: "I admire the divine inspiration which led to your Institute being placed under the safeguard of unity. I re-

joice that the Sovereign Pontiff was not willing that there should be another Mother House, even at Rome. This unity is, in fact, your defence, your support, and by the strength it imparts you will spread your branches in all directions. Look at the universe, but one sun vivifies and warms it. So it is with you. One heart is your sun, and that sun is Angers. Behold the sun which animates you all! ”

Keep this well in mind, my dear daughters, Angers must ever be the centre of unity for you all. You ought to look on it as a blessed, a holy land. Here it is that the numerous tribes of Israel should always assemble, the Mother House should always be here. Never on any account whatever should it be transplanted; the gratitude you owe to God forbids such a change ever being made. The general Novitiate must be here. From the Mother House subjects from all parts of the world go forth, taking with them everywhere the same spirit. The rich fount of grace, the salutary streams which have watered the whole field of our beloved Congregation, have their source at Angers. Oh! may no one ever wish to turn aside this happy stream of blessings and mercy which God Himself has opened. Angers is the cradle of your religious infancy, it should also be the centre of your affections, its memory should be ineffaceably impressed on your hearts.

The Feast of the Tabernacles was a yearly one for the people of God. The time of its celebration was looked upon as very glorious and very holy. God had ordained that the law prescribing this solemn reunion should be a memorable one to all the posterity of the Hebrews, having also in view that these annual journeys should teach them that they were but travellers and pilgrims on this earth.

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Our solemn reunions, are not as frequent, but the memory of them must be transmitted to future generations, that they may hold them in great respect and love. Happy they who, like you, will come here at the specified time to bless and thank the Lord, to be strengthened in union and to rejoice together in His holy presence. Happy, yes, happy, they to whom it shall be granted to make this pilgrimage, to come and renew their Vows in these sacred precincts, and to preserve to posterity the spirit of zeal and of union which forms the life of the Institute. Their journey will be blessed, and they will one day reach that glorious city, built on a solid foundation, of which God Himself is the Founder and Architect. There all the fatigues of the way will be forgotten; and if it be true that even in this world the life of charity and union gives us days of ineffable joy and delight, what will it be when the souls of the elect, who shall have faithfully served God, shall find themselves in the enjoyment of that reign of perpetual happiness, peace and union.

Oh, Sacred Institute, I shall die in thy arms, and thou wilt bear me to the bosom of my God.

THE END.